

Small State Diplomacy in 21st Century Africa

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Abstract

The evolving dynamics of international relations in the 21st century have brought renewed attention to the agency of small states, particularly in the Global South. In the African context, small states, typically characterized by limited territorial size, population, economic capacity and military influence, have increasingly demonstrated strategic adaptability in navigating complex geopolitical environments. This paper examines the nature, strategies, and constraints of small state diplomacy in Africa, with a focus on how these states assert influence beyond their material capabilities. The study explores how African small states leverage multilateral institutions, regional bodies, and niche diplomacy to safeguard sovereignty, attract investment, and contribute to conflict resolution. The analysis highlights the use of soft power tools, strategic geographic positioning, and coalition-building as means of amplifying diplomatic presence. Furthermore, the paper interrogates the structural challenges these states face, including diplomatic resource constraints, vulnerability to external shocks, and marginalization in global governance. Despite these limitations, small African states have demonstrated a capacity to shape regional discourse, influence international norms, and punch above their weight in global forums. By foregrounding the agency of small states in African diplomacy, this paper contributes to a more insightful understanding of the continent's international engagement. It offers insights into the resilience and innovation of peripheral actors in the global system.

Keywords: *African diplomacy, Foreign policy, International relations, Small states.*

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Introduction

Small states in contemporary Africa are often overlooked in discussions of international diplomacy, where attention tends to focus on larger, more influential powers. Nevertheless, many of these smaller countries have developed effective and nuanced foreign policies that allow them to navigate complex global and regional dynamics. Far from being passive players, small African states have demonstrated agency and strategic thinking in their diplomatic engagements. This paper explores how small states in Africa conduct diplomacy despite limited economic or military power. It considers the strategies they use, such as forming regional alliances, participating actively in multilateral institutions, and focusing on specific policy areas where they can have influence. By examining examples like Botswana, Rwanda, and Cape Verde, the study shows how these states manage external relationships, pursue national interests, and contribute to broader international conversations. Ultimately, this research challenges the assumption that small size equates to limited influence and argues for a more serious consideration of the role small African states play in shaping diplomatic outcomes.

Conceptual Clarifications

In much of international relations literature, "small states" are typically defined in terms of population size, territorial extent, or economic output. While these criteria are helpful starting points, they often fail to capture the complexity of small states' behaviour, especially in Africa. On the continent, several states with limited material capacity have nonetheless carved out important diplomatic roles for themselves. This suggests that smallness, in the African context, is not only a matter of size but also of strategy and agency. African scholars have increasingly questioned assumptions that equate small size with marginal influence. Mushelenga and Van Wyk argue that many African small states actively shape their foreign policies in response to both internal and external factors.¹ These states are often strategic in their diplomacy, relying on multilateral platforms, regional cooperation, and soft power to safeguard their interests and influence regional outcomes.

Kansaye similarly challenges the view that small states are inconsequential in global affairs. He notes that countries such as Cape Verde, Botswana, and Djibouti use their limited resources wisely, often emphasizing good governance, peacekeeping, or environmental leadership to gain visibility and credibility on the world stage.² Through what is often referred to as "niche diplomacy," these states selectively engage in areas where they can lead or innovate, allowing them to project influence disproportionate to their size. Sishekanu takes this argument further by proposing that small states should not be judged solely by physical or economic measures. Instead, their influence should be assessed in terms of their diplomatic initiative and international engagement.³ From this perspective, smallness becomes less of a limitation and more of a framework within which states operate creatively to advance their interests.

This approach is echoed in broader international relations theory, including the work of Yee-Kuang Heng, who highlights how small states often compensate for their lack of hard power by forming coalitions, promoting international norms, or specializing in particular policy areas.⁴ In Africa, this is evident among the continent's Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Seychelles, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Comoros. Suzanne and Graham describe how these states pursue "smart diplomacy" by focusing on issues like climate change, ocean governance, and sustainable development, thereby positioning themselves as moral leaders on the global stage.⁵ Taken together, these perspectives suggest that in Africa, small states should not be defined solely by what they lack, but by how they act. Their diplomatic strategies demonstrate that limited size does not preclude influence. On the contrary, many small African states have shown an impressive ability to navigate a competitive international environment, often setting the agenda in areas where they have expertise or moral authority.

