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# FAROESE FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Cooperating Across  
the West Nordic  
Region

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**Dissertation**

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## List of Abbreviations

AC	Arctic Council
ASR	Arctic Sailing Routes
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
EC	European Community
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IO	International Organisation
IR	International Relations
MP	Member of Parliament
NAFO	North Atlantic Fisheries Organization
NAMMCO	North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC	Nordic Council
NEAFC	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
RFMO	Regional Fishery Management Organisation
SAR	Search and Rescue
UN	United Nations

UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WNC	West Nordic Council
WTO	World Trade organization

## **Abstract**

This research is seeking to understand the Faroese cooperation in the West Nordic Council as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests. The Faroes, a non-sovereign actor, have undertaken more responsibility from Denmark and taken a more active role within international relations as a consequence of Danish and Faroese interests being distinct within many fields. Lately the cooperation in the WNC has increased and the focus has been on the Arctic. The Council has put forward visions for the forthcoming future which are in coherence with Faroese interests. The Council seeks to influence international affairs which are affecting the West Nordic region and creating both challenges and opportunities for the three countries, that have strong relational ties connected through similarities in remoteness, fisheries and culture. Through the use of theories and concepts of small states, regionalism and institution an analysis has been made based on six themes created from eleven qualitative interviews. As a case study it goes in to depth with the cooperation in the West Nordic Council and seeks to understand its uniqueness and complexity. The study concludes that the West Nordic Council can be understood as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interest if the members increase their cooperation as envisioned through the understanding of the special constellation of the Council, its potential, its setting and statehood of the Faroes.

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# CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

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## 1. Introduction

The Faroes, a small self-governing entity of the Danish Kingdom, have recently increased their political room of manoeuvre and autonomy from Denmark among others by carrying out paradiplomacy and through decreased economic dependency (Hovgaard et al., 2014). There is a tendency among small non-sovereign nations to take upon increased authority from the centre state in a degree that they basically fulfil the criteria of a nation state (Hovgaard et al., 2014: 8). This tendency is a consequence of the increasing globalisation and the end of the Cold War creating new constellations in the international structure leading to non-sovereign nations becoming actors on the international arena exercising their own versions of foreign policy within international collaborations and networks (Jákupsstovu et al., 2009: 99). Hence, the international forum is no longer only reserved for super powers, high influence states and international institutions but also non-sovereign states have emerged on the scene (ibid.).

## Significant Location

Located in the North Atlantic Ocean between Iceland, Norway and Scotland (Ombudsman, 2014) with a population of 48.721 people (hagstova.fo) the Faroe Islands are situated in a very remote and marginalised part of Norden and are often, together with Greenland and Iceland viewed as the periphery of Norden (Joensen, 2014). Despite of this, the Faroes have had a central role during both World War II and the Cold War because of their significant location (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014). Only few days after Denmark was occupied by the Germans in 1940 the British occupied the Faroes and built an airport and a navigation system on the Faroes which Denmark took over after the war (ibid.). Also, during the Cold War the Faroes were an attractive territory to external, foreign actors and since the Faroes had no influence on foreign policy concerning the Faroes at that time, Denmark had the mandate to decide if whether or not those foreign actors were allowed to set up military instances in the Faroe Islands (ibid.).

This time it was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and USA who had an interest in using Faroese territory as a base for navigation equipment even though the Faroese parliament had

declared the Faroes as neutral and did not welcome their new guests (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014). Also the Danish military brought military instances to the Faroes in that period (ibid.). When the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union fell, the role of the Faroes as a geo-strategic territory also descended and their significance decreased hence the Faroes had to find themselves a new role in the international society (ibid.).

## **The Legal Arrangements**

The absence of Danish authority during the British settlement of the Faroes throughout World War II made the Faroese set up a temporary management of governance during that period which resulted in the Home Rule Act in 1948 which asserts power to Faroese authorities from Denmark within certain fields (Ombudsman, 2014: 14). In 2005 a new supplementary act to the Home Rule Act (1948) entered into force named the Takeover Act (statsministeriet.dk). This was a new self-governing arrangement which expanded the possibilities for the Faroe Islands to take over new affairs and fields though still except from the Constitution; nationality; the Supreme Court; foreign, security and defence policy; exchange rate and monetary policy (ibid.). The Takeover Act (2005) is based on an agreement between the Danish and Faroese governments as equal partners (ibid.).

In addition to the Takeover Act the Danish and Faroese governments negotiated the Authorisation Act (2005) which authorises the Faroese government to negotiate and to conclude international agreements with foreign states and international organisations including administrative agreements within fields that are entirely undertaken by the Faroe Islands to the responsibility of the government of the Faroes (statsministeriet.dk). The Authorisation Act (2005) consents the government of the Faroes to employ Faroese representatives at Danish diplomatic missions abroad in order to attend Faroese interests within fields that are taken over (ibid.). Also, a circular note was devised to the United Nations (UN) and their members, which explains the special situation of the Faroes being a Danish entity with the authority to make international agreements with the Authorisation Act (2005) (ibid.).

Furthermore, the Acts are simultaneously results of recognition of the distinctive position of the Faroes concerning national, historical and geographical matters (statsministeriet.dk). In order to strengthen and reinforce their cooperation within foreign affairs the two parties signed a joint declaration, the Fámjin Declaration (2005), of principles on the participation and involvement of the Faroes in foreign and security policies with the objective to take into account Faroese views and interests within these areas by having Faroese representatives participating along with Danish

representatives when concerning issues of special interest to the Faroes (ibid.). Generally seen, the arrangements between Denmark and the Faroes are perceived as flexible because the government of the Faroes has been able to undertake the various areas as they have been and are ready to do so (Acrén, 2014).

## **Fisheries**

The Faroes are a nation of fisheries and fishery goods count for 95 percent of all Faroese export (Ombudsman, 2014). In 1977 an extension of the Faroese fishing zone to 200 nautical miles took place and indicated a new epoch in Faroese history of fisheries and created a greater dependency to the living resources in Faroese waters (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014). Denmark had joined the European Community (EC now the European Union (EU)) in 1973 which the Faroes declined therefore the EC and the Faroes were sitting on opposite sides of the negotiating table hence Denmark as an EU Member State was not capable of negotiating Faroese fisheries on behalf of the Faroes (ibid.). Therefore the Faroese government started to negotiate fisheries on their own with the EU and the Soviet with the presence of a Danish civil servant from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was specialised within Faroese affairs and this became the procedure (ibid.: 137).

Through negotiations on fisheries with the Soviet the Faroes could use their geo-strategic asset as a mean because the Soviet saw the Faroes as an important actor in that matter which was beneficial to the Faroes (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014). The case was a bit different with the EU who also represented Britain in the fisheries negotiations; Britain and the Faroes have different fishery interests, mostly because of the Scottish islands that are also dependent on fisheries and these interests have clashed during recent negotiation (Davies, 2010). Last year a dispute between the EU and the Faroes was settled regarding fisheries negotiations on herring and mackerel managed in the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) also referred to as the *Mackerel War* and began in 2009 when the Faroes broke out of a negotiation because they did not get a higher fishing quota as demanded (Ellefsen, 2013).

Historically, the mackerel stock has mostly been in European and Norwegian waters but as a consequence of climate change the pelagic fish stocks have changed their migration patterns in favour to the Faroes and Iceland thus they both demanded a higher share (Ellefsen, 2013). The EU began threatening to sanction the Faroes and Iceland for acting unsustainable and in September 2013 the sanctions against the Faroe Islands became a reality released by the act of the Faroes who tripled their herring quota (Skorini, 2013). Consequently, Faroese vessels were banned from

exporting herring and herring related mackerel to the EU, including Denmark (Skorini, 2013a). The Faroes started a trial against the EU under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) at the court of arbitration in Haag and in November 2013 the Faroes also took legal action against the EU at the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the argument that EU's sanctions did not follow fundamental rules of trade set by the WTO (Skorini, 2013; Account of FFA, 2014: 11).

The arbitrary trials were led by Denmark since the Faroes are neither a full member of the WTO nor the UN but the Faroese government had the responsibility and organised both trials with approval from the Danish foreign minister at that time (Account of FFA, 2014: 11; fiskeritidende.dk; politiko.dk). When the four parties met at the fourth NEAFC mackerel consultation in October 2013 since the breaking up the parties met with a more positive approach and all delegations presented opening remarks that stated their eagerness and will to find a solution to the dispute in order to pursue sustainable fisheries (appendix 1). It turned out that this was the fourth time lucky. 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 the head of delegation of the EU, the Faroes and Norway signed the Agreed Record for the next five years<sup>1</sup> (Agreed Record, 2014). Hence, the sanctions were abolished and the arbitrary trials at the arbitrary courts stopped as the Faroes had promised they would if the parties signed an acceptable agreement (Account of FFA, 2014: 11).

## **International Activity**

The government of the Faroes has recently devised an Account of Faroese Foreign Affairs (2014) which has been presented to the Faroese parliament in April 2015 where it is concluded that the role of the Faroes in the international society is of importance since the Faroes are a developed and organised community of islands and a nation of fisheries (Account of FFA, 2014: 4). The Faroes take active part in international cooperation on fishery resources both through bilateral fishery agreements and in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) such as the NEAFC and participate independently as a coastal state and negotiate fisheries agreements on their own behalf under the term "Denmark in respect of the Faroes and Greenland" (Account of FFA, 2014: 24). In addition to the RFMOs the Faroes have negotiated five bilateral fisheries agreements with the EU, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Russia (ibid.).

Besides from trade agreements and RFMOs the Faroe Islands are also enjoying memberships of several international and regional organisations among others the Nordic Council (NC), the Nordic

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<sup>11</sup> Iceland did not sign the agreement.

Council of Ministers, the Arctic Council (AC), the West Nordic Council (WNC), the North Atlantic Marine Mammals Commission (NAMMCO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) (Account of FFA, 2014). Previous research on Faroese foreign affairs has concluded that there are only few of the Faroes' memberships which are full memberships and not associated memberships; those are the cooperation in NAMMCO and the WNC (Ólavsdóttir, 2009).

### **The Case of the West Nordic Council**

The WNC is a parliamentary organisation established in 1985 to attend the special cultural and geographic conditions of the three West Nordic countries: Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands (vestnordisk.is). The Council's members cooperate on issues concerning the West Nordic region and common problems with these objectives in mind (ibid.):

1. To promote west Nordic (north Atlantic) interests.
2. To be guardians of north Atlantic resources and north Atlantic culture and to help in promoting west Nordic interests through the west Nordic governments – not least to the regards to the serious issues of resource management, pollution etc.
3. To follow up on the governments west Nordic cooperation.
4. To work with the Nordic Council and to be the west Nordic link in Nordic cooperation.
5. To act as the parliamentary link for inter-west Nordic organisations, including Arctic parliamentary cooperation.

The Council devises recommendations and accounts of west Nordic issues to the three respective governments which have been issued on different themes (ibid.). Every year the Council chooses a new relevant theme and this year it is “The West Nordic Region in the Arctic – From Vision to Reality” (vestnordisk.is/1). The theme conference was held in January 2015 and emphasised issues concerning the West Nordic region in regard to the Arctic, and the members discussed issues such as: west Nordic infrastructure for transportation, fisheries, a west Nordic free trade agreement and economic potential from Arctic development (ibid.). The aim of this year's theme is to form a common west Nordic Arctic strategy to be handed to the respective member's foreign affairs' ministers (ibid.).

## **The West Nordic Countries**

Altogether, the three west Nordic countries: Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes are covering a large physical area in the Nordic and Arctic region covering 1,5 percent of the earth's land surface but with a very sparse population counting 426,424 people all together, whereas the Faroes are the smallest of the three in populations and in territory with only 1,393 square kilometres compared to Greenland's 2,166,086 square kilometres and a population of 56,370 inhabitants while Iceland is 103,000 square kilometres with 321,857 inhabitants (Nielsson, 2014a: 5).

The relationship between the members goes way back before the formal cooperation in the WNC began based on shared similarities in history, remoteness, colonial heritage and marine resources (Bærenholdt, 2006: 5). Traditional fisheries has been connecting Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes and created a long lasting relationship between the West Nordic countries characterised by a bottom-up approach, especially whaling has been maintaining the relationship between Greenland and the other two others despite the distance between them (Joensen, 2014). Therefore cooperation in the West Nordic region has been developed as a bottom-up relationship where the informal relations have walked the path before the more formal relations began which is different from their EU neighbours where cooperation and integration have been initiated from the top (ibid.).

Culturally, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes are both similar and different. They share historical experiences by living in small and remote societies highly dependent on their natural surroundings and maritime resources even though their languages are different, and Greenland's heritage is distinct because of the indigenous people not found in Iceland or the Faroes (Nielsson, 2014a: 6). Politically, they all share a political history as possessions of Denmark; Iceland became a sovereign state in 1944 after being a self-governing country since 1918 (Nielsson, 2014: 7). Like the Faroes, Greenland is a self-governing entity of Denmark who achieved home rule in 1979 and then self-governance in 2009 (Acrén, 2014) hence they are different in political statuses and sovereignty (Bærenholdt, 2006: 5).

Economically, they are all relying a great deal on fisheries which is also a great export good in both Iceland and Greenland as is the case of the Faroes; 88 percent of Greenland's and 40,6 percent of Iceland's export is made of fisheries goods (Nielsson, 2014a: 8). Both the Faroes and Greenland receive an annual block grant from the Danish government, while the Faroes' block grant has decreased Greenland's has increased, however they have the responsibility to finance all fields that are under their respective home rule governments (Hovgaard et al., 2014).

## A New Role

As a country in the North Atlantic Ocean the Faroes are finding themselves, along with Greenland and Iceland, in a geo-strategic and geo-political position which has not been as important since World War II and the Cold War (Eythórsson & Hovgaard, 2013). Especially the Arctic has become an important issue to the region since the countries obtain a geo-strategic position between Europe and North America which names this region “the gate way to the Arctic” (TDPC, 2011: 13). In a speech held by the Icelandic president in 2012 the growing significance of the Arctic was emphasised: “[...] *Up to the 1900s or so the Arctic was largely, both to us in the Arctic and definitely to the rest of the world, an unknown part of the world. By 2000, we had made it our Arctic. But I believe now, in this new century, it has already become the global Arctic*” (Nielsson, 2014: 13).

The effects of climate change have changed the Arctic environment in which it has become more accessible and connecting the world on a whole new level (ibid.). The changed environment is predicting resource extraction from previous ice covered and inaccessible areas as well as the opening of new alternative shipping routes through the North (Eythórsson & Hovgaard, 2013: 140). The Arctic Shipping Routes (ASR) are important because the countries hold the potential becoming a transshipment hub and opportunities for profitable and rapid growth are in hand (Nielsson, 2014: 14). However, the ASR are also creating security challenges to the region both within personal security and environmental security as well as the high demand for the natural resources this region possess will be a challenge to handle (ibid.; Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014). Also considering the countries’ smallness which means that their resources to withstand both opportunities and challenges are limited (TDPC, 2011: 13).

The changes in the Arctic environment has given three small west Nordic countries shared interests in shipping, facility development and environment along with the interest in fair share of the fishing stocks in the region, as well as the changes in the Arctic are making west Nordic interests more concrete and visible (Bailes, 2014: 164-66). One way of countering the challenges is to perform stronger regional cooperation between the countries of the region (TDPC, 2011: 32). Cooperation can contribute to a common international voice and profile; achieve greater influence through joint action and contributing to safe and sustainable use of the resources in the region and its environment (ibid.).

It is argued that a formal West Nordic cooperation based on mutual trust and cooperation between parliaments, officials and local governments can be a mean to pursue the Faroes', Greenland's and Iceland's interests on several levels (Bailes, 2014). For example, through the values from sharing information, experiences, and models of practices and the potential to influence and promote their interests in the NC and the AC or other if they are standing together as one (ibid.). The Faroese prime minister stated in 2013 that the future challenges the west Nordic region is about to meet call for stronger cooperation (press release, 14.10.13). Because of the regions' richness of resources and new ASR this area once again is to become a significant location and an area that sees an increase in political and economic external attraction - a strong cooperation is thus a necessity (ibid.).

