

The Faroese Sub-State Unit's Response to Arctic Political Development

The Arctic is undergoing a process of political region building, including an institutional development of the Arctic Council. Also, the region is attracting attention from a multitude of actors and institutions, including the world's superpowers. A country facing implications related to this development is the Faroe Islands. The increasing attention towards the Faroe Islands is familiar considering previous Cold War experiences. However, the de-facto autonomy and internal institutional development within the Faroese sub-state unit means that the situation today is different. Thus, Arctic development calls for political attention. This article focuses on the opportunities for the Faroe Islands not only as a sub-state unit but also as a micro sized political unit to conduct foreign policy activity related to Arctic development and to what extent the political system in fact is responding and addressing the development. The expectation is that considering the increase in the salience of Arctic related issues the Faroese political system to a higher degree prioritizes Arctic related issues compared to a decade ago. The article shows that despite formal limitations there still is room for foreign policy manoeuvres and despite limited capacity the political system still has prioritised to develop relevant competences to facilitate foreign policy related activity. The investigation shows that today the political system to a higher extent responds to Arctic development, especially on the governmental level, but also to some extent on the parliamentary level and even on the political party level.

Introduction

For some time now the Arctic has been undergoing a process of political region building. This is for instance seen in the increasing institutionalization of the Arctic Council as well as the increasing interest for Arctic Council activity from a multitude of actors and institutions. Also, the world's superpowers to a high degree prioritize attendance at political council meetings (Exner-Pirot, 2012; Olsen & Shadian, 2016). In addition, recent events show an increasing focus on security and military issues in the Arctic, though not within the Arctic Council.¹ A country facing implications due to this development is the North Atlantic sub-state unit of the Faroe Islands.²

The Faroe Islands is in a key position related to new sea routes in the Arctic region³, and has experienced changes like increased activity at sea, which has been followed by challenges in the field of civil security (Jákupsstovu & Berg, 2012; Bailes & Jákupsstovu, 2013). Also, the so-called Taksøe-Jensen (2016) report about Danish foreign policy and security signalled a changed international reality by stating the North Atlantic and Arctic region as one of the main three strategic pillars for the Danish state. For the Faroe Islands, recent events with attention from the world's superpowers related to trade and export, technology infrastructure as well as the ongoing case about establishing an air surveillance radar seems like a Déjà-vu situation considering the resemblance to the cold war situation. This time, however, the Faroe Islands finds itself in a totally

different situation considering the de-facto very high degree of autonomy and a completely different state when it comes to institutional development. Still, at the same time, the Faroe Islands is a very small actor in the world of international politics. The increased Arctic related international activity calls for political attention if the islands want some control of the implications for the Faroese sub-state unit, and this article focuses on if and how the Faroe Islands has been responding to these changes and increase in Arctic related international activity.

Related to these changes and challenges, this article focuses on the external as well as internal dimension of the Faroe Islands' sub-state unit. For the external dimension, the article focuses on the options for the Faroe Islands as a sub-state unit to conduct foreign policy and engage in Arctic related international activity. For the internal dimension, the article focuses on institutional conditions in terms of administrative capacity and "know how" required for the conduction of this type of activity. Thereafter, the article investigates to what extent and how the political system has and is responding to this development seen over a 10-year time-period.

The expectation is that the Faroe Islands as not only a sub-state unit, but also a very small political unit measured in population size is challenged when it comes to the conduction of foreign policy related activity in general. Also, we know from previous investigations that political parties have not always agreed on the importance of the conduction of an independent Faroese foreign policy (Ólavsdóttir, Justinussen & Jákupsstovu, 2011). In addition, we know that the Faroese administrative traditions are still young (West, 2020), which questions the administrative capacity, and we also know that the salience of foreign policy issues typically are lower compared to other more distributional policy issues (Raunio, 2014), which to an ever-higher degree can be expected to apply for a sub-state unit. Nevertheless, the expectation is that the focus on Arctic related issues within the political system has increased as well as expanded across the different parts of the political system.

This article first explores the role of sub-state units in the international system, and then considers the issue of administrative capacity and typical challenges relevant for micro size systems like the Faroese political system. Thereafter, the article presents the research design followed by the investigation of the Arctic focus in Faroese foreign policy, distinguishing between the governmental, parliamentary, and party level. The results show a clear Arctic focus at the governmental level, which was also to be expected, but also some Arctic focus in the foreign affairs committee on the parliamentary level and even on the political party level.