Niche Diplomacy refers to a strategy where smaller or less powerful countries focus their diplomatic efforts on a limited number of specific issues or areas where they can have a meaningful impact. Instead of trying to engage broadly across all international topics, these states concentrate on particular sectors such as environmental protection, peacekeeping, maritime security, or cultural diplomacy where they can build expertise, influence global discussions, and gain recognition beyond what their size might suggest. This targeted approach allows small states to maximise their limited resources and carve out a distinct role in international relations.

Review of Literature

The study of small state diplomacy has grown significantly in recent decades, especially as scholars and policymakers have begun to realise that wielding influence in international relations is not only determined by size or military endowments. In the case of Africa, small states, despite their diplomatic challenges, continue to find creative ways to assert themselves in the international system. The following literature shapes our current understanding of small state diplomacy in Africa. Bueger and Wivel challenge the common assumption that a state's small size correlates with limited diplomatic influence.⁶ With Seychelles as a case study, a state with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants and a diplomatic corps of a few dozen, they reveal how the country achieves outsized international standing, acting as a broker on multilateral platforms and an agenda setter in ocean governance debates. Lawale and Ahmad present a compelling argument of how Djibouti, despite being a small and resource-limited state, manages to wield significant influence in the Horn of Africa.⁷ They challenge the perception that small states are powerless by highlighting Djibouti's strategic use of its geographic position and diplomatic strength. Mushelenga and Van Wyk explore how small states navigate the complexities of international politics despite their limited material power.⁸ They focus on the diplomatic behavior of small states,

identifying their unique challenges and the creative strategies they employ to secure their interests and enhance their influence.

Juma interrogates the evolving landscape of global diplomacy in the 21st century, focusing on the particular challenges and opportunities facing small states.⁹ He argues that small states are at a pivotal moment as shifting global power dynamics compel them to rethink their diplomatic approaches. Mushelenga examines how Namibia leverages bilateral and multilateral relations, domestic legal instruments, and export zones to engage global and regional partners.¹⁰ Graham examines the motivations and nature of foreign policies of small states in Southern Africa, focusing on seven case studies: Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, and Eswatini. She rejects the simplistic view that small states are always weak or passive in international relations. She evinces that despite limited resources, these states pursue active and purposeful foreign policies shaped by their unique priorities and contexts. Kansanye challenges the notion that small states are marginal.¹¹ He argues that these states leverage multilateralism, norm entrepreneurship and strategic diplomacy to exert influence in global governance, regional integration and thematic initiatives such as climate and democracy.

Naitore offers an examination of Kenya's diplomatic strategies and engagement in Africa throughout the 21st century.¹² He accentuates Kenya's role not only as a regional leader but also as an emerging player in continental and global diplomacy. Amoateng traces the prestige deficit of African states to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, colonialism, and the enduring effects of neocolonialism.¹³ He reveals how historical subjugation continues to affect the prestige of African states. He argues that even though independence was a breakthrough in bringing about prestige recovery, neocolonial structures and persistent forms of discrimination continue to undermine these efforts. He advocates the redefinition of power and prestige along the lines of genuine respect and cooperation.

Historical Evolution of Small State Diplomacy in Africa

The role of small states in African diplomacy has undergone significant change throughout history, revealing a much richer story than their often overlooked size or economic capacity might suggest. While many tend to view these states primarily through the lens of their limited territorial size, population, or resources, their diplomatic history shows a long tradition of resilience, creativity, and purposeful engagement with regional and global powers. Long before the colonial era, Africa was home to numerous kingdoms and city-states such as Buganda, the Oyo Empire, and the coastal Swahili settlements that actively engaged in diplomatic activities. These political entities negotiated treaties, facilitated trade, and formed alliances with neighbouring groups and even distant foreign powers. Although the diplomatic methods of that time differed from contemporary statecraft, these early forms of diplomacy demonstrate that African societies, including smaller political units, possessed agency in managing their external relations and safeguarding their interests¹⁴

The advent of colonialism disrupted and, in many cases, replaced these indigenous diplomatic systems with European models that often marginalized African voices. However, the wave of decolonization in the mid-20th century ushered in a new era. Numerous newly independent African states entered the international system, many of which were small by territorial or economic standards. Despite facing a world divided by Cold War tensions, these states quickly adapted by adopting strategies like non-alignment and regional cooperation to maintain their sovereignty and pursue their national goals.¹⁵ For instance, countries like Tanzania and Botswana, though limited in resources, skillfully used diplomacy to champion African unity, support liberation struggles, and secure crucial development aid.¹⁶