## **A Gap**

The relationship between Denmark and the Faroes has changed and with the relative new legal arrangements the Faroes have gained more authority hence more room of manoeuvre the past ten years. Danish and Faroese interests have been conflicting way back to the beginning of the Cold War but now the Faroes are able to act in difference with Denmark and pursue their own interests in matters that are undertaken by the Faroese government, which also means that the Faroes have to handle issues and challenges within these fields on their own.

The relationship between Denmark and the Faroe Islands seem to be drifting further apart as well as their interests seem to be mutually conflicting and while Denmark is turning towards the EU the question is then to what or to whom the Faroes are turning to in terms of support and assistance. The Faroes are a small country thus cooperation is important in pursuing and protecting their interests within areas that the government of the Faroes have undertaken from Danish authorities or within fields that Denmark and the Faroes do not share interests in.

All located in the North Atlantic: Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands are similar in many economic, political and cultural areas which make the WNC a possible supplement to the Faroes in countering challenges that are coming with the changes in the Arctic as well as seizing the opportunities laying a head. Also, the west Nordic countries have had a long term relationship based on their commonalities in remoteness, history and fisheries as well as traditional hunting which have been unifying factors thus an increased cooperation in the WNC can be seen as mean the Faroes can use in pursuing and protecting their interests.

## **Problem Formulation**

Based on the above discussion the problem formulation runs as follows:

*How can the cooperation in the West Nordic Council be understood as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests?*

### **Extending the Problematic**

The established cooperation in the WNC has existed since 1985 but not until recently the Council has expressed a will to develop the cooperation and further the aims of the WNC with a special focus on the Arctic. As stated above the cooperation in the WNC has potential to become a channel the members can benefit from both in withstanding common challenges and to influence international politics, especially within Arctic affairs. The Faroese interests have not always been prioritised but now that the Faroes have the opportunity to attend their own national interests within fields they have undertaken or in accordance with the Authorisation Act (2005) they are able to pursue and protect their interests through other means than the Danish Realm, especially where Danish and Faroese interests are mutual conflicting and where Denmark is not any longer obligated to carry out Faroese interests since they are the responsibility of Faroese authorities.

Therefore, the research here is to understand how the WNC can be understood as the cooperation where the Faroe Islands can gain influence on the international arena and thus pursue and protect their interests, also since the WNC is one of two organisations the Faroes are a full member of and where Denmark is not participating in the cooperation. The argument here is not to argue for or against Faroese independency from the Danish Kingdom but to understand through which means the Faroes can enjoy influence and at the same time find support and assistance in the WNC as a supplement to Denmark and other relations. Thus, the current context of the Faroes in regard to its statehood and the international discourses are important in this regard in understanding how the cooperation in the WNC can be a mean for the Faroes in achieving influence to pursue and protect their interests.

*Cooperation* in the problem formulation is referred to as the formal, established cooperation between the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland in the West Nordic Council which is grounded on a historical long relationship between the three countries joined together by similarities and common West Nordic interests and issues. *Mean* is here understood as a tool the Faroes can use in pursuing

and protecting their interests, therefore it refers to the cooperation in the West Nordic Council. To *pursue* is here referred to how Faroese national interests can be prioritised through influence on international affairs, and to *protect* is referred to how the Faroes can guard their interests through influence on international affairs. *Faroese interests* are defined as national interests in form of fisheries, trade agreements and geographical location.

## **Research Design**

This study is taking point of departure in a case study design that seeks to understand how the cooperation in the West Nordic Council can be understood as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests which constitutes one part of Faroese foreign affairs that will be examined and analysed through relevant selected theories and concepts of small states, regionalism and institution together with empirical findings on the subject. Here, a logical structure of the inquiry will be presented with the aim of explaining how the obtained evidence enables an answer to the problem formulation as unambiguously as possible and how this case study is designed.

## **Structure**

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework which is to be used in understanding how cooperation in the WNC can function as a channel to the Faroes in pursuing and protecting their interests. The theories and concepts presented are all selected in accordance with their relevance to the understanding as well as they each attain a specific role in understanding Faroese foreign affairs and the cooperation in the WNC with an international relations' (IR) approach. The chapter begins with introducing *small state* definition and characteristics, role, challenges and need for shelter from a larger neighbouring state or an international organisation (IO). It is necessary to define the Faroes and its statehood if we are to understand weaknesses and strengths of the Faroes in accordance with its size, location and relations and how the Faroes acts and behaves in their specific situation.

The role of the Faroes is important to locate in order to understand what function the case of the WNC can have to the Faroes as well to support and assist the Faroes in withstanding specific challenges that come with being small. Their role is tied to their significance as a country in the international system and to what power possessions the Faroe Islands hold and how these are used and by whom they are used. Because of specific challenges and weaknesses the Faroes are in need of shelter from external actors in form of a larger neighbour or an IO. This is necessary to prevent crisis and in general to gain support and assistance in disputes and alike and to counter weaknesses.

Through the concepts and theories of small states in IR the aim is to understand what sort of mean the Faroes need the WNC to function as and which fields require cooperation.

The WNC has existed since 1985 thus the process and development in the Council needs to be defined in order to understand what role the WNC can provide the Faroes as a mean in pursuing and protecting their interests. In relation to this, theories of *regionalism* are introduced which are serving as a mean to understand the reason and aim of establishing the WNC as well as its future, ability and strength. Also, small states in regard to regionalism are presented in understanding how the Faroes enjoy regional cooperation. The last section in chapter 2 provides a definition of *institution* which is important in regard to the WNC and the members' reasons for forming the Council, and at last a description of *hierarchy* and *network* as modes of cooperative structure in an institution.

The objective of this is to define the cooperative structure between the conducting parties in the WNC and thus what benefits and/or disadvantages the structure adds to the understanding of how the cooperation in the West Nordic Council can function as a mean to the Faroes in pursuing and protecting their interests. The theoretical texts and articles used in this chapter have been supplemented with a qualitative elitist interview with Baldur Thorhallsson, whose theories and concepts on small states have been used. The aim was to gain his understanding and interpretation of his theories and concepts on small states' challenges and need for shelter in relation to the Faroes and the WNC.

In chapter 3 the framework comprises a thorough assessment of methodology, the chosen case, method as well as a strategy for analysis. First, an introduction of the outer framework of the conducted inquiry is set, namely the ontological and epistemological understandings which makes up the methodological considerations of *social constructivism*. Methodology impacts the choice of method and hence the consequent outcome of the investigation which implies that all decisions regarding method, analysis and different scientific tools are made in accordance with social constructivism. Next, a detailed presentation of the strategy of analysis will be carried out which has been chosen in accordance with social constructivism and takes point of departure in *hermeneutical interpretation*.

A hermeneutic analysis is well fit for social constructivist ontology and epistemology where interpretation is a core within both meta-theories as well as hermeneutic analysis is recommendable

when the main method is based on *semi-structured interviewing*. Third, the chosen case will be presented stating the implications for choosing the WNC as case in the study on Faroese foreign affairs. Also, the limitations that have been necessary to make in relation to the case is outlined. Afterwards, the research methods will be introduced including both primer and secondary sources. The main method consists of eleven interviews conducted with Faroese Members of Parliament (MPs) and civil servants as well with one Greenlandic MP and one Icelandic MP, which have all been transcribed.

The choice of method is grounded on lack of empirical sources on the subject therefore conducting the interviews was a necessity in order to understand and to gain insight into the cooperation between the Faroes and the WNC and Faroese foreign affairs in general. The interview sources have been supplemented with other empirical sources consisting of government documents, diverse newspaper articles, academic articles, press releases, speeches, secondary literature, web pages, legal acts, conventions, charters, rules of procedure, reports and other relevant sources that reflect and narrate all issues under investigation, and have they been collected throughout the whole process to illuminate the theoretical points of the dissertation. At last, an account will be made of how the material from the interviews will be structured and used through thematic analysis.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and final chapter composes the analysis of the investigated subject and case and is divided into six sections which are made in accordance to discovered themes from coding the interview transcripts. The analytical approach is inductive where all themes are analysed through the use of relevant theory and concepts from chapter 2 together with collected empirical sources and are they all finished with a sum-up conclusion. The first section of analysis “The Faroes, Who are They?” is examining the statehood of the Faroes and seeks to conclude if the Faroes can be defined as a small semi-state. The aim is to uncover the weaknesses and strengths of the Faroes in order to understand the focus of Faroese foreign affairs strategy, actions and behaviour which is relevant in regard to how the WNC can function as a mean to pursue and protect Faroes interests.

The second section analysis “Denmark and the Faroes, Conflicting interests?” emphasises on the conflicting relationship between Denmark and the Faroes and takes point of departure in their distinct interests which has an effect on their relationship and results in increased responsibility to the Faroese foreign affairs authorities but also Denmark's decreasing obligation to support and assistance the Faroes within fields undertaken by the Faroes - both because of increased responsibility and mutual conflicting interests. The objective of the investigation is to understand

within which fields the Faroes need to focus on and find support and assistance to withstand challenges and to gain influence. The third section “Faroese Foreign Affairs, a Small State Strategy?” allocates Faroese foreign affairs strategy and puts it into the light of small state’s actions and behaviour and discovers where in their strategy an IO such as the WNC can become beneficial to the Faroes in pursuing and protecting their interests.

The fourth analysis “Institutionalising a Relationship” takes point of departure in the WNC and examines the aim of the cooperation and its establishment. Here, the aim is to balance the previous sections’ conclusions to the activities of the WNC in order to understand the cooperation in the WNC as a mean the Faroes can use in achieving influence and hence pursue and protect their interests. The fifth analysis “Visions and Potential” is examining the WNC’s work on Arctic issues and the plan and visions the Council has for the future in regard to Faroese challenges and opportunities. The aim is to measure the potential of the WNC in relation to the need of the Faroes now and in the future in regard to changes in the Arctic and how this is a mean in pursuing and protecting Faroese interests.

The last section “The (Special) Relationship” analyses the long term relationship between the three parties: Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes and the strengths that a long term relationship can pass on to a formal institutional cooperation and how the historical ties and patterns of cooperation can affect the cooperative structure of the WNC. Here, the objective is to understand how the special relationship between the west Nordic countries can be an imbedded phenomenon that makes the case of the WNC as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests and thus make it a strategic relationship that is even stronger and ads more potential to the cooperation as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests. The analysis will end with a conclusion of the results of the analysis and with an answer to the problem formulation. Furthermore, the whole research study will end with a perspectivation, which takes the subject and case into context and explores its usefulness, meaning, consequences and future.

# CHAPTER 2

## - Theoretical Framework

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In this chapter the theoretical framework consisting of theories and concepts regarding small state studies, regionalism and institutions are introduced and accounted for. The objective of this chapter is thus introducing the academic, theoretical tools that will be used in the analysis in order to answer the problem formulation. Thus, this chapter along with chapter 3 connects the introduction in chapter one to the empirical findings on the subject, which are object for analysis in chapter 4.

### **State of the Art: Small State Studies**

The essence of traditional IR is state-centric and power-centred where the focus of the discipline is on states' capabilities in form of total population, size of territory, GDP and military expenditure (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 3). Therefore, most case studies of IR are focusing on great powers which eliminate those states that are considered less powerful according to the traditional criteria of the size of a state (ibid.). However, small state literature argues that it is important to study states in all its shapes and diversities and acknowledges the value of studying small states in international relations (ibid.). After all, Small states constitute a great number of states in the UN and are therefore too numerous and too important to be ignored (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 3).

As a consequence of the fall of the empires and decolonialisation in the twentieth century the quantity of states rose and since the end of the Cold War the number of small states has multiplied, which has increased the academia on the subject of small states over the past decades (ibid.; Archer et al., 2014). Even though the study of small states is growing in popularity and sophistication around the world (ibid.) some scholars maintain that small states are neglected in the study of international relations (Steinmetz & Wivel, 2010: 7). Questions can thus be raised whether or not it is important to study small states within international relations and if the meaning and purpose of small states in IR have changed (ibid.).

Twentieth-century scholars were occupied with how and why small states survived in an anarchic international system dominated by great power politics, therefore small states studies and security politics have always been related (Archer et al., 2014). Annette Baker Fox was a pioneer within small state studies with her book *The power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (1959)

because this book somehow shifted the literature on state theory from great power capabilities and interests towards the role of ideas and global governance efforts of all sorts of actors (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 4). Small states were a residual category in IR and were referred to as small powers because until well into the twentieth century all states were referred to as “powers” which today is only used when referring to great powers (ibid.).

What is thought of today as small states was once considered the powers who were deemed too inconsequential in the period after the Napoleonic Wars; when the powers met at the Congress of Vienna the powers were categorised as (the five) *powers*, *middle powers* and *small powers* (ibid.: 4-5). The great powers decided to meet on a regular basis to discuss matters of concern and to draw up agreements and treaties which resulted in documents with legal force and these five great powers became legitimate as the great powers since they were the only ones signing the legal documents (ibid.: 5). Later on, all states who were not great powers became small states, thus there were no middle powers and the concept became extinct (ibid.).

The term Small powers has shifted with the term *small states* which is argued still possesses the presumption that small states lack power in a quantitative sense based on this the foremost definition of a small state is *what it is not* (ibid.: 5-6). More recently, scholars have been more interested in the behaviour and influence of small states in a mere institutional security environment where the range of security challenges has broadened and become a challenge not only to the state but also to individuals and society (Archer et al., 2014). In Europe the growing interest in small studies has been more concerned with the challenges and opportunities of small states in an increasingly globalised world (ibid.).

The realist tradition has dominated IR and security politics including security problems of small states and as an effect most theories within this field have their roots within realist thinking, thus military means and quantitative definitions of statehood have dominated the theoretical literature of small states (ibid.: 5-6). Also, the approach on small states alliances has been on their political and economic vulnerabilities compared to those of larger states (Bailes et al., 2013: 3). However, the study of small states is not a reductionist theory and therefore it can be approached through and combined with any of the theories of international relations; from realism to social constructivism and beyond. It is at its best when it is used to test theories through the exploration of outlying cases and to challenge any over-monolithic view of either statehood or international system generally (Archer et al., 2014: 18).

Based on the literature review above it is clear that most IR literature on small states has focused on the relationship between a large and a small state since the traditional definition of a small state is made by comparing traditional relative fixed means, which is not very context dependent but rather fixed and puts the understanding of small states and their capacities into a status quo situation with limited manoeuvre. However, this study seeks to define the Faroes and their relationship to two other small countries, thus it is a small state relationship which is under examination without comparison of traditional power capabilities. Also, the thesis rather turns towards a more context and relational dependent definition which seeks to look beyond the traditional definition of a small state towards a more qualitative and context dependent definition of small state power and how this power is exercised.

### **Small States: Definition and Characteristics**

The term *small state* has been used in reference to at least three different types of states: micro-states, small states in the developed world and small states in the Third World (Archer et al., 2014: 8). Scholars disagree on how to define what a micro-state or a small state entails and there is no consensus among scholars on how to define typical behavioural characteristics of small states other than the general idea that a small state is one that adapts to its external environment instead of trying to dominate it and that small states seek influence through memberships of IOs (ibid., 2014: 5-6). But defining a small state is a comparative concept where micro-states are smaller than small states and small states are smaller than great powers, thus the object of definition is compared to other objects (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 6).