The Faroese sub-state unit and the external dimension

In classical international politics and foreign policy there is not much focus on non-sovereign countries, and in the international system, states still are the actor unit *par excellence*. Nevertheless, today, there is an increasing tendency for regional governments or sub-state units becoming actors on the international stage (Crielmans, 2020). There are the cases of sub-state units striving for independence to gain state sovereignty. Adler-Nissen and Gad (2014) refer to sovereignty games in the international system. Still, sub-state units do also conduct foreign policy activity based on their own distinct foreign policy agenda separate from their "mother" state, but not directly linked to an aim of becoming a sovereign state. In other words, regional governments promote and pursue their own distinct agenda in the international system. Some scholars refer to this type of activity as paradiplomacy (Ackrén, 2014; Wolff, 2007).

Ackrén (2014) identifies three layers in paradiplomacy. The first layer is economic related issues, like attracting foreign investments and target markets for export. The second layer is international policy collaboration related to education, culture etc. The third layer relates to international activity

that express a distinct identity separate from the central state, like separate representation in international organizations. Regardless, paradiplomacy is still activity that typically falls in a legal and constitutional grey zone (Ackrén, 2014: 45). Also, existing states and their governments view this type of activity with some suspicion, since it potentially undermines their sovereignty and undermines the pursuit of the broader state interest (Wolff, 2007). Related to this, in an Arctic Council context, there is the example of conflicts and resistance about efforts to compensate for the one formal Danish “seat” by bringing more “chairs” to the table (Jacobsen, 2019).

The Faroe Islands is a sub-state unit with a high degree of autonomy (Adler-Nissen, 2014: 58; Aldrich and Connell, 1998: 46). Today, the Home Rule authorities handle most jurisdictions (West, 2020) and the autonomy on the internal dimension is extensive. Still, there are limitations, especially on the external dimension. Foreign-, security- and defence policy are for instance defined as Danish responsibility areas.⁴ Nevertheless, the ‘Foreign Policy Authority Act’ from 2005 still states how and when the Faroe Islands can act and conduct foreign policy related activity. The Faroese government can negotiate and enter international agreements related to Home Rule jurisdictions (§ 1), hire own foreign representatives, though formally linked to Danish foreign representations (§3), and obtain associated membership in international organizations (§ 4). In other words, there is ample room for activity within the previous mentioned first and second layer of paradiplomacy, while activity within the third layer is more constrained.

Empirically, there are multiple examples of Faroese foreign policy activity. There are examples of trade agreements and international fishery negotiations/agreements (NEAFC, NAFO and NASCO). There are also several examples of distinct memberships like in NAMMCO and in the tax related BEPS (within OECD) in their own name, in the Nordic Council as an autonomous area, associate membership in FAO, IMO, UNESCO, and from May 26, 2021, in WHO as well. Related to the EU, by necessity, the Faroe Islands (not EU member) conducts its own negotiations when dealing with the EU, since Denmark as a member cannot sit at both sides of the table. In addition to trade, the collaboration with the EU also includes policy collaboration since the Faroe Islands is a partner in the EU Horizon research framework.⁵ On the parliamentary level, the Faroe Islands participates in the Nordic Council, and in the West Nordic Council (WNC) as one of three member countries (together with Greenland and Iceland). It is, however, important to stress that Faroese international activity also took place before the 2005 framework, and that this formalization has been heavily disputed because of the constraints that the framework also implies. Bertelsen & Justinussen (2020) nevertheless stress the positive aspects of this formalization since foreign policy now to a higher degree figures as a policy area in Faroese politics (2020: 42).

In other words, on the one hand there are many examples of Faroese distinct international activity, but on the other side the Faroe Islands still face a rather complex institutional reality. Ólavasdóttir, Justinussen & Jákupsstovu (2011) state that the task for the Faroe Islands is to find their place in the hierarchy and to figure out what the manoeuvring room is. Nevertheless, the Faroe Islands has been through all of the successive steps for subnational jurisdictions’ paradiplomacy according to Prinsen (2020). Also, the annual report from the Danish High Commissioner for the Faroe Islands states that the Faroese government today to a high extent are involved in Danish Realm international cases of special importance for the Faroe Islands (2021: 15). In other words, today the Faroe Islands has substantially more experience in the conduction of foreign policy compared to the Cold War situation.

Internal conditions and administrative capacity

This section will address some within case institutional conditions of relevance for facilitation of foreign policy activity. Related to this, the section addresses typical challenges for micro sized political units. The Faroe Islands has a rather complete political institutional infrastructure consisting of a parliamentary system and government institutions, which previously have been treated (Sølvará, 2001; West, 2018). The administrative system and capacity, however, has received limited attention. The Faroese political unit is an example of a very small size,⁶ which means that one can expect that the system capacity to facilitate foreign policy related activity is limited. This section will, however, focus on the relative institutional capacity and development of relevant “know how” for the conduction of foreign policy in the Faroese case.