With the end of the Cold War and the rise of globalization, the diplomatic landscape shifted once more. Small African states increasingly diversified their diplomatic efforts, focusing on economic diplomacy, regional integration, and targeted international engagement. Nations such as Cape Verde, Mauritius, and Lesotho expanded their roles by actively participating in international organizations, contributing to peacekeeping operations, and pushing for development policies tailored to their unique circumstances.¹⁷ More recently, many of these states have embraced “niche diplomacy”, specializing in particular global issues where they can lead and influence despite their size. For example, Seychelles and São Tomé and Príncipe have become important voices in international discussions on climate change and ocean governance, leveraging their geographic and environmental realities to gain diplomatic recognition.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Djibouti has transformed its strategic location at a key maritime crossroads into a diplomatic asset by hosting international military bases and serving as a hub for global commerce.¹⁹ This evolving history underscores that small African states are far from passive actors. Instead, they have consistently found innovative ways to navigate complex international systems, turning perceived limitations into strengths and carving out meaningful roles in global diplomacy.

Strategic Use of Multilateralism and International Law

For many small African states, multilateralism and international law have become essential tools for amplifying their voices on the global stage. Recognizing their limited individual power, these states strategically engage with multilateral institutions and legal frameworks to protect their interests, secure support, and influence international norms. Multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and various regional economic communities like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) provide platforms where small states can collaborate, build alliances, and participate in decision-making processes that directly affect them. Through these collective forums, small states overcome some of the constraints imposed by their size and limited resources.²⁰ For example, during peacekeeping missions coordinated by the AU and the UN, small states such as Botswana and Rwanda have played active roles, contributing troops and diplomatic

efforts that elevate their international standing beyond what their size might predict. These institutions confer legitimacy and establish rules that govern international relations, helping to protect small states from coercion or interference by more powerful actors.

International law also serves as a crucial equalizer. Small states frequently rely on core legal principles like sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the prohibition of external interference to defend their rights. This legal framework has been instrumental for countries such as Namibia and Eritrea, which used international legal mechanisms to solidify their sovereignty amid regional disputes. Moreover, small states employ international law strategically in what are termed "grey zone" conflicts, which are situations characterised by coercion or aggression that stop short of open warfare. By invoking legal norms, these states deter hostile actions and assert claims diplomatically, minimizing the risk of confrontation. For instance, Seychelles and Mauritius have actively invoked maritime law under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to defend their ocean territories against competing claims.²¹

The dynamic nature of multilateral diplomacy requires small African states to be adept at navigating shifting alliances and calls for institutional reform. Many small states advocate for changes in influential bodies like the UN Security Council, pushing for greater representation and voice in global governance. Their calls for reform stem from the desire to address better their unique challenges, such as vulnerability to climate change, economic dependency, and security threats that are often overlooked in traditional power structures.²² This push for inclusivity is not just symbolic but strategic, aiming to ensure that decision-making processes become more responsive to their needs.

Furthermore, many small African states have embraced "niche diplomacy" within multilateral settings by championing specific global issues that resonate deeply with their national interests. For example, island states like Seychelles and São Tomé and Príncipe have positioned themselves as key advocates for climate change mitigation and ocean governance, areas directly impacting their survival and economic well-being. Similarly, Rwanda has emerged as a leader in peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts, leveraging its experiences to influence AU and UN policies. By focusing on such specialized areas, these countries raise their international profiles and exert influence far beyond what their physical size might suggest.²³

Soft Power and Niche Diplomacy

Soft power has become a crucial strategy for small African states seeking to expand their influence on the global stage without depending on military strength or vast economic resources. Unlike hard power, which relies on coercion or financial incentives, soft power is based on attraction and persuasion, leveraging culture, values, diplomacy, and development cooperation to build goodwill and shape how others perceive and respond

to them. For many small states in Africa, soft power provides a practical pathway to gain international recognition and foster meaningful partnerships despite their limited material capacities.