The distinction between a micro-state and a small state lies within the size of the population where a micro-state is sometimes identified if the figure of inhabitants is somewhere between 100,000 and 1.5 million (Archer et al., 2014: 8) and in a European context a micro-state is one with less than 100,000 inhabitants including Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican (ibid.). Some define states with a population of less than one million as micro-states which adds Iceland, Cyprus, Malta and Luxembourg (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 6). Defining a small state in a European context the bar has been set around 16 million inhabitants which makes almost every European state a small state except for Russia, Germany, Turkey, France, Great Britain, Italy, Ukraine, Spain, Poland and Romania (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 6).

Any precise definition can be arbitrary and thus it is argued that the above definition is incompatible and only leads to confusion (ibid., 2006; Archer et al., 2014), therefore other criteria must be added

to the definition of small and micro-states meaning a micro-state can be defined as one that claims to maintain effective sovereignty on its territory but in some degree is questioned by other states and furthermore it cannot maintain the minimum required presence in the international society of states such as membership of IOs and embassies in key capitals as consequences of lack of resources which must be the main criteria for defining a micro-state (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 6-7).

Both within international politics and international relations' literature being big is correlated with power whereas being small has been viewed as a restriction on state action and even state survival (Archer et al., 2014: 3). But the risk of focusing on material and military capabilities is underestimating the opportunities and contributions of small states since most small states are weak regarding conventional military power (ibid.: 7). Therefore, it is necessary to look away from the traditional features towards the political elite's will to change and their perception of themselves as a small state in order to further the small state's action from inactive to proactive (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14: 12-13).

A more qualitative and relational definition of small state is introduced by Archer, Bailes and Wivel (2014: 9) who define a small state as: “[...] *the weaker part in an asymmetric relationship which is unable to change the nature or functioning of the relationship on its own*”, furthermore: “[...] *small states are stuck with the power configuration and its institutional expression, no matter what their specific relation to it is*”. This entails that the behavior and actions of small states in regard to an IO do not change the entire institution and its nature which would be the case if a great power changed its actions, for example if the US left NATO, and it is here that the difference between a small and a great state becomes visible and where their strategic challenges and options differ (ibid.).

Today, small states engage in different and numerous power relations with different sets of actors and the state might be small in some relations but more powerful in others (ibid.). Therefore, being a small state is tied to a specific spatio-temporal context and this context is decisive for both the nature of challenges and opportunities as well as small states' answer to these challenges and opportunities rather than characteristics of absolute population or military expenditure (ibid.). With this understanding of what a small state entails the focus of analysis has shifted from the power small states *possess*, which is the traditional way of measuring power, to the power small states *exercise* and is used as a focus-device directing towards research stemming from “*the experience of power disparity and the manner of coping with it*” (ibid.).

## Role

The perception of a small state used to be connected with the idea that it was a helpless pawn in world politics and mostly just seen as an object to be moved around by great powers in their struggle with other great powers thus small states tried to resist from becoming battlegrounds (Fox, 2006: 39-40). Based on this, small states are seen as arenas and not actors, which emphasises the importance of a small state's geographical location because through their geo-strategic position small states can exercise power during periods of war, therefore the location of small states can be perceived as an asset to the small state (Fox, 2006: 41-42).

Fox (2006) claimed that small states are unable to survive in a period of peace after World War II, with the argument that they are dying because there are no advantages for great powers to engage with small states during peace, in effect meaning they are not very much needed. When war is on the small state needs to step up and take on a role and be of advantage and gain to the great powers, especially in the time of inter-great- power war, which is the most active and intense phase of the relationship between a great power and a small state (ibid.: 39-41).

Also according to Fox, the general belief is that great powers set the course of world politics whereas small states have no other choice than to comply with their decisions (ibid.: 40). It has been argued that small states have had little to offer greater states other than being permanent consumers of security and therefore they have a limited room for manoeuvre when pursuing strategic goals beyond security and survival, but geopolitical location continues to be of central importance to small states and their security (Archer et al., 2014: 5). Keohane suggests that focus should be on the systemic role that state's leaders see their countries undertake and he distinguishes between four roles of states regarding the international system: the first is called *system-determining*, here states play a critical role in shaping the international system (Keohane, 2006: 59).

The second is *system-influencing*, which refers to states who are able to influence the international system through unilateral or multilateral action; the third group of states are *system-affecting*, which means that they cannot influence the international system on their own but through alliances with others or through regional or international organisation they are capable of influence (ibid.). And the fourth group is *system-ineffectual*, which refers to states who adjust to the international system without being able to change it (ibid.). Nevertheless, there is an agreement that small states do enjoy more international prestige and visibility now than ever before (Archer et al., 2014: 6).

## Challenges

Each state has its individual characteristics concerning history, geography, culture and institution but small states have some specific common problems which large states do not have, and these specific small state issues are very important to pay attention to (Thorhallsson, 2000: 1). Some of these common characteristics influence the behavior of small states, which makes small states different from large states (ibid.). According to Thorhallsson (30.10.14: 2), all small states have inbuilt weaknesses in regard to the smallness of their domestic market and the fact that they cannot defend themselves, for example, from attacks. These are the two most common challenges of small states (ibid.).

When it comes to political literature on small states it is suggested that small states are more vulnerable when it comes to security either in terms of military or geographical location (Thorhallsson, 2000: 13). The argument is that the security of small states is determined by power politics and factors beyond their control and the dominating concern of small states is security in its wider meaning (Thorhallsson, 2004: 199). Economic and security vulnerabilities are the greatest concerns of small states (ibid.: 200). For example, Iceland has covered these through the Schengen agreement and membership of NATO and by being a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) (ibid.).

The end of the Cold War reduced the military threat to most small states in Europe and they now do not have to fear any military invasion in the foreseeable future, which is widening the foreign policy room of manoeuvre of small states since there is no fear that their policy will provoke the great powers that will lead to military subjugation or extinction (Archer et al., 2014: 4). In addition to this the intensified globalisation and increased interdependence since the 1990s has reduced the importance of traditional military equipment, which perhaps makes the small states' assets of business, intellectual and environmental sorts more valuable as well as highlighting their diplomatic and institutional competencies (ibid.).

However, new wars of all sorts continue to occur and small states are expected to participate in the solution which brings into account new security challenges with a greater global aspect (ibid.). At the same time, economic, societal and environmental security issues are all targets of new challenges that small states need to cope with along with financial crisis, increased market competition, migration, terrorism and global warming (ibid.). Also, small states have less capability to defend themselves diplomatically and to engage in international affairs because of the small size

of their public administration and foreign services (Bailes et al., 2013: 4). These are all challenges small states are anticipated to be able to withstand through international cooperation (ibid.).

Economic vulnerability is a great challenge to small states since they are more reliant on foreign markets than larger states because their domestic markets are small (Thorhallsson, 2000: 5-12). Industries in smaller states are less diversified and therefore small states rely heavily on import and are more dependent on other economies as well as small states are more dependent on export, and need to remain more open in their economy (ibid.:12-13). This means that the economic interests of small states are more concentrated and their political interests will differ from the interests of larger states (ibid.).

Both economic and security challenges are seen as external stress which small states need to overcome by realising their weaknesses and by making domestic and external arrangements in accordance with this acknowledgement (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14: 2, 8). Domestic arrangements can for example be democratic corporatism as seen in the Nordic countries in order to deal with the fluctuating international economy, but this is not enough (ibid.) since external arrangements are a necessity to withstand external stress (Thorhallsson, 2011: 10). Domestic arrangements will not be under examination here, but external arrangements will and are referred to as seeking shelter from a large neighbour or an international organisation (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14: 2).

### **Need of Shelter**

Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century small European states have found shelter in different international organisations rather than through bilateral arrangements with a large neighbour, which used to be the case since regional and international multilateral organisations did not exist before the post-war period (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14: 2). The difference between seeking shelter from large states and IOs is that IOs provide small states with formal rules and norms as protection, which makes it a political matter and not only an economical matter as trade agreements are, for example (Thorhallsson, 2011: 2-3). The EU, OECD, NATO, and the NC are some examples of IOs small states have been seeking membership of in order to gain shelter from external and internal threats through formalities implemented in that organisation (ibid.) - from a legal point of view all sovereign states no matter size are equal before the law (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006: 5). Kristinsson and Thorhallsson define shelter as those external relations that are favourable to the small entity according to shelter theory (Kristinsson & Thorhallsson, 2013:115).

Three forms of shelter have been identified. The first one is about providing *economical shelter* to a small state and includes direct economic assistance, a currency union, help from an external Central Bank, beneficial loans, favourable market access, common market etc., which can be provided by a more powerful country or an IO (Thorhallsson, 2011: 4). Thorhallsson argues that the effects the global financial crisis in 2008 had on Iceland proves that small states are more than ever bound to the fortress of the international economy and to the instability of the international financial sector, and that is why they are in need of a shelter from a larger state or IO that can provide all of the criteria (Thorhallsson, 2011).

A small state may in any given situation be in need of *political shelter*, which is the second form, from another state or IO which can provide a direct and visible diplomatic or military backing through the means of organisational rules and norms (Thorhallsson, 2011: 4). Thorhallsson claims that if a small state has an interest in providing its citizens with economic growth and political stability, it is of utmost importance that the small state is in a position to protect itself from being attacked, bullied or heavily pressed from external or domestic actors (ibid.: 3). Today, diplomatic support perhaps weighs a bit more than military support since the chances for needing diplomatic support is greater (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14: 6).

It is necessary to consider both economic and political shelters, but during a research on Icelandic external affairs Thorhallsson and other scholars identified a third form which surprisingly was more important than economic and political shelter to the people of Iceland; this was *societal shelter* (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14: 6). Therefore, Kristinsson and Thorhallsson (2013:117-18) argue that small state literature needs to acknowledge the importance of social communication for small entities and cultural relations being as valuable as economic and political relations for small entities.

Social and cultural relations bring social and cultural influences from other parts of the world while at the same time these relations are prevailing economic and political structures (ibid.). Social communication thus keeps the small entity connected to the outside world and allows the small state to have close contact with other norms despite its peripheral geographical location (ibid.). To a remote country social communication is significant as otherwise the country becomes isolated and different, which consequently can lead to difficulties in adjusting to the international environment, as well as access to educational systems abroad for example being important to develop the people's competences in a small state (Thorhallsson, 30.10.14).

The overall aim of small states seeking and obtaining economic, political and societal shelter is to overcome three levels of exposed risk. Firstly, it is about reducing risks before the crisis takes place, secondly it is about providing assistance in the case of a shock when risk goes bad and the crisis has happened, and thirdly, it is about providing help in cleaning up after the event (Thorhallsson, 2011: 4-5). Shelter theory needs to analyse the potential freedom, associated benefits and costs that an entity may enjoy and declare, as well that all shelter relations a small state may have need to be analysed because the formal external authority may not be the actual shelter provider (Kristinsson & Thorhallsson, 2013: 134).

A protecting power or alliance may be a costly affair for a small state - costs are associated with protection and Kristinsson and Thorhallsson quote Vital (Vital in Kristinsson and Thorhallsson, 2013: 79) saying: “*where the quest for protection and insurance is successful a price must normally be paid in terms of sacrifice of autonomy in the control of national resources and loss of freedom of political manoeuvre and choice*” (Kristinsson & Thorhallsson, 2013: 115). Using the EU as an example the costs associated with EU membership are the institutional rules, norms and treaties whereas within international financial institutions financial aid is often given with preconditions regarding the recipient’s domestic policies (ibid.). The ultimate cost is when the recipient becomes part of the protector’s territory without any means of controlling its own affairs (ibid.).

## **Regionalism**

After World War II bipolarity replaced the multipolar era which had been dominating the international political pattern ever since the emergence of a world with sovereign states. The end of the Cold War also marked an end to the bipolar era, making room for a different structure of international politics which had not been possible before, since there has always been one power to replace the fallen power (Waltz, 1993). As no sovereign state replaced the fallen Soviet Union’s bipolar role with the US, the US became a unipolar actor and left the world open for new structures (Waltz, 1993; Layne, 1993).

The interest for regionalism rose in the period after the Cold War (Neumann, 1992: 5), as was the case with small state studies which makes it a relatively new phenomenon of IR. There are three ways of understanding regions depending on what terms are characterising the concept: *regional security*, *regional organisation* and *regional integration* (ibid.). In this study regionalism is considered as regional organization, thus the second term and understanding of the concept regionalism will be used.

Many of the European smaller states located on the western, southern and eastern peripheries of Europe welcome political (regional) integration because it offers them some promising strategies for countering national weaknesses (Katzenstein, 1997: 254). Katzenstein argues that many European countries' dependency on the manufacturing sector has helped in driving them towards memberships in the EU (ibid.). In Norway the case is different. The importance and economic advantages of the Norwegian energy sector has made it financially possible for Norway to stay out of a European membership (ibid.).

That statement of Katzenstein is supported by Thorhallsson (30.10.14: 4-5) who argues that the Faroes, Greenland, Norway and Iceland are hindered in joining the European Union because of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), since their main sector is fisheries. Katzenstein (1997: 260) also argues that all of the smaller European states seek to diffuse and reduce their dependence on one great power through closer European integration, whereas Keohane claims that the formation of alliances increases the possibility of smaller states to influence larger states (Thorhallsson, 2000: 5-6).

### **Three Phases of Regionalism**

The objectives for regional cooperation have changed over the years and reflect a development in cooperation characterised by deeper integration and interdependence. Three phases can be identified: *old regionalism*, *new regionalism* and *network regionalism* (Shaw & Söderbaum, 2003; Baldersheim & Øgård, 2009). Old regionalism, also referred to as the first wave of regionalism, emerged in Western Europe during the post-war period thus regionalism was formed in a bipolar context and was characterised as a state-led phenomenon and a result of some cooperation between only neighbouring states (Hettne, 2003: 23; Söderbaum, 2003: 4). In economic terms it was inward-oriented and protectionist and very specific about its aim of cooperation, but very shallow integration of reduction of trade barriers in a regional area but old regionalism succumbed in the 1960-70s (Söderbaum, 2003: 4).

New regionalism, also called the second wave of regionalism, emerged in the 1980s as an effect of European integration and succeeded with a regional movement in the mid-1990s throughout Europe (Baldersheim & Øgård, 2009; Söderbaum, 2003). It represented a range of both formal and informal relations between both states and non-state actors such as private companies and civil societies and has a more international approach and is often referred to as the *return of the political* (ibid.; Hettne, 2003) It is characterised by deeper integration and features decentralisation of policy responsibility

from the nation state to regions as well as a search for a formal role for regions in European integration (Baldersheim & Øgård, 2009: 7).

However, regions are now moving beyond the era of new regionalism into network regionalism. Also here, decentralisation of policy responsibilities is central as well as having an internationalist orientation, but the difference between new and network regionalism lies within the *relations* between the actors who are now more collaborating (ibid.). The cooperation is driven by collaboration and not competitiveness as in the former ways of regionalism, and the actors therefore rely on network modes of governance in developing and implementing its policies (ibid.).

## **Institutions**

The purpose of an institution is to group different actors with common interests and goals constructing a common front that is stronger than the actors alone (Jákupsstovu et al., 2009: 102). Here, the actors act with a common attitude and understanding because the structure of the institution partly forms and organises the actors and their behaviour, in effect the actor also influences the structure of the institution (ibid.). Institutions can be both *formal* and *informal*, where the former is constructed through laws and contracts and the latter is created through tradition, continuous interaction and common procedures (ibid.).

It is common to distinguish between types of institutions: *hierarchy*, *network* and *market*. The first is categorised as formal, the second as hybrid and the third as free (ibid.). International cooperation is a mixture of all three and therefore it cannot simply be defined as hierarchy, network or market (ibid.). For example, cooperation between different actors can be organised hierarchically through networks and by the market (ibid.: 103). However, in this research the focus will only be on hierarchical and networks structures of institutions.