For a sub-state unit, it seems plausible to assume that the higher degree of autonomy, the higher demands the administrative system faces related to being able to handle policy portfolio issues, including securing legislation and regulation. Institutional and administrative capacity is required to meet these demands. For the Faroese case, the very high degree of internal autonomy requires administrative capacity, but there might still be differences across policy areas to consider. Thus, the small size of the system necessitates a prioritization in the organization of public functions. Still, at the same time a complete abandonment of core functions is not an option, at least not for a state (Sarapuu & Randma-Liiv, 2020).

Research shows that country/state size is a factor that shapes a national bureaucracy and affects performance and effectiveness. Negative factors for small units are lacking economies of scale and informal coordination mechanisms that are under-specialized and under-professionalized (Jugl, 2019: 119).⁷ Nevertheless, Corbett, Veenendaal and Connell (2021) refer to natural levels of informal coordination as a positive asset. On a somewhat different note, Baldacchino (2000) and Hovgaard & Bogadóttir (2020) state challenges like administrative capacity on the one side but at the same time point to innovative industry approaches that make actors in small units capable of developing successful strategies and becoming over achievers. Baldacchino (2000: 68) also questions the lacking economies of scales assumption by stating that a substantial part of the highest per capita income populations are micro-states. Prinsen (2020: 370) stresses that peoples in small subnational jurisdictions typically are more prosperous than small sovereign states. For the Faroe Islands figures show large increases and high levels of per capita income.

Regardless of economic performance and how to explain this, the small size of public organizations still limits the division of labour and specializations. Research states that this pushes towards multi-functionalism and tendencies for multi-functional ministries and that small administrations tend to rely more on flexible, informal structures and communication, often characterized by the lack of machinery for formal coordination (Sarapuu & Randma-Liiv, 2020). Nevertheless, the Faroe Islands in the late 1990s implemented a multiple portfolio and individual minister responsibility system and have gradually strengthened the principles of sector specialization. The numbers of governmental departments vary, though typically ranges between 7 and 9 (West, 2020). The development of the Faroese administrative system shows a continuous effort to develop formal institutional procedures, to strengthen organizational performance, but also formal coordination (Interview 1). In other words, the Faroese case questions the assumption about the qualities of informal coordination in smaller administrative settings. Small units face the same technical complexities as larger countries and therefore face similar challenges of balancing specialization and the need of formal coordination. Still, the degree of specialization remains a constant challenge to be handled.

According to the most recent Government report (2014), the total number of staff in the central administration is 146,⁸ where around 70% is academic staff (primarily economists, political scientists, and legally trained). The staff is allocated to different ministry departments. Compared to other Nordic countries, the Faroese central administration has by far the lowest number of staff in relation to number of ministers (Government report, 2014: 61). Yet there still is a substantial output to consider. For the 2013-2019 time-period, the annual average number of new legal rules was 173, and 84% was produced by the Faroese political system (West, 2020). According to the Head of Government's department for legal control, the system has developed strategies to cope with the challenges of being a very small system facing the same legislative demands as much larger systems (Interview 2). The department has developed a substantial number of procedural guidelines and procedures to support the legal drafting process and produces annual review reports.

Foreign affairs capacity and focus on Arctic issues

The foreign affairs service was established in 1998 and the first foreign affairs representations abroad were established in Copenhagen (1993) and then Brussels (1998) (Jákupsstovu & Justinussen, 2021). From previous research (a survey), we, however, know that the political parties have not always agreed on the importance of a distinct Faroese foreign policy. The result showed that politicians from parties aiming for sovereignty to a higher degree were in favour of a distinct Faroese foreign policy compared to politicians from parties in favour of unaltered dependency to Denmark: 54.5 % compared to 21.4 % (Ólavsdóttir, Justinussen & Jákupsstovu, 2011: 114).

The past decade, the life of the Faroese foreign affairs administration has been rather tumultuous (West, 2020). The short lived CEH 2008 coalition established the first independent foreign affairs ministry department, which was maintained by the 2008-2011 (ABCII) coalition. After this, the status as section was restored, while the affiliation since then has shifted several times, from being part of the Prime Minister department (2011-2015 coalition), to the Department for Trade (2015-2019 coalition) to the present affiliation to the Department for Culture and Education (2019-coalition). Strangely enough the larger coalition parties for the two latest coalition periods have left the foreign policy portfolio to the small coalition parties, to the Progress Party in the 2015-2019 coalition and to the Centre Party in the present 2019- coalition. This indicates that foreign policy is not as high on coalition party's portfolio priority lists as we know from other countries or that small parties want to be "paid" for securing the final seats for the majority coalition government.