One key way small states utilize soft power is through niche diplomacy. This strategy involves focusing on specific issues or sectors where a country has unique expertise, cultural influence, or comparative advantages. By concentrating diplomatic efforts on specialized areas such as environmental protection, peace mediation, or cultural promotion, these states carve out distinctive roles in international affairs, effectively amplifying their voices far beyond what their size might suggest. For instance, countries like Rwanda and Ghana have gained reputations as leaders in peacekeeping and conflict resolution within Africa.^{24,25} Rwanda's active participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions and its role in mediating regional conflicts have enhanced its diplomatic clout, allowing it to shape security agendas across the continent. Similarly, Ghana has hosted peace talks and contributed troops to peacekeeping forces, reinforcing its image as a stable, peace-promoting actor.

Other small African states have championed global issues such as climate change and sustainable development, building alliances in multilateral forums around shared priorities. Island nations like Seychelles and Mauritius, whose economies and survival are deeply tied to the health of the oceans and environment, have become vocal advocates for climate action and ocean governance. Their leadership in these areas has earned them respect and partnership opportunities with larger powers and international organizations, allowing them to influence policy debates that directly impact their futures.

This targeted use of niche diplomacy enables small states not only to stand out in crowded international arenas but also to build credibility and soft power capital that attracts development aid, foreign investment, and technical cooperation aligned with their priorities. By engaging in such diplomacy, small African states diversify their foreign relations and reduce overreliance on a single partner or bloc, thereby enhancing their strategic autonomy and resilience in an increasingly complex global environment.²⁶

Security and Strategic Partnerships

Security remains a central concern for small African states, which face a wide range of challenges from internal conflicts and political instability to transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, and piracy. Because many of these states have limited military capacity, financial resources, and logistical capabilities, they increasingly depend on strategic partnerships to safeguard their sovereignty and contribute to regional and continental stability. These partnerships enable small states to pool resources, share intelligence, and enhance their security capabilities by cooperating with regional organizations, global powers, and multilateral institutions. Importantly, such partnerships go beyond

simple transactions; they are part of a broader diplomatic strategy that allows small states to balance competing interests and engage with influential actors while maintaining a degree of autonomy.

One significant example is the cooperation between African states and the African Union (AU). The AU plays a crucial role in coordinating peacekeeping missions, conflict resolution efforts, and rapid response mechanisms across the continent. However, the AU's effectiveness depends heavily on strategic ties with external partners like the European Union (EU), the United States, and China, which provide funding, training, equipment, and logistical support to strengthen the AU's security sector reforms and operational capacities. These collaborations have been essential in conflict zones such as the Sahel, where joint efforts have helped counter violent extremist groups threatening regional stability.

China's expanding security engagement in Africa exemplifies the complexity and opportunities of such partnerships.²⁷ Beyond economic investments, China has established military cooperation agreements with multiple African countries, including Djibouti, where it operates its first overseas military base, a strategic location near key maritime routes. Through military training programs, joint exercises, and defense diplomacy, China has positioned itself as a key security partner, offering African states new avenues for capacity-building. However, this growing involvement also introduces nuanced geopolitical dynamics, requiring small states to carefully navigate their diplomatic relationships to avoid overdependence or conflicts of interest.

In addition to formal partnerships, defense diplomacy has become a critical instrument for small African states.²⁸ Military-to-military contacts, joint exercises, training exchanges, and peacekeeping contributions build trust, improve interoperability, and strengthen regional security frameworks. For example, small states like Botswana and Rwanda have gained recognition for their professional peacekeeping forces, participating in missions under the AU and United Nations umbrellas. These engagements allow them to contribute meaningfully to continental security agendas, elevate their international profiles, and forge influential alliances.

In sum, strategic security partnerships are indispensable tools for small African states. They provide practical means to overcome limited resources, amplify diplomatic influence, and protect national interests in an increasingly complex global security environment. By engaging pragmatically with diverse actors such as regional bodies, global powers, and multilateral organizations, small states enhance their resilience and secure a seat at the table in shaping Africa's security future.