## **Hierarchy vs. Network**

Hierarchy is, as mentioned above, a formal way of structuring relations and cooperation between different actors based on firm processes laws and contracts that bind the involved actors (Jákupsstovu et al., 2009: 103). It is a top-down institution where the members are ranked and act on orders from the superior, the chain of command thus being vertical (ibid.). Horizontal contact can occur in a hierarchy but only between actors from the same level of that hierarchy - within a horizontal structure of hierarchy there is no chain of command (ibid.). The information flow in a hierarchy goes from several actors to a single actor, which implies that if one actor in the hierarchy

receives relevant information it will be sent further up through the hierarchy (ibid.: 103). Consequently, information will not flow freely and not all actors are equally informed (ibid.).

Looking at institutional network structures all actors are equal and not ranked in relation to each other, there are no written laws and a network is characterised by informal cooperation based on common interests, traditions and recurring cooperation (ibid.). There is no core in network cooperation, in effect they are formed through recurrent relations when the actors interact (ibid.). A network can to some degree be defined as stable patterns of social relations between actors who have common interests or policy problems (ibid.). In order to form a network there has to be at least three parties because practicing network cooperation requires several interactive dyadic networks (ibid.).

A network can be constructed through *weak* or *strong ties* between the actors where strong ties refer to an interdependent relationship based on a direct relationship where the actors know each other (Jákupsstovu et al., 2009: 104). In a weak tie relationship the relations are more fluid and intangible and the actors do not have regular relationships. Here, information and ideas are new and can challenge the actor's beliefs thus potentially making weak ties valuable because of the flow of new information within research and development (ibid.). The quality of a network is its ability to gather and spread knowledge which can enhance actor's ability to compete, therefore network is perceived as a link to the rest of the world and all the knowledge that exists in the rest of the world (ibid.).

The framework of the cooperation is important to the relationship between the actors and for its work and development, and both hierarchy and network entail qualities that are significant in managing and organising cooperation in a world that is both influenced by globalisation and traditional hierarchies around the world - in some cases a hierarchy will be more effective than network and vice versa (ibid.: 105). For example, networks rely on consensus which can be time-consuming, therefore a hierarchical structure is good when fast decisions are needed but at the same time network cooperation is more flexible than formal hierarchical cooperation (ibid.). It must depend on the aim of the institution when deciding and constructing the structure and making a decision of whether to organise a formal or informal cooperation between actors, as well as being clear about what characterises the relations between these actors; whether the aim is to control or to inform.

## **In a Context**

It is necessary to look at the whole and the context surrounding the object of investigation to understand how the presented theories and concepts will be used as a whole in understanding how the cooperation in the West Nordic Council can be used as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests. It is clear from all theoretical approaches that the changed international order after both World War II and the Cold War has had an effect on small states' behaviour and actions in the current international system. Defining a state is dependent on the contextual discourses; both the role of small states and small state challenges are bound to the current political landscape.

Due to the states' smallness regarding all characteristics, a small state needs protection which can be in the form of regional alliances which is a phenomenon related to the changes in the international order which gives small states room for manoeuvre and to conduct their own regional cooperation. That said, it is necessary to define the cooperation and the arrangements between the institutional actors in order to understand the outcome and benefits of the organisation. If the alliances are used to counter small state challenges and to influence the international system or it could be military protection therefore it is depending on what the actors are seeking.

## CHAPTER 3

### - Methodology and Method for Scientific Inquiry

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Transparency is important when conducting scientific inquiry if the result of the research is to be trustworthy since a researcher's selection – and deselection – of methodology, method and strategies of analysis have an effect on the conclusion the researcher reaches at the end of the inquiry. Using a different method, for example, can lead to a whole other result. Therefore this chapter constitutes a part of the inquiry itself since it provides a framework for the conducted analysis which makes up the scientific inquiry.

#### Methodology

On the epistemological spectrum two opposites are found, namely *interpretivism* and *objectivism*, which represent different ranges of methodological stances. One of them is *Social constructivism*, meta-theory of IR, which has an interpretative epistemological understanding since the understanding of the social world is gained through an interpretation of that world, according to social constructivism (Bryman, 2008: 366). What we seek to acknowledge is never the actual reality but an interpreted reality; our acknowledgement of reality is what we impose on it – not a reflection. Thus, the ontological perception of social constructivism is that we *shape* and *construct* social reality (Rasborg, 2013: 403).

Through a social constructivism philosophy of science, which this dissertation is built upon, all examinations are context dependent and reflect the researcher's methodological understanding and interpretation of social reality (Klotz & Lynch, 2007). Thus, all decisions regarding research design, strategy and method are based on these understandings, as well as the theoretical considerations presented in the previous chapter are chosen in coherence with epistemological and ontological understandings of social constructivism in order to achieve an overall and underlying coherency. This stance will also affect the outcome of the analysis since the researcher has a subjective interpretative relationship to the examined object and perceives it as constructed, because social constructivism invites the researcher to consider the ways in which social reality is an ongoing accomplishment *of* social actors rather than something external to them (Bryman, 2008).

Everything within the frames of social reality is contingent, therefore everything could have been different – it is about analysing social constructions as they exist in order to reveal these constructions (Esmark et al., 2005: 22). Social constructivism then *deconstructs* constructions that are seen as natural and obvious in order to illustrate that social reality is socially constructed (ibid.: 24-25). This implies that actor's interests and identities are not implicated by nature itself but through the varieties of *context* - individuals and groups are shaped by their world and at the same time they are capable of changing it (Klotz & Lynch, 2007). This dissertation seeks to deconstruct the patterns of Faroese foreign affairs and the WNC through the use of theory to illuminate and understand how and why they are constructed and that Faroese foreign affairs discourses are context depended on external discourses which effect the decisions of Faroese authorities. Through this knowledge the actors are capable of adjusting and changing the structures and dynamics.

Within social constructivism theory it is about unfolding concepts which can make a difference in the way social reality is constructed, which is an alternative understanding of the role of theory which is not a confrontation against methodology and method, which some regard social constructivist approach to be, but rather about extending social constructivism throughout the whole where methodology and method are an overall framework for discussion (Esmark et al., 2005: 9-11). Therefore the understandings of social constructivism are implicit in all chapters and discussions of the dissertation. Social constructivist methodological approach is about *understanding* that social reality and not explaining it through causes and effects as within traditional methodological stances; (true) knowledge is a social phenomenon (ibid.: 11).

A strategy for analysis according to social constructive methodological understandings is underlying about making account for how social reality is constructed through the use of certain concepts without creating hypothesis or thesis (ibid.). Analysis within social constructivism thus begins by a notion of an empirical finding which unfolds though the introduction of associated concepts (ibid.: 10-12). Through the theories and concepts one perspective of one segment of social reality will lead to a specific construction of that reality. The conclusion of social constructivist analysis is hence not about confirming or rejecting theses but a recapitulation of the construction which has been done during the analysis because the analysis is a construction of reality on the basis of the theoretical framework (ibid.: 12).

## **Strategy of Analysis**

The common ground for social constructivism and hermeneutics is that the exposure of reality is a matter of interpretation (Rasborg, 2013). Since the endeavour of the study is to understand the aim of the Faroes' cooperation in the WNC an hermeneutic analysis is applicable because this mode of analysis strives to understand through interpretation (Højberg, 2013). Here, the researcher's understanding is always included in the process of analysing the social actors and phenomenon. Focus is on the social actors' actions and practices, which then will be put out meaningfully and act as a statement about the social reality (ibid.). The hermeneutical circle is a reflexivity or circularity which makes interpretation ineliminable; interpretation never comes to an end (Malpas, 2015: 3) and is in line with the idea of social constructivism which by deconstructing social reality is being constructed.

It is common to refer to hermeneutics as the art of interpretation or even theory of interpretation which implies that hermeneutics sometimes takes on a universal character (ibid.: 1). All understanding is self-understanding (ibid.: 2), in effect understanding is contingent. Social constructivism has criticised hermeneutics for being too close to traditional methodology and method and to stay true to elements of traditionalist approaches as using interpretation as an explanation instead of understanding (Esmark et al., 2005: 13). However, this view has also changed within some traditions of hermeneutics, for example philosophical hermeneutics from the point of view of Gadamer (ibid.). Understanding is not only a contrast to objective explanation but an event of human existence unlocking the self and the world (Gander, 2015: 137).

Here, method is not a warrantor for coherence between theory and a given reality but a way of organising different horizons of understanding (Esmark et al., 2005: 13). According to Gadamer, understanding is a historically effected event (Gander, 2015: 146). Hereby, it can be argued that understanding within philosophical hermeneutic analysis is context contingent as it is within social constructivism. In Gadamer's work understanding is more reflexive and a practical process where the text continues to be reinterpreted and influences the interpreter - its historicism links the reader to the text, and prejudgement and prejudice make understanding possible (Outhwaite, 2015: 490).

Our account of happenings cannot and will not be the same if it is put forward now as it would have been in the past – history influences the way we interpret because different questions will be asked, different issues will be raised and different features will stand out and so on (ibid.). This underlines the theoretical definitions of how to understand a small state and that it is necessary to understand Faroese behaviour and actions within the current historical context and how their role may have changed over time with the changes in the international landscape. If this same research was conducted before the Home Rule arrangements, for example, then the result would be different since the context was different and the questions raised as the motive for conducting the examination of Faroese foreign affairs would not even have been a relevant issue.

Within an interpretivist scientific perspective it is expected that the scientist builds her research around the social actors' understandings of social phenomenon. The actors' interpretations and understandings of a given event or act will turn back to the researcher's own interpretation and understanding of a given event or act, but the researcher also brings her understandings (for example theoretical understandings) on to the social actors (Højberg, 2013: 317). In this case the analysis will be based upon different themes which have been made according to the social actor's statements and answers from the respective interviews. But these patterns of answers and statements are from the beginning affected by the interviewer's questions and themes which have been guiding the interviews.

Hermeneutic analysis seeks to understand and gain knowledge of meanings in social reality and this is conflicting with social constructivism because hermeneutic analysis then does not deal with the social constructions of opinions (Højberg, 2013: 318). However, it is an analytic strategy that can be used in a social constructivist methodology (Rasborg, 2013) because even though they deviate on some areas both methodologies share commonalities, for example hermeneutic analysis is a strategy from where you can view the social reality where the role of the researcher is not seen as objective but is reflected throughout the analysis and a hermeneutic analysis does not strive to test an hypothesis or theory by searching for a right or false answer (Højberg, 2013: 318-21) which is in line with social constructivism. In this matter, this strategy allows the researcher's subjectivity to reflect the analysis while interpreting the social actors involved in the research as well as it does not impose a hypothesis which this dissertation does not have.

In relation to the chosen method: qualitative semi-structured interviews the hermeneutic analysis strategy is a clear choice because in form of dialogue hermeneutic analysis seeks insight into the

social actor's practice, horizon of understanding, actions and community. Thus, conversation is the center of attention and within that conversation meaningful knowledge emerges (ibid.: 321). Within semi-structured interviews the conversation is the center of attention because it does not center around the questions or how the questions were developed from beginning.

It is open and allows the interviewer as well as the interviewee to deviate from the interview guide and go into other themes and subjects than intended (Kristensen, 2007). Within hermeneutic analysis interpretation of documents is made on the notion that what the text tells us is understood on the basis of our own historical context and situation (Højberg, 2013: 321). Based on these assumptions the approach to the empirical sources is going to be emphasized on the dialogue itself and the themes that have emerged from the interview transcripts and therefore it is the actors and the actors' horizon and understanding that will be the centre of analysis.

### **The Case of the West Nordic Council**

This dissertation is based on a case study design which aims for a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (de Vaus, 2011: ch. 13), here the West Nordic Council. Case studies emphasise understanding of the whole case and is seeing the case in the wider context of that case. Thus, a case study can be defined as: *“a way of organising social data ... to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied ... it is an approach that views any social unit as a whole”* (Gode & Hatt in de Vaus, 2011: 234). Here, the stress is on the importance of looking at the parts within the context of the whole, where the whole is a construct of itself and it is the researcher who defines what the “whole” is (de Vaus, 2011: 235, 248). The delineation between the case – the whole – and context is arbitrary (ibid.).

Usually, the emphasis and concerns of a case are structured around the complexity and particular nature of the specific case as well to elucidate the unique features of the case (Bryman, 2008: ch. 2). The WNC is one out of only two<sup>2</sup> international organisations where the Faroes enjoy a full membership, which makes it unique. All three members are small Nordic countries whereas two are non-sovereign; the members share many similarities such as size, remoteness, colonial heritage and marine resources among others and they have had a long term relationship before the establishment of the WNC. Since they are all located in the same region, they are dealing with some of the same challenges and opportunities, which put an external pressure on the three countries. Because of

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<sup>2</sup> The other being NAMMCO (see chapter 1).

these unique and special features one could argue that this case holds a lot of potential when considering a forum where Faroese interests are being managed in a manner that can sustain the Faroes in pursuing and protecting their national interests on a global level.

The complexity of the case lies within the blurry lines of the Faroes performing foreign affairs even though foreign affairs are a field that belongs to Danish authorities therefore some Faroese interests are to be safeguarded by Denmark, but Danish and Faroese interests are mutual conflicting in some cases. Then, how can the WNC be a mean to the Faroes where Denmark is not able or not obligated to attend Faroese interest. The cooperation and the special constellation make the WNC singular in its nature. The potentials that are imbedded in this cooperation but not yet released properly are objects that need to be studied. In order to do so the nature of the organisation and cooperation must be revealed (de Vaus, 2011: ch. 13). It is important to look at the context where actions and non-actions are taking place, thus a thorough analysis of the cooperation itself as well as the historical and social context of the relationship of these three countries must be emphasised (ibid.).

Since the overall subject of the thesis is Faroese foreign affairs, it is inevitable to determine what aspect of foreign affairs that needs to be examined. By selecting a case study design a sorting out is already being made. Within qualitative research transparency is what is important and adds legitimacy and validity to the research, since these are factors that are not very easy to measure in a qualitative context (Bryman, 2011: 375.). It is not about gaining a right or wrong answer but to be able to account for the actions and selections the researcher has made.

A focused case study only deals with certain aspects of the historical case that is being investigated (George & Bennett, 2005) and therefore it is necessary to structure the case by making choices regarding which areas of the case to focus upon, as well to make some deselections. This is done in accordance with the theoretical framework since the theories and concepts imply which empirical areas are of importance, in order to conduct a full covered analysis on the basis of the theoretical framework and the empirical findings.

### **Critique**

Standard criticism of case studies is that it cannot be generalised (Bryman, 2008; de Vaus, 2011; George & Bennett, 2005). The counter argument of this critique is that the purpose of the research design is not to generalise to other cases or to populations beyond the case but to go into details and depth into one or more cases (Bryman, 2008; ch. 2). Case study researchers argue that they aim to

generate intensive examinations of single cases, in relation to which they carry out a theoretical analysis (ibid.). That is also the purpose of this research. The intention is not to make a study with the aim of generalising because this is a singular case with unique features which may not exist elsewhere.

A central issue of concern in case studies is how well does the data support the theoretical arguments that are generated and if the theoretical analysis is incisive enough (Bryman, 2008: 57). The question is therefore not if the findings can be generalised but how well the theory is generated out of the findings (ibid.). It is not about generalisation although it can be argued that the outcome of case studies have some influence; case studies should hold factors of theoretical interest for the purpose of understanding, which should include some factors that provide some leverage for policymakers to enable them to influence outcome (George & Bennett, 2005: 3). A study with the aim of illuminating a corner of Faroese foreign affairs is striving to make a difference on the actual political outcome after the research is done by adding some influence to the policymakers of the

### **Research Method: Semi-Structured Interviewing**

There are two types of qualitative interviews made with individuals: *key interviewees* and *specialised interviewees* (Kristensen, 2010: 282). The first is related to an interviewee who has great knowledge about a subject where the aim of the interview is to gain knowledge and information about a topic which is very sparse, whereas the second is an interview conducted with the aim of gaining detailed knowledge and information about a certain topic (ibid.). The main method of this dissertation consists of eleven semi-structured, elitist interviews with Faroese, Greenlandic and Icelandic PMs and civil servants (appendix 2) who all are professional since they all have been picked because of their profession or because of the interviewee's role as a key figure in relation to the examined subject.