For the facilitation of activity, the number of staff in the foreign affairs service is important to consider. Compared to the total number of academic staff in the central administration there is a relatively high priority of this policy area. A staff overview shows that this administrative section consists of eleven academic positions and one coordinator. In addition, there are seven foreign representations (Copenhagen, Brussel, London, Reykjavík, Moscow, Beijing and Tel Aviv) that consist of seven academic staff from the foreign service and seven secretaries (typically 1 + 1 for each representative unit).⁹

For the question about foreign affairs institutional capacity, it is also worth considering the parliamentary level since the governing rule (Legal act no. 103 from 1994: § 54) states that government must consult the foreign affairs committee (seven MPs in committee) before taking decisions of foreign affairs importance. Thus, government must make sure that they have a mandate from parliament. The mandate system is, however, not followed by formal guidelines and examples are of discussions and partisan rivalry. Still, for trade agreements, fishery negotiations,

and questions about membership in international associations a treatment practice has been developed.¹⁰

Still, government has the initiative, but one might still assume that government anticipates what issues the committee wants to be consulted on. Also, the committee (majority) has an alternative committee question/consultation option to use by its own initiative and hereby has a clear agenda setting instrument. The administrative resource on the parliamentary level is, however, low. A calculated value based on the total number of staff in relation to the number of MPs (33) leaves the value of 0.3. In comparison to the Icelandic parliament the value is 1.7 and for the Danish parliament 2.2. Still, most of the administrative resources in the Faroese case are, however, used to support committee activity (West, 2018: 92-93).

In addition to institutional and administrative capacity, the question about policy issues or salience is expected to influence the degree of focus on foreign policy, including Arctic related issues. In general, foreign policy issues rank lower, since people are interested in issues that are close to them (Manza & Cook, 2002: 640-641). Supporting this, Aldrich et al. (2006) make references to low awareness on international issues according to Gallup's "most important problem" measure. A typical expectation is that parliaments to a higher degree delegate foreign policy issue to government to deal with. Still, the degree of delegated discretion varies in relation to different types of foreign policy, being higher for security and military policy than for foreign economic policy. Thus, a typical expectation is that MPs favour policy issues that have internal distributional implications. Still, the increasing interdependencies between countries and states means that global and regional questions are becoming more salient and also have distributional implications (Raunio, 2014).

Considering the development in the Arctic, the salience of Arctic regional related issues has and is increasing. In addition, as previously mentioned, the Faroe Islands is facing implications due to this development. Therefore, the expectation is that the Faroese political system to a higher degree today compared to earlier prioritizes to use the developed foreign policy capacity to focus on Arctic related issues in their foreign policyrelated activity.

Research design

The investigation is conducted as a study of the single Faroese political unit. Still, the case study design has spatial as well as temporal variation (Gerring, 2004). The investigation focuses on different within-units of the political system: the governmental, parliamentary, and party level; and the investigation focuses on changes over time. The main time-period in focus is the past 10-year period, which has consisted of different government coalitions with different unionist- and independence-oriented parties.

The governmental level is the most likely setting for a focus on foreign policy, including a focus on Arctic related issues. The expectation for the parliamentary setting is more limited, but the investigation especially focuses on the foreign affairs committee where some Arctic related foreign policy activity is expected. The third level is the party level and the existence of Arctic references in election programs. Election programs relate to a party's vote seeking activity *par excellence* and considering the typical low salience of foreign policy this is the least likely setting for political Arctic references.

The data for the investigation is primarily different types of public documentary material. For the governmental level, the investigation focuses on government's reports on foreign policy, specific Arctic strategy reports, newsletters, and information from ministry and other institutions'

webpages. For the parliamentary level, the investigation primarily focuses on the foreign affairs committee. For the committee focus, the investigation covers the mandate consultations for the 2011-2020 time-period¹¹ and the total population of 14 foreign affairs committee questions/consultations. For the additional overall focus on the assembly, a general search was conducted for Arctic related parliamentary activity. The parliamentary data are accessible on the parliament's homepage: www.logting.fo. For the party level, the investigation is based on election programs for the 2011, 2015, and 2019 Løgting and Folketing elections. The programs have been collected by contacting each respective political party.