Economic Diplomacy and Development Cooperation

Economic diplomacy plays a crucial role for small African states as they work to advance their development agendas and strengthen their presence on the global stage. Due to their limited economic resources, small

markets, and often constrained bargaining power, these states actively use diplomatic engagement to attract foreign direct investment, secure development aid, and build strategic partnerships that can promote sustainable growth. One primary avenue for this diplomatic effort is participation in multilateral frameworks and bilateral initiatives designed to support trade, infrastructure development, and capacity-building. For example, small African states are active participants in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), where they negotiate for infrastructure projects, loans, and technical assistance that align with their national development goals.²⁹ Through FOCAC, countries like Djibouti and Rwanda have secured Chinese-funded infrastructure investments, including ports and transport corridors, which have become critical for economic integration and regional trade. These engagements allow small states to amplify their voices collectively, helping them better navigate the complexities of global economic governance where considerable powers often dominate.

Economic diplomacy also closely intersects with development cooperation, as small states leverage partnerships to address pressing domestic challenges such as poverty alleviation, education reform, and healthcare improvement.³⁰ For instance, Botswana has effectively engaged with development partners like the European Union and Japan to fund programs targeting HIV/AIDS treatment and education, contributing to measurable social progress. The relationship between African states and their development partners is often reciprocal: donors provide financial aid, technical expertise, and capacity-building, while African countries offer diplomatic support, natural resources, and expanding markets.³¹

Furthermore, small African states use economic diplomacy strategically to manage the risks of over-dependence on a single partner by diversifying their international relations. By balancing longstanding ties with Western donors such as France, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, with newer partnerships with countries like China, India, and Turkey, these states broaden their options for development finance and technical cooperation. This diversification is crucial given the evolving landscape of global development cooperation, where donor priorities shift, and competition for influence intensifies.³² For example, Mauritius has positioned itself as a gateway for investment into Africa by fostering strong relations with multiple partners, thereby enhancing its economic resilience.

Overall, economic diplomacy allows small African states to transform external engagements into tangible benefits for their populations. This approach reflects a strategic and pragmatic understanding of diplomacy, not merely as a means of gaining political recognition but as a vital tool to secure infrastructure development, boost trade, and improve social welfare. In this way, economic diplomacy contributes directly to enhancing national sovereignty and long-term development prospects,

helping small states assert themselves in a challenging global economic environment.

Structural Challenges and Vulnerabilities

Small states in Africa face a range of structural challenges and vulnerabilities that deeply influence their diplomatic strategies and international engagements. These challenges arise from historical legacies, economic constraints, political fragility, and environmental pressures, all of which limit their ability to exercise sovereignty and shape global affairs to their advantage fully. One of the most significant structural challenges is economic fragility. Many small African states rely heavily on a narrow export base, often dependent on a few commodities such as minerals, oil, or agricultural products or on foreign aid for their fiscal stability. This heavy reliance makes them highly susceptible to external shocks, including fluctuations in global commodity prices, economic downturns in major markets, or shifts in donor priorities. For instance, countries like Zambia and Guinea-Bissau have experienced sharp economic disruptions due to volatile copper and cashew nut prices, respectively.³³ These economic vulnerabilities weaken their negotiating positions in international diplomacy and development cooperation, forcing them to adopt cautious and often reactive foreign policies.

Political and institutional weaknesses also significantly affect small states' capacity to conduct effective diplomacy. Fragile governance structures characterized by weak institutions, limited administrative resources, and sometimes ongoing internal conflicts, undermine state stability and development.³⁴ For example, the Central African Republic and South Sudan have struggled with protracted conflicts and fragile political institutions, which hinder consistent foreign policy implementation and reduce their ability to engage as strong actors on the international stage. This political fragility diminishes their credibility and limits their capacity to form sustained alliances or negotiate favorable agreements.

Environmental and social vulnerabilities further compound these difficulties. Many small African states are on the frontlines of climate change, facing rising temperatures, desertification, and increasing frequency of natural disasters such as droughts and floods. Coastal states like Seychelles and São Tomé and Príncipe are particularly exposed to sea-level rise, threatening their very existence.³⁵ Food insecurity and water scarcity also exacerbate social stresses and economic challenges, requiring these states to seek substantial international support for disaster risk reduction and sustainable development initiatives. These environmental pressures have pushed small states to prioritize climate diplomacy, leading them to form coalitions such as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), where they advocate for more decisive global climate action.