The interviewees in this case (appendix 2) have mainly been key informants who have been able to give both an overview of Faroese foreign affairs in general as well as some knowledge, information and interpretation of the specific cooperation in the WNC without going into detail. For example, the interview carried out with the director of the Faroese Foreign Service was because of his profession as well as the Faroese MP Bill Justinusen being chosen because of his key role as the chair of the WNC. However, some of the interviewees have been invoked in order to give a more detailed view on a specific relation as the relationship between the Faroes and the EU. Here, the head of the Mission to the EU of the Faroes has been helpful since she has a deeper and more

detailed knowledge about the Faroese position and relation to the EU than the head of the Representation of the Faroes in Reykjavik and vice versa. This is also the case for the politicians who have not been chosen according to their political ideology, but rather according to their participation in political committees and affiliation to the WNC, and one single interviewee because of her previous occupation as a civil servant of the Faroes (appendix 2).

Overall, the purpose of conducting the interviews has been to gain insight into professionals' *understanding* and *interpretation* of Faroese foreign affairs overall and, more specifically, knowledge about the cooperation in the WNC where existing empirical sources are in minority and insufficient. Therefore, the interviews are argued to be the main empirical source of the research. The interviewees' insights have contributed to the understanding of Faroese foreign affairs strategy and of the cooperation in the WNC, as well as leading to questions and themes of interest in relation to the research (appendix 3), thus it can also be argued that they have all been beneficial to the inquiry which is the most important reason for conducting elitist interviews (Richards, 1996: 200).

Using interviewing as research method correlates firstly with the philosophical understandings of the research framework because semi-structured interviews are open for deviation initiated by the interviewee and interviewer and seeks an insight into knowledge and information that the interviewee possesses which cannot be found elsewhere (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Kristensen, 2009). It provides the interviewer with insight into the social reality of the interviewee through dialogue and interpretation; therefore it makes sense to carry out several interviews with different interviewees about the same subject because all interviewees have their own interpretations about the themes concerning the case.

Secondly, interviewing is also a method that goes well with case study designs because through semi-structured interviewing hidden themes and meanings of the case studied can be discovered and mapped (de Vaus, 2011: ch. 13), which the researcher has not discovered within existing empirical findings but will enrich the knowledge and details of the specific case. Furthermore, they can provide help in understanding context and atmosphere of the specific case as well as contact information to other elitists who might be of interest to the research (Richards, 1996: 200). The interviews continued as long as there were relevant people left to interview and most of the interviewees were recommended from a former interviewee, the so called *snowball effect* (ibid.).

## **Interview Guides**

Before initiating the interviews two interview guides were devised (appendix 4 & 5) which were formed in accordance with a semi-structured interview model. This implies that the interviews are based on specific but flexible themes which make room for deviation and for including and exploring new topics put forward by the interviewees (Kristensen, 2007: 282-85). The themes are made in interaction with the areas the interviewer needs to enlighten and gain information about, which can be driven by theory or empirical data (ibid.). In this study the themes are driven by theory. Each theme contains topics and questions that are specifically constructed to cover the subject (ibid.), however, the questions do not necessarily need to be asked literally or in that order (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: ch. 7).

The first guide covers five themes related to the theories, concepts and research object (excluding introduction and debriefing) (appendix 4). When forming and developing questions using a case study design the questions asked must be grounded in and reflect the theoretical perspective and research objective of the study (George & Bennett, 2005: 5). Therefore, all themes and questions are devised in order to associate with the theories and concepts of small states, regionalism and institutions but also some empirical understandings and knowledge on the subject has been included (especially in the last interview which was carried out much later in the process than the others, see appendix 2).

The second guide was levelled at the Greenlandic and Icelandic interviewees in order to gain insight into Greenlandic and Icelandic affairs in relation to the cooperation in the West Nordic Council (appendix 5). The aim is to understand how these two countries respectively aim to cooperate in the Council and what they are seeking to achieve from the cooperation. It is not a comparison per se but an effort to understand how the different parties of the Council perceive and see the future of the Council, as well as what they expect to gain from the cooperation. Therefore, a different guide had to be made for this purpose which contains three themes which focus on the Greenlandic and Icelandic interests and foreign relations as well as their respective perspectives on the cooperation.

Most of the questions asked in the two guides are all short and quite open, which makes every interviewee able to answer differently to the same question even though they are standard questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009: 154-5). Since the guide is only to be seen as guidance to the interviewer and does not have to be followed in correct manner, many questions arise during the interview which have been follow-up questions, explorative questions, more specified questions,

direct questions, indirect questions, structured questions, interpretive questions and sometimes silence have helped the interviewee to reach a concluding answer or to speak even more about a certain theme (appendix 6-18).

### **Triangulation**

Other methods with other sources of data (see appendix 3 for list of collected and used empirical sources) than interviews will substitute the empirical findings from the different interviews in elucidating and explaining the different phenomena of the case when analysing through the use of concepts and theories from chapter 2. Triangulation is important when conducting qualitative research in order to support claims and arguments, but it is also a consideration that must be made when using a qualitative case study design to legitimate the research; it is not as easy to measure validity in qualitative research as with quantitative research, since measuring validity within qualitative work is not comparable to those of quantitative (Bryman, 2008).

Within the philosophy of social constructivism there is no correct or right interpretation, still an interpretation of a phenomenon needs to be supportable (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 20). This is done through selecting an analysis as somehow more reasonable or plausible than another (ibid.). Triangulation is one way of doing so. By this, the different material will check one against another (ibid.). By using triangulation as a tool within the collection of empirical sources the analysis will not only depend on the interviews but also on other data, which can support the data gained from the interview and thus make the case and arguments stronger without falsifying or verifying the theories or empirical findings.

The themes in the analysis have made on the basis of the information collected through the interviewees which implies that the interviewees have agreed on most of the themes since it has been possible to detect a pattern. Therefore, the different interview statements are triangulating each other mostly which is argued to be legitimate since they all come from different interview sources. Since there are only very few secondary sources to be found on the subject, other data than the interviews can only serve as a supplement when it exists. Hence, some arguments may only rest on information gained from interviewing.

### **Thematic Analysis**

When collecting several interviews it is important to keep record of all the information gained from the interviews in order to utilise the material properly within the analysis. One way of doing so is to

thematise the interview records through a four step process where the data is being thematised according to chosen themes. At the end, a comparison of these themes will be made across all the conducted interviews that have been transcribed (Kristensen, 2007).

A thematic analysis is grounded on hermeneutics and focuses on the parts and the whole in the hermeneutical cycle (Kristensen, 2007: 289). This means that all quotations and themes that are extracted from the respective interviews need to be analysed in relation to the interview they are a part of and in relation to quotations and themes from the other interviews. The aim of this way of analysing is to construct a holistic understanding of every single theme which can be used further in the analysis (ibid.: 290). In this way all eleven interviews can be compared to each other on the ground of the themes from the interview guide. Thus, all the answers within these five themes in guide 1 (appendix 4) can be compared and analysed across as well as the answers within the three themes from guide 2 (appendix 5) can be compared to each other.

The four steps of thematic analysis are categorised into phases which make up the beginning to end of the process of analysis. Starting with coding and categorisation, next step is condensation of opinions stemming internally from the interviews, third there will be a comparison and recapitulation across the interviews and at last the conclusive analysis starts to come forward (Kristensen, 2007: 290.). The first two phases emphasise the firsthand perspective from the interviewee, thus the researcher needs to maintain the interviewee's presentation and answers and the significance the answers contain. The quotations need to relate to the whole of that interview. Afterwards, within the next two phases, the researcher's interpretation steps more into forefront (ibid.).

The first phase constitutes coding and categorisation of the interview material as mentioned above. Here, the transcripts were carefully read one by one and quotations that seemed relevant were marked. These quotations can both represent the themes in the interview guide (which in this case stems from the theoretical framework) or from new themes that emerge during the process (ibid.). Some new themes were found during this process, such as the necessity of creating a Faroese identity outwards and the potential of increasing the cooperation in the WNC (appendix 3).

Afterwards, the different themes that were located during the coding needed to be categorised by grouping the quotations in relation to previous and new themes which resulted in six great themes with sub-topics (appendix 2). In order to check the relevance of the new themes uncovered during

coding, all interviews had to be read in order to find similar themes in some of the others. This can contribute to a better description of the new themes and to specify and empirically nuance the new themes (Kristiansen, 2007) as well to triangulate. This process is intended for the researcher to find different patterns and hidden themes that the researcher other ways would not have discovered (ibid.). In effect, the outcome of analysing the interview records may be unforeseen and is contingent of how the researcher interprets the data.

The second phase emphasises the necessity of condensing the interviewees' opinions – it is a recapitulation which takes its point of departure within the interviewee's phrasing and what that phrasing means, thus it is a description of that person's statement. This was done by taking all of the relevant statements covering the different themes out of the interviews and into subject of the study and are carried separately forward in the analysis because these descriptions need to distinguish from the researcher's interpretations (ibid.: 291). This phase works as a base for the further use of quotations and descriptions from the respective interviews because they constitute the whole the parts are being interpreted in relation to (ibid.).

The third phase is the first step of the researcher's analysis because here the empirical data is compared and summed up with the categories where the focus is held on similarities and differences, continuation and non-compliances or dilemmas (ibid.: 292). The process ends with a summary and analysis of every single category. The theoretical framework will be included and the researcher needs to account for how every category contributes to answering the research question (ibid.). The fourth phase is the final analysis which can be grounded on summaries of different problematic stated throughout the study (ibid.: 292). The problematic will be based on categories emerged from the empirical material gained from the interviews as well as other included literature.

### **Critique of Method**

The most important issue to consider when choosing empirical sources is to make sure that they supplement each other so that no source will stand alone (Richards, 1996: 204). Collecting different methods for a research - in this case triangulation as described above - is necessary to legitimate qualitative research by supporting the statements from the interviews and other collected findings. By using triangulation is to counter some of the critique, that has been given on qualitative interview as single method (ibid.).

Since all of the interviews have been elitist interviews, it is necessary to point out some features which may be problems instead of advantages; problems of methodological, operational and interpretational character (Richards, 1996: 200). The first issue may be unrepresentative sampling, which might come to view in the case of Greenland because the chair of the Greenlandic delegation did not reply on the inquiry about the interview and therefore only two out of three of the chairs of the three delegations to the WNC have been interviewed. Instead, the attempt to get an interview with the Greenlandic vice chair proved successful, thus Greenland's view and interpretations of the cooperation have been included just not from the chairs point of view and understanding.

A counter argument against unrepresentative sampling is that the snowball effect has been used in all interviews except the last one. Thus there has been an examination and consideration of other possible interviewees which have been recommended. Some who were recommended have been deselected who might have been able to contribute with a more nuanced understanding of the examined case because of the time frame and resources. The reliability of the interviewees is always questionable (Richards, 1996: 200). Again, triangulation can be argued to counter this issue. In this way all answers and statements of the interviewees will be supported by the other interviewees or through other empirical findings appointed by the researcher.

All of the chosen interviewees are still active within politics or civil services, thus they are still engaged into the themes and overall subject of the thesis on a daily basis. However, their personal interpretation of events and happenings must be held against them as they are the source. Elitist interviewing is about gaining highly subjective accounts of problematic matters which they have an informed or specialised knowledge about (Richards, 1996; Kristensen, 2007). Some of the interviewees including Sanderson, Olsen, Djurhuus, Balle, Justinusen, Holm-Jacobsen and Johansen have approved the statements used in the analysis before this dissertation was handed as this was arranged when the interviews were carried out.

As mentioned earlier above, some questions asked by the interviewer might be leading and affect the interviewees' opinions during the interview in that they change their mind about a specific subject (Richards, 1996: 201). It is hard to argue against this since the opinion of the interviewee was not known before the interview was conducted however one example may be found in one of the interviews (appendix 14). Here, Balle changes her priority list of Faroese foreign activities in relation to their importance. At the beginning the WNC is number three but ends at number one when not considering trade agreements.

Also, it is important to keep in mind that the interviewer can become deferential if the interviewee is notorious and this also implies that a problem of power relations can occur; the interviewee may want to control or dominate the interview (Richards, 1996; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Kristensen, 2007). However, all interviews conducted in relation to this dissertation have been completed from beginning to end meaning that all themes from the interview guide have been covered as wished, depending on the field of work of the interviewee. However, it is natural that the elitist interviewees hold the power during the interview (Richards, 1996: 201), and to this it can be argued that conducting a semi-structured interview allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to deviate from the process and guide (Aberbach, 2002; Kristensen, 2007).

# CHAPTER 4

## - Faroese Foreign Affairs: Cooperation in the West Nordic Council

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### 4.1 The Faroes, Who are They?

**“...if you do not fit into a box then you do not exist. “**

Sanderson, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Defining the Faroes in terms of statehood is a complicated affair since they are not a sovereign state but neither a Danish county and furthermore because of the unclear and dissident definitions of small and micro-states. Defining the Faroes as a small or a micro-state is decisive for the nature of challenges and opportunities the Faroes may have and furthermore to how the Faroes address the challenges and opportunities that comes with the size. This is crucial in regard to examining how Faroese interests can be managed through cooperation in the WNC. In this section the Faroes will be defined.

#### **A Micro-State?**

Considering the total Faroese population alone the Faroes will be categorised as a European micro-state. Considering the quantitative and qualitative definition of a micro-state altogether it can be discussed whether or not the Faroes belong to the micro-state category. A micro-state is one who cannot fulfil the minimum requirement of international presence. In the new report on Faroese foreign affairs the Faroese prime minister states that only the Faroes can and should exercise Faroese foreign interests and it makes no difference whether the Faroes are a sovereign or not, and he notes that he has the responsibility of these fields with the limits that come with the special situation and arrangements (Account of FFA, 2014: 4).

As noted in the introduction the Faroes have several memberships of different international and regional cooperation, and the Faroes play an important role in regard to the RFMOs since the

Faroese are a nation of fisheries the prime minister claims. Through the Home Rule Act (1948) and the Takeover Act (2005) the Faroes negotiate on their own behalf within RFMOs since fisheries is an area undertaken by the Faroes (statsministeriet.dk/4). The Faroes are able to join IOs but if Denmark is a member they cannot be a full member but become associated members of that IO and if both Greenland and the Faroes are members and Denmark not they have to agree before any decision-making is done (Authorisation Act, 2005).

Also, the Faroe Islands manage their own trade agreements confer the Authorisation Act (2005) and as mentioned in the chapter 1 the Faroes have five bilateral trade agreements. Justinussen (05.11.14: 1) argues that the activities the Faroes are participating in within the WNC are a form of foreign affairs in a foreign affairs forum without Danish participation. Furthermore, most Faroese ministries are conducting foreign affairs by committing fields of work and agreements that are of an international sphere as well as the Faroes have a minister of Nordic Co-operation to the Nordic Council of Ministers (Account of FFA, 2014: 4). Within fisheries it is claimed that the Faroes are perceived as any other state and acts as any other state (Mikkelsen 05.11.14).

But at the same time they are being questioned by other states by for example China, which is sceptical about the home rule arrangements between Denmark and the Faroes (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14; Johansen, 19.12.14; Ólavsdóttir, 2009). A micro-state is also one who claims to have jurisdiction over its territory but is questioned by others which is the case here. However, the Circular note that was made in regard to the Authorisation Act (2005) was devised in order to explain the arrangements between Denmark and the Faroes to the members of the UN (statsministeriet.dk). Therefore, it is argued that the Faroes are legally defended by Denmark in their actions if anyone questions their authority and with the launching of the circular note this issue is countered.