The governmental level and the Arctic focus

On the governmental level, there are several examples of government reporting to parliament on Faroese foreign policy priorities. Lately, this reporting activity has been more frequent compared to previously. The latest report was for the 2020 parliamentary year and before that for 2018, 2014, 2009, and 2000 (www.logting.fo). All the reports have content that refers to the Arctic and/or the Arctic Council. While the references in the 2000 reports are very general, the reports from 2009 and forward contain more detailed information about Faroese participation in Arctic Council related activity and address Faroese interests. Also, the oral presentation of the latest 2020 foreign affairs report in parliament in 2021, compared to the oral presentations of the 2014 and 2018, showed a stronger Arctic focus, since the Arctic was one of the main topics to be addressed (parliamentary cases FG-4/2014, FG-8/2018, FG-4/2020).

In addition to the general foreign affairs reports, the Faroese government joined the Danish Realm Arctic strategy report in 2011 ("Kongeriget Danmarks Strategi for Arktis 2011-2020") and in 2013 produced a distinct Faroese Arctic strategy paper ("The Faroe Islands – a Nation in the Arctic. Opportunities and Challenges"). For the presentation of the distinct strategy report in parliament in November 2013, the government stated that Arctic matters mainly relate to Faroese Home Rule jurisdictions and therefore a distinct Faroese Arctic strategy is required. The report presents a broad range of recommendations and covers topics like trade opportunities for industry actors, rights and regulation of Arctic fishery, research, emergency preparedness, risks of pollution etc. Politically, the strategy paper stresses the importance of participation in Arctic Council activity and to influence Arctic decision making (Parliamentary matter, F-3/2013). Still, compared to the Danish Realm strategy report the focus on international collaboration is limited. Yet, the present (2019-) coalition has announced that an updated version of the distinct Faroese Arctic strategy paper is underway.

The governmental reporting activity has been followed up by different types of Arctic related participative activity. It is clearly a political priority to participate in political Arctic Council meetings and to state this participation in newsletters, like for the 2013 Kiruna Arctic Council meeting (N1), the 2015 Iqaluit minister meeting (N2), the 2017 Fairbanks meeting (N6), the 2019 Rovaniemi meeting (N8), and the 2021 Reykjavík meeting (N11). Overall, Faroese representatives have taken active part in ministerial meetings since 2011, and Faroe Islands participates in Senior Arctic Officials forum (SAO), in different working groups, and have in their own name signed the three treaties Search and Rescue (2011), Oil and Spill (2013), and Arctic Scientific Cooperation (2017).¹² Other examples of Arctic related activity are political participation in the Arctic Circle conference in for instance 2015 and 2016 (N3, N5), and hosting of the 2018 Arctic Circle related event the Arctic hubs (N7). Also, the minister of education participated in a US White House meeting about Arctic research related to the US Arctic Council chairmanship (N4).

Lately, on the governmental level, in addition to reports and participation, steps have been taken to conduct some institutional changes related to Arctic development. The present (2019-) government has established a new Faroese security council within government specifically related to the development in the Arctic (N10). Also, on the Danish Realm political meeting level, Arctic related challenges and opportunities have been addressed and recently a new Danish Realm council has been established. The council consisting of ministers from the three respective governments will meet annually to treat issues related to foreign affairs, including security and defence (N12). The announcement specifically refers to the increased attention from the worlds' superpowers towards the North Atlantic countries and the Arctic. Interestingly, the announcement publicly addresses the need of a stronger collaboration and coordination within the Danish Realm.