Given these overlapping structural vulnerabilities, small African states adopt a pragmatic diplomatic approach aimed at mitigating risks and

advancing their interests. They actively form strategic partnerships with regional and global powers, participate in multilateral organizations such as the African Union and the United Nations, and advocate for institutional reforms that enhance their representation and influence in global governance.³⁶ For example, the push by many African small states for Security Council reform is motivated by the need to gain a more equitable voice and protection within the international system. By leveraging multilateralism and aligning around shared challenges, these states seek to overcome their individual limitations and improve their development prospects.

Understanding the complex structural challenges facing small African states is essential to appreciating their diplomatic behavior. Rather than being passive actors, these states engage in calculated strategies that reflect a deep awareness of their vulnerabilities and a determination to assert their sovereignty and interests within a competitive global environment.

Resilience and Innovation in Diplomatic Practice

Small states in Africa often face significant challenges in maintaining a strong diplomatic presence and influence within an increasingly complex and competitive global environment. However, despite these limitations, many have shown remarkable resilience and innovation in adapting their foreign policy strategies to meet contemporary demands. Resilience in this context refers to the ability of small states to withstand external shocks such as global economic crises, geopolitical pressure, pandemics, or climate-related disasters, while continuing to assert their interests and maintain international relevance. Innovation, on the other hand, involves the creative use of new tools, ideas, and technologies to overcome structural disadvantages and enhance diplomatic efficiency.

Recent advancements in digital diplomacy have provided small states with new platforms to participate in international dialogue, regardless of their limited physical presence in global capitals. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and data analytics into foreign policy processes allows small foreign ministries to enhance decision-making, conduct real-time policy analysis, and monitor global trends with limited human resources.³⁷ For example, Mauritius and Rwanda have both embraced e-governance and digital tools to manage their diplomatic communications, engage diaspora communities, and conduct online public diplomacy campaigns. These digital strategies help broaden their diplomatic reach while reducing costs associated with traditional statecraft, such as maintaining large embassies abroad.

Moreover, African small states have exhibited resilience by crafting innovative responses to long-standing challenges such as sovereign debt, development cooperation, and climate vulnerability.³⁸ In terms of financial resilience, Cape Verde has successfully experimented with debt-for-climate swaps, converting debt repayments into climate investment.³⁹ This not only addresses fiscal sustainability but also aligns national

interests with global climate goals. Similarly, countries like Seychelles have pioneered the use of "blue bonds" to fund marine conservation and sustainable fisheries, combining environmental diplomacy with innovative financing.^{40,41}

In addition to financial and technological innovation, small states are reshaping their diplomatic identities by focusing on niche areas where they can lead and influence. For example, Lesotho has carved a role in advocating for water diplomacy in Southern Africa, given its control over key regional water resources.⁴² Botswana, historically known for its strong democratic governance, has built credibility in regional mediation and rule-of-law promotion. These examples demonstrate how resilience is not just reactive but also proactive. Small states leverage their unique positions or reputations to assert influence in specific policy domains.

Furthermore, during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, small African states demonstrated agility by mobilizing multilateral support, engaging with global health institutions, and adapting public diplomacy through virtual platforms.⁴³ Countries like Namibia and Eswatini used partnerships with WHO, COVAX, and bilateral donors to secure vaccines and medical aid, while maintaining regular virtual engagements with regional and global partners.⁴⁴

Ultimately, the combination of resilience and innovation allows small African states to turn structural constraints into strategic opportunities. Their ability to adapt, specialize, and utilize technology enables them to participate more actively in global affairs, build partnerships on their own terms, and advocate effectively for their national and regional interests. These evolving practices reflect a broader shift in African diplomacy, one where even the smallest actors are finding new ways to lead and influence.

Conclusion

Small states in contemporary Africa operate in a global system that often favors larger powers, yet they continue to assert their presence through strategic, innovative, and resilient diplomatic practices. By understanding the unique challenges they face, ranging from economic vulnerabilities to limited political influence, these states have adapted by leveraging multilateralism, niche diplomacy, and technological advancements. Their ability to navigate complex international landscapes demonstrates not only their agency but also the evolving nature of diplomacy in a multipolar world. As Africa's small states continue to refine their diplomatic approaches, they offer valuable lessons on how resilience and creativity can transform constraints into opportunities for greater influence and sustainable development.

End Notes

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