Being a low populated country also has its limitations regarding resources (Hovgaard et al., 2014: 9; Olsen, 18.12.14), which is a characteristics of a micro-state. As argued by the Faroese prime minister above, the Faroes undertake their own foreign affairs only limited by the legal arrangements between Denmark and the Faroes which can be interpreted as the Faroes are capable of managing foreign affairs within the fields of their jurisdiction. Also, the resources and capacity to do so lies within the Faroese Foreign Service, associated representations and different ministries who hold the competence (Account of FFA, 2014).

In regard to embassies in key capitals the Faroes have representations in Brussels, London and Moscow, and in addition to these the Faroes have representations in Copenhagen<sup>3</sup> and Reykjavík (Account of FFA, 2014) and the prime minister has even expressed the importance of opening a representation in China (kvf.fo). The new arrangements consent the government of the Faroes to employ Faroese representatives at Danish diplomatic missions abroad in order to attend Faroese interests within fields that are taken over (statsministeriet.dk).

Based on the above, it can be discussed if this is to fulfil the requirement since foreign policy is still under Danish authorisation and the Faroes are limited in exercising international relations because of that. But it is argued that under the circumstances of not being a sovereign, the Faroes arguably do have the capacity and resources to handle Faroese interests where they are legitimate to do so hence the Faroes do fulfil the minimum requirement of international participation and thus not categorised as a micro-state according to that definition.

### **A Small State?**

Moving forward to the definition of a small state, which is different from the one of a micro-state in regard to size of population but also within the ability to act internationally, a small state is tied to a spatial-temporal context which implies that a small state is determined in accordance to the context it exists which effects how it copes with being in a power disparity and exercising power when being the weaker actor and not being able to change the settings. The small state definition is a comparative concept therefore the Faroes need to be seen in relation to another state or entity in order to define it as one. Here, the Faroes are seen in relation to Denmark, even though the Faroes are engaged into different sorts of power configurations – cooperation – as accounted for in the introduction.

In this context the Faroes are the weaker since Denmark has a population above five millions (denmark.dk); still has the responsibility of many important fields of Faroese issues, including foreign and security policy (statsministeriet.dk) and the fact that Denmark still provides the Faroes with an annual block grant. Looking at figure 1(appendix 6) Denmark functions as a protector to the Faroes in regard to all shelter types listed, which implicitly states that Denmark is greater and larger than the Faroes, according to theory. Based on this it is argued that the Faroes are in a power disparity with Denmark as the weaker part.

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<sup>3</sup> The Faroese service in Copenhagen does not officially have diplomatic status but they are treated and act as one.

Furthermore, the Faroes are stuck with the situation of being in the Danish Realm and their relational ties are defined in the different acts accounted for and in the Danish Constitution (1953) thus the Faroes are stuck with the settings unless Denmark decides, for example, in 1946 a referendum was held on the question of independency (arbejderen.dk). The referendum was an effect of the British settlement of the Faroes during World War II and the Faroese people voted yes for independency but the Danish government did not accept the referendum and the Faroes ended becoming part of the new Danish Constitution in 1953 (ibid.).

The Faroes need to cope with being in that situation – as the weaker part in a power disparity – and still be able to exercise power if categorised as a small state. The Faroes do possess power in form of natural resources and geo-strategic location which are their assets as presented in the introduction because these assets are strong means within negotiations and have been powerful phenomenon to both the Faroes and Denmark. With the Faroes taking over more authority from Denmark, which was the objective of implementing the Takeover Act (2005), Denmark is to some extent letting some of its sovereignty to the Faroes. Arguably, this is empowering the Faroes on those fields they undertake and thus giving the Faroes the opportunity to exercise power within these fields and with the Authorisation Act (2005) they are also able to exercise some power within foreign affairs.

Therefore, the Faroes are in a different situation now than before the Takeover and Authorisation Acts (2005) were implemented. In order to conclude whether the Faroes can be defined as a small state, their actual exercising of power needs to be examined and is done through mapping three fields: Faroese responsibility, increased attention from extern actors and Faroes' role in the international society. These fields are patterns found during the processing of the interviews and are indicating if whether or not the Faroes are exercising power through the use of their power possessions and not only being a pawn in the hands of great powers.

### **Increased Responsibility**

Along with other global changes the decisions Denmark has made regarding international affairs have affected the Faroes and their behaviour. Hoydal (05.11.14) lists three reasons why the Faroes have been compelled to exercise their own foreign affairs: First, the Mackerel War has been a reason for the Faroes taking international action against the EU and to defend their interests since Denmark was tied up to EU treaties (ibid.). This is also emphasised by Mikkelsen (05.11.14) who states that increased responsibility is contingent to increased international activity and addresses the Mackerel War as the reason for this since Danish and Faroese interests were mutual conflicting.

During that period, Denmark was not able to provide political shelter, and to some extent economic shelter with the loss of export markets, to the Faroes as it ought to according to figure 1 (appendix 6). Therefore, Denmark had to give the Faroes authorisation to conduct the case in the WTO which the Faroes otherwise are not authorised to since they are only an associated member (fiskeritidende.dk). Here, the Faroes defended themselves through an IO's rules and rights which are one sort of shelter small states enjoy from IOs. By not being protected by Denmark the Faroes were forced to take action as explained in the introduction, which is in line with Hoydal's argument.

Second, Hoydal (05.11.14) claims that the ongoing crisis between Ukraine and Russia forces the Faroes to act. The Faroes and Russia have had trade relations for more than 40 years and opened the Faroese Representation in Moscow this year (Account of FFA, 2014: 7-8). The Faroes have continued their relations with Russia even though the relation between Russia and other western countries has changed because of the tense situation in Ukraine (ibid.). however, this is has forced the Faroes to make statements regarding their position to Russia and the west since thus the Faroes have not been seen as neutral or objective in this matter (business.dk).

This is also an example of that the Faroes are facing challenges with a greater global aspect, as small states do now because of the globalisation and can lead to security issues if the situation between the West and Russia increases. Third, when Denmark joined the EU they left the Faroes behind because the Faroese government was not interested in joining the EU and a few years later the Faroese fishing zone was extended which demanded action from the Faroese authorities (Hoydal, 05.11.14: 6) which is coherent with the account of fisheries in the introduction.

Holm-Jacobsen (04.12.14) emphasises that the Faros' increasing responsibility in foreign activity is a result of a political aim to gain more self-governance within external affairs in order to become more visible on the global arena. The slowly but forward moving of adapting more responsibility to the Faroese authorities from Denmark is a natural process within the existing arrangements between the two, the Faroes slowly get more authority and are able to negotiate and make decisions regarding foreign affairs without Danish representatives but within the current framework (ibid.). Johansen agrees with this point of view and notes that it is a natural, organic process the Faroese need to cope with and are adapting to (Johansen, 19.12.14).

Also Balle (01.12.15) somehow agrees with this statement saying that because of the global political changes and the increasing attention on Arctic it is a natural process that the Faroese

foreign affairs' responsibility also increases; new challenges create more responsibility where the Faroes have to take on an active character and have a subjective foreign affairs approach. These statements are signifying a change in Faroese international activity and that it is an internal, natural process the Faroes have chosen to take. Along with Hoydal's arguments it can be concluded that the Faroes are changing their actions within foreign affairs towards a more active position – internal or external pressures are making the Faroes become more active internationally.

### **Increased Attention**

The Faroes have received more attention and visits from many different countries than in the past, especially from the Far East: China, Japan and South Korea which have an interest in the Faroese-Arctic relation, Faroes' role in the AC and how the Faroese view Arctic affairs and so on (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14). The Faroese Foreign Service is somehow convinced that these visits are partly because these countries are interested in creating a relationship to the Faroes as a part of their strategy becoming more visible in the region around the Faroes (ibid.). The increased attention is not in the same degree as the attention Greenland is experiencing but it is related to Arctic affairs and it is what the Faroese Foreign Service expects when the ASR for real becomes active (ibid.).

Sanderson is sure that the Faroes have become more visible and known during her two year period in Brussels which is an effect of a Faroese strategy to become more visible and to expand knowledge about the Faroes (Sanderson, 11.12.14: 4). This suggests that the attention the Faroes have received throughout the years might stem from diplomacy and planned strategy hence an internal decision to change the perception of Faroese identity. However, Sanderson notes that the perception of the Faroes is different now compared to before the Mackerel War within the EU community in Brussels, and as an example she uses a German civil servant's remark at a reception saying: "the Faroe Islands, of course we have heard of you" (ibid: 8).

The Mackerel War has changed the perception of the Faroes a bit because the Faroes chose to stand up against the EU (ibid.), which is an example of the Faroes actually exercising its power when the Faroes chose to stand up against the EU and demand a higher quota related to increased fisheries. Balle (01.12.14) is somehow in agreement with Sanderson on this topic stating that the politicians who are aware of the geopolitical changes and what it means for the Faroes are pressuring the Faroese political organs in order to keep up with the changes and respond to them. Also, when participating in IOs Faroese representatives get a lot of input which indirectly pressures the

administration to act and play an international role because it is expected from the other participants (ibid.: 3).

Based on the above arguments and statements it can be argued that the Faroes are experiencing more attention because they are perceived as an Arctic player but this is not the only reason. The Faroes have themselves planned strategies for how to change the position of the Faroes as an inactive non-sovereign. The changed and increased attention is to be seen as a tool of power the Faroes can use to exercise their powers.

### **Role**

Since the international political landscape changed after the end of the Cold War it also changed the role of the Faroes since their geopolitical significance became weaker as a consequence of a more stabilised world. The traditional perception of a small state was that it functioned as an object to be manoeuvred by greater states, which was the case during the Cold War. It is argued that Denmark allowed the US and NATO access to the Faroes in order to gain more influence in NATO (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014) which emphasises Faroes inactive and incapability to act other than being an object to Denmark and other states.

Fox argued that during war the small state could exercise its power because it was in possession of power assets in form of geo-strategic position, but the Faroes were not able to do so during the Cold War since Denmark had the authority and used the Faroes to exercise power. This is more coherent with the (non-)actions of a micro-state than a small state since the Faroes had no ability to exercise its power possessions, as well as an example of the Faroes' inability to change the settings. After the war, the Faroes and their geostrategic location were not very needed which is coherent with Fox's theory except from the fact that she said they would not survive in times of peace.

However, the changes in Arctic affairs have affected the Faroes as argued above and perhaps even partly changed their role once again to become an objective external actors are in need of because of their geostrategic location within the Arctic Circle (Hovgaard & Eythórsson, 2013). The difference is that the Faroes now have the ability to be the actor who exercises power instead of Denmark, which was the case during the Cold War and might even be able to change their role as an inactive object to become an active actor.

Referring to a meeting with the Icelandic president discussing the geo-political position of the Faroes and Iceland Djurhuus repeats the Icelandic president's statement: "imagine how important

Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes were during World War II and the Cold War then imagine now; we possess everything that is in the ocean and below the ocean. Everything the world wants speaking of sailing routes, geopolitics, rescue and a line of other things that our area embraces. Because of this the focus on us has never been greater than right now” (Djurhuus, 29.10.14: 12). External actors do have an interest in the resources in this region which the Faroes also hold (Nielsson, 2014a: 10).

The difference between then and now may also lie within the Faroes’ own consciousness and self-perception because now the Faroes truly understands how important the Faroes are geo-strategically and the only way to realise this is through participation and to realise what truly is going on here (Djurhuus, 29.10.14: 12). As stated by Thorhallsson, the political elite’s will to change and recognition of their status as a small state is important if the small states is to become proactive instead of inactive, which might be happening. Considering Arctic affairs, the Faroes might have realised exactly this with the launching of the Faroese Arctic strategy: the Faroes, a Country in the Arctic (Føroyar, eitt land í Arktisk, 2013). The Faroes devised the strategy despite of that Denmark had devised one Arctic strategy for the Kingdom of Denmark (Bailes & Jákupsstovu, 2013).

Thus, it can be argued that the Faroes somehow have done so to put the Faroes on the list among great states that all have an Arctic strategy in order to put their interests on the Arctic agenda (Bailes & Jákupsstovu, 2013). Here, the Faroes are coping with their smallness by using their geo-political resources in a context of power disparity in a period of peace but with increased focus of the geo-economic and geostrategic opportunities in this region. The happenings in the Arctic are also changing Faroes’ role in the Arctic community because the opening of the ASR puts a pressure on the Faroes within SAR and a demand for the Faroes to participate actively (Djurhuus, 29.10.14: 4), since the Faroes in 2012 undertook SAR from the Danish authorities (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014: 130).

The geo-strategic position of the Faroes is again the reason for increased attention and significance to external actors and not war as claimed by Fox. But the actions of the Faroes and their opportunities now are different than previously and therefore the Faroes seem to be in apposition of recognition as well as they are trying to cope with their situation and use the opportunities they are given. With the Faroese Arctic strategy, for example, the Faroes have taken an active approach to the changes and are putting Faroese interests on the Arctic agenda.

## **A Semi-State?**

The Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States (1933) uses five requirements to define statehood confer article 1: 1. permanent population, 2. defined territory, 3. a government, 4. the capacity to manage relations to other states, and 5. a membership of the UN (Hovgaard et al., 2014: 7). The first three requirements are not very discussable since the Faroe Islands are a marked territory with a permanent population as stated in chapter 1. Also, the Faroes have had their own executive and a legislative power since year 900 when the parliament was established (Ombudsman, 2014: 14). Since then the Faroese parliamentarians have determined Faroese public affairs and how these are to be financed (Hovgaard et al., 2014: 9).

Requirement 4 is not that simple but is interpreted in the same manner as the definition of a micro-state because here it was stated that the Faroes are fulfilling the minimum requirement of international presence only limited by the fact that they are not a sovereign and therefore they are not legally able to perform increased foreign affairs. Therefore it can be concluded that the Faroes does not fully act according to requirement 4 but does so within the fields they have undertaken. Which means that requirement 4 can be met halfway.

As well, the Faroes cannot be a member of the UN since it is not a sovereign state, which is the fifth and newest requirement of the Montevideo Convention (Hovgaard et al., 2014: 7). Based on this, the Faroes fulfil three out of five requirements and one requirement is half fulfilled, while the last requirement is not possible as a non-sovereign, therefore it is argued that the Faroes are entitled to be defined as a *semi-state*.

## **A Small Semi-State**

Based on the above discussion it is claimed that the Faroes fit better into the category as a small state than a micro-state when considering the qualitative definitions – in regard to the quantitative definition the Faroes is a micro-state. The argument is that the Faroes have increased foreign affairs responsibility stemming from both internal and external happenings and actions, as well as increased attention the Faroes have been experiencing shows the significance of the Faroes as a possible actor. Also, their role as an active actor on the international arena is putting the Faroes in a position where they are able to exercise power, and one step has been the devising of the Faroese Arctic strategy. Because of the increased international activity the micro-state definition has been declined.

The Faroes are the weaker part in an asymmetric power disparity with Denmark but they are in a period of change where they are starting to cope with it by exercising their power assets instead of possessing them. Because they are not a sovereign but still exercise foreign affairs in some matters and because they almost fulfil the criteria of a sovereign state, the Faroes is argued to be defined as a small semi-state. This definition provides the Faroes with challenges and opportunities which will be examined in the forthcoming sections. Because of this, this is contributing to the understanding of, how the WNC can function as mean in pursuing and protecting Faroese interests.

## **4.2 Denmark and the Faroes, Conflicting Interests?**

**“The best way to take care of your interests is to do it yourself.”**

Djurhuus, 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2014

In the introduction a few examples of the differences between Danish and Faroese interests were presented and emphasised, especially in regard to the Cold War and the Mackerel War. In the first analysis the Faroes were defined as a small semi-state, which implies that the Faroes are coping with being in a power disparity with Denmark as the weaker part but are still exercising power, which is widening Faroese foreign affairs' responsibility. One reason for this is the differences in interests between Denmark and the Faroes. Here, these differences will be studied further with the aim of understanding what consequences the distinct interests have on the relation between Denmark and the Faroes, and how it influences the Faroes.