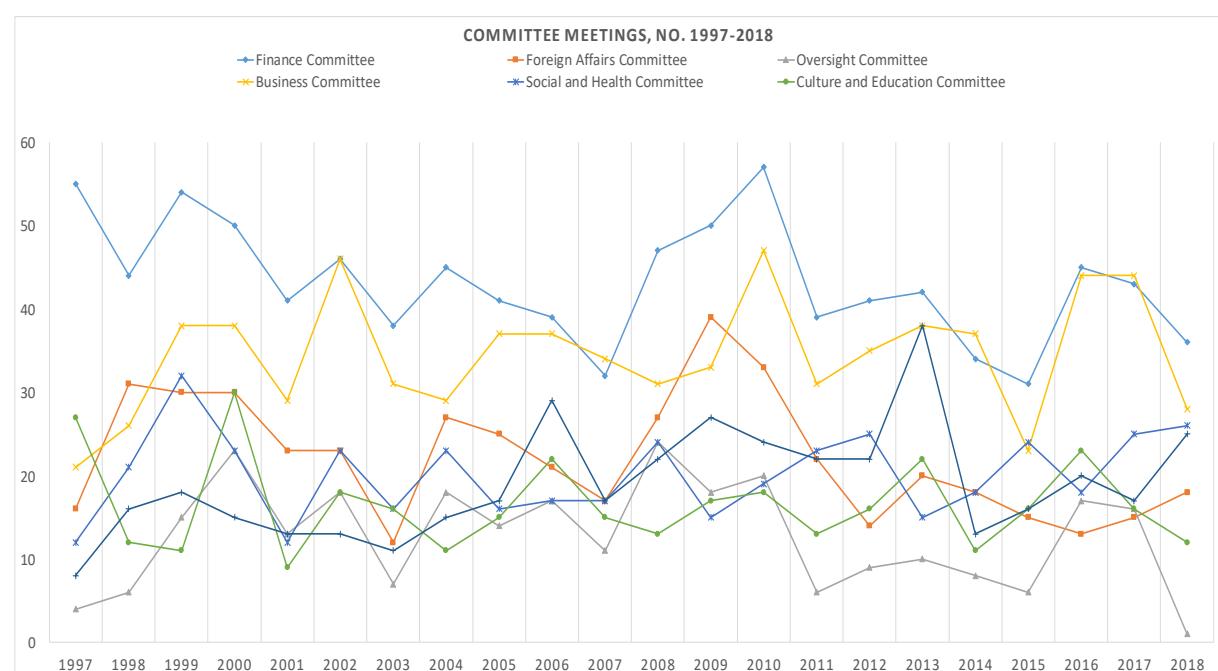
In other words, overall on the governmental level, there is Arctic related activity for the whole time-period. Lately, activity seems to have increased and also to change form. There is more frequent reporting activity, different types of meeting activity, and now also institutional changes in form of newly established councils related to Arctic regional development.

The parliamentary level and the Arctic focus

In parliament, the foreign affairs committee besides regular cases treats mandate cases as well as committee questions/consultations. In the assembly, the 33 MPs have the option to address Arctic related issues by raising parliamentary assembly questions. In addition, there is the transnational parliamentary collaboration to consider.

The level of activity in the foreign affairs committee has been rather stable since the establishment of the foreign affairs service, considering the average number of 22 annual meetings compared to the general average of 24. For an overview of the variation in the committees' meeting activity, see figure 1.

Figure 1. Committee activity level: annual number of committee meetings for the seven standing committees¹³



The average annual number of foreign affairs regular cases is, however, substantially lower, considering the average annual number of only ten compared to the general average of 22. This is, however, not surprising since foreign policy to a lesser extent relates to legal proposals. Instead, the foreign affairs committee has the additional mandate system consultations as well as the committee questions/consultations. There are 3 - 8 annual mandate consultations in the 2011-2020 time-period, the total number being 62. The investigation of the focus for these mandate consultations shows that almost every second consultation is about fishery negotiations. Moreover, a substantial part, eleven of the consultations, relate to trade. This leaves an impression of a very strong focus on distributional related foreign affairs issues in the committee. Four of the fishery consultations relate to the Arctic and focus on the ongoing multilateral process to regulate Arctic fishery (Íshavið). Nevertheless, there are also four consultations about other Arctic related issues. One is about the Arctic Search and Rescue agreement, another about the Arctic Scientific Cooperation Agreement, a third about the new edition of the distinct Faroese Arctic strategy , and the most recent one is about security and relates to the air surveillance radar case. In other words, there has been some room for Arctic related issues in the mandate consultation system, including very recent activity. These results are displayed in table 1.

Table 1: Overview of minister mandate consultations in the foreign affairs committee 2011-2020, in numbers, divided by theme

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Fishery: negotiations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 24 |
| Arctic: fishery negotiations | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Trade | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 13 |
| Policy collaboration | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Territory: Cont. shelf | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Relations: Arctic | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| International participation/ membership | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Total | 5 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 62 |

Source: Minutes (Gerðabók), Foreign Affairs committee, parliamentary years 2011-2018. For 2019-2020: case overview.

For the committee question/consultation option, where the committee is the agenda-setter, it is important to stress that the general activity level for this question type is very low in the Løgting

compared to assembly question types. Still, the foreign affairs committee uses this option more frequent compared to the other committees, since they have raised 14 of the total of 29 questions since 2008 when this question type was introduced. Again, the committee focus has a strong distributional focus since most questions relate to fishery negotiations (9/14). There is no direct reference to Arctic cases but some of the questions relate to changes in the Arctic geopolitical situation, considering the consultations about the Chinese embassy visit and Huawei/5G digital infrastructure case. For an overview of the committee questions, see table 2.

Table 2: Overview of consultations/questions in the foreign affairs committee 2008-2021, in numbers, divided by theme

| | 2008-2010 | 2011-2013 | 2014-2016 | 2017-2018 | 2019-2021 | Total |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Fishery negotiations | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Dk relations | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | 1 |
| Foreign representatives | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | 2 |
| Technology infrastructure | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 14 |

Source: case overviews, consultation/committee questions, collected 09-09-2021.

The additional investigation included a general search on the parliamentary webpage, which revealed some meeting activity between the foreign affairs committee and the Danish minister of foreign affairs with the Arctic on the agenda (on September 2, 2020)¹⁴ and a limited number of three assembly questions (Parliamentary cases: 52-044/2012, 52-049/2012, 52-042/2014). The search, however, also revealed that the Løgting hosted a transnational parliamentary debate with Arctic themes on the agenda between Faroese, Greenlandic and Danish MPs on November 9, 2020.

Faroese MPs also participate, as previously mentioned, in transnational parliamentary collaboration, which is a rather common part of Arctic governance (Luszczuk, 2015). Faroese MPs have seats in the Nordic Council, but more importantly in the West Nordic Council (WNC), which in 2017 achieved observer status in the Arctic Council (N13). Arctic development was, however, not the original focus for the council (Luszczuk, 2015, Eyþórsson & Hovgaard, 2018). According to the WNC administration most of the activity and council recommendations still relates to West Nordic countries' cultural and industry interests but Arctic issues are though a vital concern. WNC political representatives participate in Arctic related conference activities and host workshops, for instance in the annual Arctic Circle.¹⁵ The fact that the WNC recently has established a specific Arctic Committee within the council supports this.¹⁶

Summing up, even though there is a very dominant focus on distributional related issues in the foreign affairs committee, especially fishery negotiations, there still are traces of Arctic related parliamentary activity. There is some activity in the foreign affairs committee and some activity related to transnational parliamentary activity.. Nevertheless, there are no signs of institutional changes on the parliamentary level like an ad-hoc committee or Arctic delegation related to treatment of Arctic issues as is seen on the government level.

The political parties and Arctic references

Political parties present election programmes ahead of elections where they state their political goals and focus. As previously stated, the expectation is that compared to the governmental and parliamentary level it is least likely to find an Arctic focus in this type of vote seeking party level activity. The investigation includes election programs for the Løgting and Folketing elections for 2011, 2015, and 2019.¹⁸

The election programmes show a limited degree of Arctic references since there are no references in the programmes for neither the 2011 nor the 2015 elections. However, for the most recent 2019 election, four of the political parties make references to the Arctic in their programs. For the results, see table 3. This indicates an increase in the political salience of Arctic related issues since this was the least likely level to include an Arctic focus.

Table 3. The presence of Arctic related references in election programs for 2011, 2015 and 2019 (1/0)

| Year | Political parties | Arctic references |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 2011 | People's Party (A)* | |
| | Unionist Party (B) | 0 |
| | Social Democratic Party (C) | 0 |
| | Republican Party (E) | 0 |
| | Progress Party (F) | 0 |
| | Centre Party (H) | 0 |
| 2015 | People's Party (A) | 0 |
| | Unionist Party (B) | 0 |
| | Social Democratic Party (C) | 0 |
| | Republican Party (E) | 0 |
| | Progress Party (F) | 0 |
| | Centre Party (H) | 0 |
| 2019 | People's Party (A) | 0 |
| | Unionist Party (B) | 1 |
| | Social Democratic Party (C) | 1 |
| | Republican Party (E) | 1 |
| | Progress Party (F) | 1 |
| | Centre Party (H) | 0 |

The content of the different references in the 2019 election programmes shows, however, some variation in the political parties' Arctic focus. While the Republican Party (E) and the Progress Party (F) focus on the importance of distinct representation in terms of independent Faroese membership in the Arctic Council, the Unionist Party (B) states the importance of international collaboration and more influence in Arctic matters, though without specifying in what way. Also, the Social Democratic Party (C) makes clear Arctic references for the Folketing election and state the importance of overseeing the development but refer to the Danish Folketing as the arena to achieve this aim. The People's Party (A) – the fourth of the larger parties - makes no Arctic references but still clearly states the importance of a distinct Faroese foreign affairs strategy. Another related document type is the coalition agreements. For this document type, there are no Arctic related references in the 2004, 2008, 2008(2), or the 2015 coalition agreements, but for the 2011 and the 2019 documents there are Arctic references. The content of these references relate to the political goal to develop a distinct Faroese Arctic strategy (the 2011 coalition), and rescue issues combined with the goal to establish a Faroese maritime centre related to Arctic Sea activity (the 2019 coalition). In other words, the investigation shows that political parties recently have started making Arctic references. This confirms the expectation that the salience of Arctic issues is higher today compared to previously in the past 10-year time-period.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the Faroese substate's opportunities and institutional capacity to respond to the political development in the Arctic region and has investigated to what extent and how the political system in fact has responded, seen over a 10-year time-period. The expectation was that the increase in salience of Arctic related themes means that the political system today to a higher degree addresses Arctic related issues compared to earlier.