### **The Difference**

Small states are bound to the international economy and the instability of the international financial sector, as claimed in the theoretical chapter, therefore small states need economic and political shelter to overcome economic instability and to provide economic growth and political stability. The Faroes experienced such instability during the Mackerel War since the EU market was no longer available. At that time the Faroes were in need of shelter, which was supposed to be provided by Denmark because Denmark functions as both an economic and political shelter to the Faroes as shown in figure 1 (appendix 6). But Denmark was tied to the EU and could not provide that security, as also argued in previous analysis.

The EU had threatened the Faroes with sanctions for more than year before they became reality (Skorini, 2013a) still Denmark had not been able to prevent the sanctions, as a shelter is suppose to. During the sanctions Denmark could neither provide assistance in opening their market nor their port to Faroese vessels since it had to follow the EU and sanction their own territorial area. The assistance Denmark could provide was to give the Faroes the authority to use the arbitrary courts of the WTO and the UN so that the Faroes could conduct the case themselves against the EU, which is a form of diplomatic assistance through the use of rules and norms of IOs.

After the sanctions abolished the Faroes were in need of finding new markets to prevent a similar crisis (Johansen, 19.12.14), but since the Faroes have taken over their own trade relations in accordance with the Authorisation Act (2005) Denmark was not obligated to assist the Faroes in this even though that would be the role of a shelter state. This can be argued to be grounded in that the Faroes chose not to join the EC, now the EU, when Denmark did which indicates that Denmark and the Faroes have different interests, and with the example of the Mackerel War the interests where in fact mutual conflicting.

Before the Faroes launched their own Arctic strategy Denmark had been devising two Arctic strategies on behalf of the Danish Kingdom (Bailes & Jákupsstovu, 2013). The first strategy had to be rewritten because Faroese and Greenlandic interests were not represented enough in the first edition, but even after that the Faroes decided to conduct their own Arctic strategy (ibid.). The challenges and opportunities following the changes in the Arctic are of economic character (Nilesson, 2014a), therefore Denmark was not providing the Faroes with economic protection nor representing their interests through their influence as a member of the AC, which is the only political cooperation in the Arctic (ibid.). Thus it can also be argued that Denmark is not providing the Faroes with full diplomatic support in this regard.

Another example is from the Faroese Representation in London located in the Danish Embassy where the cooperation between Denmark and the Faroes was difficult because the Faroes were interested in entering into the Scottish market, whereas Denmark was more interested in security policy with focus on Afghanistan, Pakistan and the EU (Johansen, 19.12.14: 4). The differences in focus and priorities can be understood with the argument that the Faroes, as a small semi-state, has different interests than Denmark, a larger state, which according to theory is common. The Faroes are looking for new market opportunities whereas Denmark is into hard security issues which are beyond Faroese control and influence because, as argued by Thorhallsson, security is determined by

power politics which small states have no influence on, even though they are more vulnerable to these issues and is one of the greatest concerns to small states.

Along with the actions of Denmark during the Cold War and the different stances Denmark and the Faroes have taken in regard to Russia, as accounted for in previous chapter and section, are examples of situations where Danish and Faroese interests have been distinctive, even conflicting.

It can be claimed, when Danish and Faroese interests are incompatible the Faroes are indirectly forced to act and find other channels to attend their interests which enlarges the gap between Denmark and the Faroes, and with the growing adoption of fields and widening of Faroese foreign affairs' responsibility Denmark's role as a shelter decreases. Thus, the Faroes cannot then expect Denmark to be functioning as a protector in the case of a crisis or to prevent one.

### **Maintaining the Unity**

Holm-Jacobsen notes that the great focus on Greenland has made Denmark very careful about not provoking Greenlanders or Faroese since they want to keep both in the Danish Realm (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14: 2-3). Johansen notes the same reflection in that the Danish government would rather have the Faroes and Greenland to handle their affairs with more authority, because the consequences of not giving Greenland and the Faroes more responsibility and decision-making might turn into a referendum on sovereignty which Denmark has no interest in (Johansen, 2014).

For example, in the AC the three parties are represented by one delegation where Denmark holds the chair, and during the Danish chairmanship 2009-2011 Denmark had all three countries sit around the table and the Faroes and Greenland where represented by their own flags, as well as all decisions are made in agreement (Nielsson, 2014a: 18; Account of FFA, 2014: 21). This is an example of Denmark providing the Faroes with more influence in the AC, which they need to as a political shelter because this is one way of providing diplomatic support. Conflicting interests and the effects of it transmit on the Danish-Faroese relationship with that the Faroese get more room for maneuver because Denmark has an interest in maintaining the settled arrangement in the Danish Realm, and being flexible is one way of preserving it (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14.).

Also, the special interests of the Faroes which Denmark has recognised in the two new acts of 2005 and by launching two special additional legal documents: the circular note (2005) and the Fámjin Declaration (2005) show Denmark's effort in maintaining the relation by making it flexible. From

this, Denmark might be using their role as a shelter to maintain the Faroes in the Kingdom, as well as providing the Faroes with more sovereignty through the Acts, but the legal arrangements are also limiting the Faroes.

## **Limitations**

With the changes in the legal arrangements between Denmark and the Faroes the Faroes have been given the opportunity to represent and safeguard their interests within foreign affairs with the Authorisation Act (2005). However, there are still limitations the Faroes need to relate to when acting internationally which hinders the Faroes in pursuing and protecting their interests through international influence. Confer the Authorisation Act (2005) article 1, paragraph 4 the Faroes do not have any authority to decision-making and signing treaties within IOs when Denmark is a member too.

This limitation is restricting the Faroes in participating actively within international cooperation and thus limiting the Faroes from obtaining other shelter relations in form IOs. As noted, Denmark does have the greatest shelter role to the Faroes as shown in figure 1 but when Denmark is not able to attend Faroese interests, as shown with the presented examples, the Faroes need to find others who can. Also, it can be argued that this limitation prevents the Faroes from influencing international affairs, thus it is indirectly limiting the Faroe Islands in pursuing and protecting Faroese national interests.

## **The Costs of Shelter**

Another factor that needs to be included when evaluating potential protectors is the cost of getting it as introduced in chapter 2. The cost for the Faroes to be part of the Danish Realm and get economic and political shelter is sovereignty – the highest cost. The Faroes are self-governing but still Danish territory and where the responsibilities are grounded in the legal acts. However, the more authority the Faroe Islands takeover from Denmark, which implies that the cost is decreasing since the Faroes are getting more sovereignty, the less protection Denmark is obligated to provide the Faroes. Thus, if the Faroes over time will attain more sovereignty from Denmark then the shelter role of Denmark needs to be supplemented. Therefore, according to theory, the Faroes ought to find shelter somewhere where the price is lower and where they will get full protection when needed.

When a small state is seeking shelter it needs to choose the one most favourable regarding its needs according to Kristinsson and Thorhallsson. In figure 1 the Faroes are getting political, economic and

societal shelter from Denmark - including hard and soft security - but based on the arguments above, Denmark is not able to fully carry out Faroese interests in form of political and economic backing as during the Mackerel War or because Denmark is not obligated to do so anymore, for example to reach new market opportunities in Britain. This is where the WNC becomes interesting because, as stated in the introduction, the members of the WNC share many similarities regarding challenges and opportunities which provide great potential for functioning as a shelter since the role as a shelter to a small state is in this analysis seen to be coherent with sharing interests.

In addition, the cooperation in the WNC is one of two where the Faroes act without Denmark thus article 1, paragraph 4 does not apply since Denmark is not a member of the WNC. This means that the Faroes have greater ability to influence the work in the WNC and make decisions on their own behalf than in other cooperation. The article does also include Greenland, however, it is argued that Faroese and Greenlandic interests are more similar than Danish and Faroese, for example regarding Arctic affairs (Evaldsen, 15.04.15: 9).

### **Increased Sovereignty, Decreased Protection**

Based on the above analysis it can be concluded that the Faroes is losing protection from Denmark caused by their interests fluctuating in different directions; while Denmark enjoys EU integration the Faroes are enjoying increased authority. An authority the Faroes have gained because Denmark has an interest in keeping the Faroes in the Danish Kingdom even though their respective national interests might be conflicting. The arrangements that are suppose to give the Faroes more room for manoeuvre are also limiting the Faroes in influencing international affairs which in the end limits the Faroes in pursuing and protecting their interests, as well to establish new shelter relations. Shelter is important to the Faroes if they are to protect themselves from external actors who might be using the Faroes as object in their own strategies, which will hinder the Faroes in exercising power. This limitation can be overcome by cooperating in an institutional forum where Denmark is not a member such as the WNC, which also carries potential in being a channel the Faroes can use exercising their power in order to pursue and protect their interests.

### **4.3 Faroese Foreign Affairs, a Small State strategy?**

**“...it is essential to have relations to the surrounding world and to participate where actions take place.”**

Olsen, 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2014

The Faroes have several trade agreements and cooperates within different IOs but as argued in previous analysis the Faroes are limited in conducting the latter as any other state because of not being a non-sovereign. In this section Faroese international activity will be mapped with the objective of discovering a pattern of behavior, which reflects the one of small states and to figure out how the WNC fits into Faroes foreign affairs' strategy.

#### **Patterns of Behaviour**

According to theory small states act different from larger states because they have specific challenges to attend that stem from being small, but these problems and weaknesses of small states are important to map since they influence the behaviour of the Faroes. The Faroese Foreign Service works on the basis of the following strategy: to promote Faroese interests within the international society with the objective of guaranteeing and improving the livelihood of the Faroes (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14: 9). There is no formal written strategy, however, when examining their foreign affairs it is clear that a lot of effort is put on trade and to improve and increase trade relations.

#### **Trade Agreements**

The Faroese trade market is small and is hindering the Faroes in creating new trade relations because they have little to offer (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14). The Faroes import all utilised goods and everything that is produced in the Faroe Islands is exported – which stems with the export percentage already presented – therefore it is the responsibility of the government to create trade agreements for the Faroese fishing industry which must be done through active participation (Djurhuus, 29.10.14: 3). Small states are more reliant on import because their domestic markets are both small and less diversified, which is the case of the Faroes. The aim is to sign as many trade

agreements as possible since the Faroes not automatically have admission to the markets Denmark has because the EU negotiates all Danish trade agreements (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14: 5).

This is an indication that the Faroese economy is vulnerable and very reliable on other economies and foreign markets and is thus a special challenge to the Faroes. Therefore the Faroes must act to withstand their economic weakness. One way of countering the challenge is to spread their marked dependency to several economies instead of relying on one big which is what the Faroese government achieves for; especially after the Mackerel War new markets have become important because the Faroes are now trying to spread their market dependency on different markets instead of relying only on one large which used to be the EU market (Johansen, 19.12.14; Sanderson, 11.12.14).

As noted in the introduction the Faroes do have several trade agreements and the most extended free trade agreement the Faroe Islands yet have signed is the one with Iceland, the Hoyvik Agreement, because it supports the free movement of all commodities, services, capital and persons (Account of FFA, 2014: 8). According to statistics, since the agreements entered into force in 2006, a year after the implementation of the Authorisation Act, the inter-state trade between Iceland and the Faroes has increased and cooperation within other fields has increased too within health, education, journalism, research and cultural relations (ibid.).

From this, Iceland is partly functioning as an economic shelter through this agreement which also implies that sole trade agreements are not enough but the agreements have to be extended and incorporate all four areas of movement if the relation is to function as a shelter the Faroes can rely on and create stabile economic growth. The trade agreement the Faroes have with the EU is limited in its scope since Faroese fishery export to the EU is restricted but all EU export can be imported freely to the Faroes (government.fo). This both indicates how dependent the Faroes are on the EU market but also that the economic protection the EU can provide the Faroes is limited and there is no security for instability as during the Mackerel War.

If the EU were to function as a shelter the Faroes would have to be a member, which the Faroes reject because of the CFP as noted in chapter 2. Once again it shows that limited trade agreements are not enough, a small state needs protection through formal rules and norms. In the present government's Governmental Platform (2011) emphasis is on creating better markets for the industry and an Export Council has been launched. Balle states that the political priority is to create trade

relations and agreements for Faroese export and import and the objective of the government's foreign affairs' strategy is to become member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or the EEA, which might be the most important step for the Faroes to take to get access to free trade agreements (Balle, 01.12.14: 6).

This view reflects the theoretical statement that small states need to deal with their challenges through international cooperation. The current government's priority of trade agreements is coherent with both Thorhallsson and Katzenstein when they claim that most small states rely on one export good because the Faroes rely heavily on exporting fisheries goods, and therefore a strategy that prioritises trade agreements is understandable. However, limited trade agreements are not providing the Faroes with any security beyond the trade which makes them incomplete as shelters except from those who are unlimited and include all four areas of free trade.

Since the Faroese have undertaken trade agreements to Faroese authorities in accordance with the Authorisation Act (2005) Denmark is not functioning as a shelter directly in this area anymore. Also, Denmark is not able to provide market access and a common market as an EU member and the Faroes not being an EU member, which leaves the Faroes on their own finding new markets. But the Faroes would benefit from making agreements that are more extended than trade relations and more in form of an IO which can provide safety through rules and norms, according to theory.

### **International Participation**

Katzenstein claims that small states welcome political integration because it provides them with strategies to counter their weaknesses thus the Faroes ought to cooperate in political institutions providing them with security in form of rules and common strategies that will help the Faroes in achieve better markets but also political influence on international affairs – in this way Faroese interests can be pursued and protected. However, international participation and memberships are not collected in the same manner as the trade agreements are. Here, the Faroes need to be selective because their administrative resources are limited (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14: 6) - another challenge for small states.

When it comes to IOs the focus of the Faroese government is on RFMOs such as the NEAFC and the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) which are significant to the Faroe Islands (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14: 6). The international rules and regulations within agreements made in RFMOs provide the Faroes to catch the agreed quota, influence on the management on fisheries

which is important since the Faroes are a nation of fisheries, and with sustainable fisheries (Agreed Record, 2014) which in the end is an economic security, but also important in order to guarantee and develop the livelihood of the Faroes by promoting Faroese interests within the international society.

The AC has become more significant to the Faroe Islands because it has gotten a greater geopolitical significance whereas it used to be a more scientific cooperation therefore it is prioritised and the Faroes try to hold on and follow the progress and development of the AC (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14: 7). The Faroese Arctic strategy is an example of the importance of the Arctic and the cooperation in the AC, where the Faroes try to influence Arctic policy through the different working groups and by being a delegation member and not only being represented by Denmark (The Faroes, a Country in the Arctic, 2013). The Nordic cooperation – which includes the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers - is also of significance and the Faroes gain a lot from this engagement which they actually get for free because they do not pay members fee (ibid.: 6).

The Faroes enjoy the benefits of being members as all other members such as finances for different sorts of projects (Olsen, 18.12.14: 6). The NC is also very established thus cooperation in the NC is seen as a natural part of Faroese international activity therefore they choose to use resources on this cooperation instead of somewhere else (ibid.: 7). Another gain from Nordic cooperation is that they are great respected countries which can reflect some of that back to the Faroes (ibid.: 6). In figure 1 the NC works as a shelter to the Faroes in regard to societal shelter, which underlines the significance of the cooperation. Currently, Denmark has the presidency for the Nordic Council of Ministers together with the Faroes and Greenland (um.dk), and the Faroes are the spearhead of a Nordic project called “Growth in Blue Bio Economy” for the next three years (vp.fo).

In a speech the Faroese Minister of Co-operation of the Nordic Council of Ministers expressed that through the Danish presidency the Faroes are hoping to influence the procedure of membership so that non-sovereign entities in the Nordic cooperation: the Aland Islands, Greenland and the Faroe Islands can become full members (speech, 25.02.14). A full and recognised membership of the Nordic cooperation is very important to the Faroes and is even stated in the current government’s Governmental platform (2011). As of today, the Faroes have two representatives in the NC who are taken from the Danish delegation which now only has 16 since two are also given to Greenland (norden.org).