The expectation was that the governmental level is the most likely level for Arctic related activity and less expectations were for the parliamentary level, while the party level was the least likely level for an Arctic focus. Overall, the investigation shows a rather clear Arctic focus, especially on the governmental level as expected. Still, there has been some room for Arctic related issues in parliament's otherwise very distributional orientated foreign affairs committee, and there are even some Arctic references on the party level, in the most recent 2019 election programmes. Therefore, it seems clear that the salience of Arctic related issues has increased and is higher today than previously. Also, the results show that the Faroese unit in fact has a distinct Arctic related foreign policy agenda and that the sub-state unit conducts activity to promote this agenda. On the governmental level there are also recent signs of institutional and procedural changes considering the establishment of councils to facilitate treatment of Arctic related issues. Nevertheless, the investigation also shows that MPs could step up the activity on the parliamentary level and to broaden their focus by including more varied issues and to counterbalance the dominant distributional orientation in the foreign affairs committee.

This case study of the single Faroese political unit with spatial as well as temporal variation first and foremost provides information about the Faroese case and the changes and development in the political response to the Arctic regional development. Nevertheless, the study also provides some general insights. The study questions some typical assumptions about natural coordination versus formal coordination for micro sized units and argues in favour of developing strategies and finding ways for micro units to build administrative capacity based on the principle of specialization, formal coordination and formal institutionalization in general. This is also relevant in a specific Arctic context, where the ongoing development is raising a multitude of issues related

to multiple policy areas. To be able to coordinate the different types of activity and respond in an efficient way is an important capability, also for micro sized political units.

Notes

1. The increasing military and security focus in the Arctic was for instance addressed at the Arctic Futures Symposium 2020.
2. The Faroe Islands consist of 18 islands that make up 1,396 km² of landmass and is surrounded by a large sea area of 274,000 km². The islands are positioned in the North Atlantic Ocean at 62° latitude North and 7° longitude West.
3. Eyþórsson and Hovgaard (2018) refer to a definition of the Arctic region by AHDR 2004, Nordregio.
4. Stated in the 1948 Home Rule arrangement and in the ‘Takeover Act’, no. 79 from 2005: §1,2.
5. Sources: Danish High Commissioner, Annual report, 2021: section 2.1, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture webpage: www.ummr.fo.
6. The use of the term size in this context is rather ambiguous. One example is Anckar’s (1999) study uses the population measure and classifies populations of less than a million as microstates and states that of the world’s 200 independent states 43 are microstates. Another example is Prinsen (2020: 364) who refers to the distinguishing size of 500,000 for small subnational island jurisdictions, which gives a result of around one hundred islands.
7. The investigation also shows negative effects for larger units (an inverse u-shaped effect).
8. The Faroese case is an example of a Nordic welfare state with a large public sector that occupies a substantial part of the Faroese workforce. For 2020, 37% of the 27,148 wage earners worked in the public sector. For the 2000-2020 period, the proportion has varied between 32 and 39% (Source: Statistics Faroe Islands, AM03030).
9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture: <https://www.ummr.fo/fo/um-radic/starvsfolk/>, visited June 1, 2021.
10. Source: Løgtingið, foreign affairs committee secretary, Rannvá Sólheim, November 5, 2020; Ministry director, foreign affairs, Gunnar Holm-Jacobsen, December 1, 2020.
11. The years refer to a parliamentary year, which starts on July 29 and ends on July 29 the following year.
12. Source: Hanna í Horni, Foreign Affairs Service, November 18, 2019.
13. Source: parliamentary overviews and minutes (Gerðabók).
14. There is, however, no overview of meeting activity for the Løgting and the Løgting doesn’t publish annual reports as we know it from other parliaments.
15. Source: WNC: Steen Løgstrup Nielsen, advisor, e-mail September 9 and 10, 2020.
16. Source: KVF, Faroese public service media institution, www.kvf.fo, 22.09.2019 (13.28 PM): “Býta oddasessin millum sín”.
17. Source: Folketinget, <https://www.ft.dk/da/internationalt/delegationerne/den-arktiske-delegation/medlemsoversigt>, visited August 15, 2019.
18. Missing election programs: People’s Party 2011 elections and the 2015 Folketing election; Progress Party 2011 and 2015 Folketing election. The small crisis inflicted Autonomist party (D) was not included.

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