Here, the Faroes are using their influence to make changes in the constellation of the Nordic cooperation which is only possible because the Faroes have a Minister of Co-operation in the Nordic Council of Ministers, and it can be argued that the Faroes are trying to make the changes by making the small non-sovereign entities stand together on this matter, thus their possibility to influence increases. According to Keohane, the formation of alliances increases small states' ability to influence larger states, which is seen in this case.

Most interviewees including Djurhuus (29.10.14), Olsen (18.12.14), Hoydal (05.11.14), Mikkelsen (05.11.14) and Balle (01.12.14) state that it is of utmost significance to the Faroes to participate in and be members of IOs. Olsen (18.12.14: 5) notes that it is crucial to have foreign relations and to be where decisions and actions take place. This is in line with the general notion that small states gain influence through IOs but some relations can be seen as more than that. International participation is the key to development Hoydal (05.11.14: 4) claims and argues that the beginning of Faroese development was caused by international cooperation because the Faroese started to fish in the seas of other nations when the Faroes turned from being a peasant society into the era of the smacks.

Thus, as argued by Thorhallsson, attaining shelter is significant to achieve economic growth and stability. A full membership of the WTO during the Mackerel War could perhaps have prevented some of the happenings as well as sustained the Faroes with more stability throughout the crisis, as a shelter is suppose to. By only being an associated member, as the Faroes are and have been since 1995 (Ólavsdóttir, 2009: 36-37), they are not achieving the full package of shelter and thus they were not able to use the rules and norms of the WTO during the Mackerel War, but needed the authority from Denmark. Confer the WTO Marrakesh Agreement non-sovereign states can become full members of WTO and countries such as Hong Kong and Taiwan are already members (ibid.). Confer the Authorisation Act (2005), article 4 the Faroes can become full members of an IO, which Denmark is a member of too, if the IO allows non-sovereigns membership. The Faroese government is currently working on a full membership (Account of FFA, 2014).

International membership is thus not only about seeking influence but also to achieve protection through rules and norms as the theory dictates. However, it can be questioned why the Faroes have not been seeking full membership of the WTO earlier when the WTO is one IO that allows non-sovereigns to become full members, when the Authorisation Act (2005) as argued in previous section is limiting the Faroes in creating shelter relations and influencing international affairs.

Previous research on Faroese foreign affairs states that the government of the Faroes in 2009 were looking into WTO full membership (Ólavsdóttir, 2009). An organisation such as the WTO is important when Denmark is unable to provide the Faroes with support and assistance to prevent crisis and memberships of such IO should then be prioritised to secure the Faroese economy and trade, especially considering the Faroes as a country relying heavily on one good of export.

### **Stronger Relational Ties**

The pattern of behaviour found in Faroese foreign affairs strategy is in many areas coherent with the one expected to find in a small state since many of the priorities of external relations are made in order to counter economic challenges and to influence through international cooperation. But the relations the Faroes have within trade might be too shallow and thus not creating enough security to the Faroes and not providing enough shelter. Protection for a small state needs to be taken on a deeper level and provide more, for example rules, to protect the Faroes in case of crisis; before the law all states are equal no matter size. When it comes to international cooperation and membership the Faroes need to prioritise cooperation where they are full members and thus have an influence and at the same time obtain full protection from the organisational settings.

Also, sometimes having influence is not enough and small states, as in the case of the Nordic cooperation, need to work together internal of that IO to gain even more influence and be able to change the settings, which thus becomes a very powerful tool and it can be argued moves the collaboration between the small states into a new form where they might be able to influence as any other non-small state because they can change the power configuration which by definition is not possible by a small state. Therefore the cooperation in the WNC, a cooperation mainly consisting of small countries, is interesting and will be the next subject of analysis.

## **4.4 Institutionalising a Relationship**

**“...the ocean connects us and the ocean divides us”**

Mikkelsen, 5th of November 2014

Before the three West Nordic countries formed the WNC they already interacted in an informal relationship based on and connected through resemblances in remoteness, heritage and fisheries

among others. Here in this section, the focus will be on the WNC, the establishment and development of the WNC in order to understand the WNC as a mean to gain influence on international policy and withstanding challenges.

### **The Establishment of the West Nordic Council**

The political initiative to form a formal organisation first came in the 1980s as a consequence of the special situation and sphere of the west Nordic region being distinctive from the other Nordic countries (Olsen, 18.12.14). In the 1980s new regionalism emerged but the WNC does not entail characteristics of new regionalism other than sharing the same decade of emergence; the cornerstone in new regionalism is decentralisation of policy responsibilities which was not the intention with forming a west Nordic forum. The aim of the WNC was to safeguard West Nordic issues and was a natural development of the long term relationship since the parties were already connected through their similarities in geographical location, challenges and opportunities (Hoydal, 2014; Olsen, 2014; Johansen, 2014).

The cultural aspect of the cooperation was also emphasised and cultural exchange was important in regard to finding their similar heritages, and how to promote these in the respective countries (Konradsdóttir, 2014: 1). The Nordic cooperation was more and more focusing on the eastern part of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall thus the west Nordic countries felt that they were not included in the Nordic agenda and that they were situated too far in the periphery to be relevant to the political constellations at that time, therefore Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes formed the WNC as a backlash against the Nordic cooperation (Olsen, 18.12.14: 1).

The west Nordic countries are institutionally far away from Denmark, Sweden and Norway (Evaldsen, 11.04.15: 5) thus Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands were in need of their own forum where west Nordic issues are on the agenda and a forum to discuss how they can become more relevant in a greater international connection (Olsen, 18.12.14.: 1.2). All regionalism is an effect of changes in the international society which now also can be imposed on the West Nordic Council, and as with the current situation in the NC as discussed in previous analysis, the establishment of the WNC was one way of strengthening the position of the three small countries in the Nordic cooperation and influence through that channel.

In theory, the purpose of constructing an institution is to group actors with common interests and goals and for them to create a common identity outwards which is stronger than one actor's alone.

This is coherent with the statements above describing the member's incentives to form the WNC. In an institution the actors act with a common attitude and understanding which might be reflected in the work of the WNC. As noted in the introduction the WNC devises recommendations to the respective governments in regard to west Nordic issues, which is one way of organising and forming Iceland's, Greenland's and the Faroes' policy behaviour and where the recommendations in the first place are grounded in common west Nordic challenges.

The WNC is more similar to that of old regionalism even though the first wave of regionalism already has succumbed in the 1980s. The members of the WNC are all neighbours in the same region and it can be argued that the WNC was in the beginning quite inward oriented since the objective of forming the institution was to focus on west Nordic issues and to have a secluded forum with a very specific aim: to influence the Nordic cooperation to include west Nordic interests. However, it does neither fit to the criteria of old regionalism. Among other, the west Nordic countries are all small relying heavily on fisheries export thus they according to theory need to have a very open economy whereas in old regionalism one characteristic is protectionism. Neither was there any political integration among the members other than the recommendations, which is more coherent with old regionalism than new but still it does not fit because the WNC does not have any reduction in trade barriers.

One characteristics of the cooperation in the WNC is their ability to cooperate in achieving their aim. The Baltic countries were taken a lot of space and interest in the Nordic cooperation, therefore the west Nordic countries together tried to change their own situation by trying to change the other Nordic countries' perception of the west Nordic region since Denmark, Finland and Sweden have sometimes had the tendency to look at the west Nordic region as a neighbouring region instead as a part of Norden, which it is (Sanderson, 11.12.14: 15).

The three worked on this mistake and managed to ensure the Nordic countries that when speaking of neighbouring countries they refer to Canada, Ireland and Scotland; they are Norden's neighbours not the west Nordic countries (ibid.). As figure 1 also shows the WNC has been working as a societal shelter to the west Nordic countries since the support they are providing each other concerns their cultural similarities and marginalisation from Norden. Cooperation is a characteristic of network regionalism which the WNC may have more in common with but only since the shift of focus: when the cooperation was established the focus was on the Nordic cooperation, today it might be more turned towards the Arctic and the AC thus the aim and gain has changed too.

## **A New Beginning**

In 1997 the Council changed name from the West Nordic Parliamentary Council of Cooperation to the West Nordic Council and a new charter was adopted (Nielsson, 2014a: 8). This also meant a shift in focus from a more social-cultural cooperation to also include economic and political cooperation and to strengthen their impact outwards (ibid.: 9) which is coherent with some characteristics of network regionalism.

Even though Iceland is the largest country of the three west Nordic countries in relative terms as territory and population as described in the introduction, Iceland is a small country in international context therefore the Icelandic purpose for joining the WNC is to cooperate with two other small countries with the aim of getting a stronger common voice (Konradsdóttir, 2014: 3) which is identical with the aim of institutionalisation. From a Faroese perspective the aim of the cooperation is very similar to Icelandic visions; the Faroes is very limited in their influence outwards but as a part of a bigger unity their words will have a bigger say, because the countries are balancing their positions, politics and strategies and thus signalling to their surroundings that this is something they should consider noticing (Olsen, 2014: 7-8).

According to the three countries' representatives from the respective delegations Justinussen (05.11.14); Evaldsen (11.04.15); Konradsdóttir (29.10.14) and Balle (01.12.14) the main objective of the cooperation currently is to influence Arctic policy and development. Not only has the WNC changed their aim for cooperation also the countries have changed their view of the Council and what role the WNC can play in regard to their respective interests. Greenland had a parliamentary election in November 2014 where the WNC was up for discussion, and an agreement was among the politicians that the west Nordic cooperation is where Greenland ought to put their focus and emphasis instead of Denmark and Europe (Evaldsen, 11.04.15).

Greenland should compare itself more to Iceland and the Faroes than they have done previously and in regard to the Arctic Greenland should be making decisions regarding this area's development in cooperation with the Faroes and Iceland, with the aim of influencing the policy-making in the Arctic, Evaldsen (11.04.15) states. The WNC has not been taken very seriously in Greenland and neither in the two other countries (ibid.), which also shows in the mapped strategy of Faroese foreign affairs in section 4.3, and Holm-Jacobsen (14.12.14) notes that the WNC has not been prioritised, especially because it is only a parliamentary cooperation.

Evaldsen (11.14.15) notes, as well as Olsen (18.12.14) has concluded, that over time the parties have recognised that together they can influence and effect international action and that they can do more than previous thought was possible. The new beginning of the WNC is thus not only a reinforced identity but also a new trust stemming from its members that the WNC can be a mean the members can use in gaining more influence outwards, for example on the AC as stated above. The statements corresponds with the Councils' aim of strengthening their impact outwards but it is also in line with the general thought that small states influence through cooperation in institutions. A more outward cooperative strategy is in the sphere of network regionalism.

The cooperative character is still found in the WNC, rather than being competitive. For example, all three countries are participating at the fisheries negotiations in the NEAFC ([neafc.org](http://neafc.org)) Greenland, however, is only an observer but the WNC is currently working on making Greenland become a coastal state in the negotiations in the NEAFC (appendix 7). This development is emphasising the networking character of the region because it will give them an even greater incitement to cooperate; as of today, the countries are competing and even conflicting within (Olsen, 18.12.14: 4).

However, this might change if they are to cooperate within fisheries as well, for example in the NEAFC with the two others' approval which might make them stand stronger in that IO and perhaps prevent a new Mackerel War. As claimed in the theoretical chapter extern policy changes require new ways of cooperation thus the informal cooperation was not quite enough in withstanding the challenges the changes brought about. The furthering of the cooperation in the WNC depends now on if whether or not the Council has the capacity to organise and run a regional network cooperation, which is needed to develop the cooperation and be a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests.

The WNC does not really fit into any of the three various forms of regionalism which might strengthen the claim in the theoretical chapter that most IR studies are conducted on the basis of large states or the relationship between a large state and a small state, whereas this study is concentrated on the formal, institutionalised cooperation between three small states whereas two are non-sovereign. Thus the WNC and its aim cannot be understood completely through the use of theories of regionalism even though it does fit with some of the characteristics of old and network regionalism, and fits more to old regionalism than network regionalism which can be argued to be because of that the theories of regionalism after the establishment of the EU: new and network regionalism, are developed from using the political integration of the EU as point of departure,

which has never been a focus of the WNC until 2008 when the European Parliament and the WNC agreed to meet regularly for cooperation and information (Nielsson, 2014: 15).

### **Bottom-up to top-down**

It can be argued that the forming of the WNC was initiated from a bottom-up approach since it was a natural development to form an institution to carry out west Nordic issues and affairs, when the countries had been cooperating in an informal manner way before 1985. Changes in the international structure also had an impact on the establishment and gave the parties a reason to institutionalise their relationship, and now the relative new changes in the Arctic have given them another reason to increase their cooperation. The cooperation in the WNC and the establishment of the WNC is different from general regional cooperation but looking at the reasons and aim of forming the WNC is defined as an institution. These interests and aims the WNC is grounded on are different than other regional cooperation, perhaps because of the constellation of countries with low populations striving for recognition. With the changes in the Arctic the WNC is also changing in that it seeks to influence Arctic cooperation, which may change its character.

## **4.5 Visions and Potential**

**“...we need to stand together, the three of us, because we are the ones living here; we are the ones who possess this area and we are the ones to protect it and to be part in making the big decisions...”**

Evaldsen, 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2015

The focus of the WNC is turning towards the Arctic and the members have recognised the importance of the Council once again but this time the plans for the WNC are taken on a higher political agenda and increased cooperation. In this analysis the WNC's visions will be examined in regard to the Faroes, and the issues the Faroes are having both in terms of their increased responsibility and in terms of their size. The aim is to understand the potential the WNC holds as a mean the Faroes can utilize in withstanding those issues by providing the Faroes with more influence to pursue and protect their interests.

## Visions

As argued in previous section the members of the WNC have changed their perception of the Council and how the WNC can be used in their own strategies to achieve more influence on Arctic issues, which are influencing their lives. The members of the WNC are willing to take the cooperation to a higher political level by having meetings with the respective foreign affairs ministers as was the case for the first time 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2014 (appendix 7). The Faroese prime minister expressed in a press release after the meeting that the West Nordic countries should stand together in protecting their rights to use the resources of the oceans in a sustainable manner because these resources are significant to the societies of the West Nordic countries (press release, 02.09.14). Therefore, they ought to stand together with a common voice, through a stronger cooperation in the WNC the West Nordic countries can stand together in protecting their interests (ibid.).

The WNC has recognised that they together constitute a great part of the Arctic Circle territory, as well as they have realised that even though their agenda might not be relevant for the Nordic cooperation it might be within Arctic affairs (Olsen, 2014: 2-3). In regard to the Arctic the WNC ordered a report on how the west Nordic countries can obtain economic growth in regard to the changes in the Arctic and how the members can utilise the opportunities that come with the changes, as well as how they can withstand some of the challenges coming with the changes (appendix 7; Nielsson, 2014).

The report: “Report on Economic West Nordic Cooperation Between the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland” was launched in January 2014 and emphasised that the cooperation needs to be taken forward to release all the opportunities stemming from the Arctic changes, the West Nordic region’s potential as a geostrategic/economic player as well as the immense opportunities for economic cooperation between the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland (Nielsson, 2014). The idea behind the report is that the west Nordic countries stand stronger together by cooperating rather than competing within these issues they all have in common, and to make use of the opportunities laying a head is very important to the region’s economies (ibid.). Two proposals from the report will be further studies in regard to the Faroes, they are a joint Arctic strategy and a West Nordic free trade zone.

## **Joint Arctic Strategy**

All three members of the WNC are searching for strategies that can strengthen their economies and the most credible strategy at the moment seems to be becoming a player in Arctic affairs by taking an advantage of the geopolitical situation (Nielsson, 2014; Nielsson, 2014a). At the Council's annual meeting in 2013 the WNC decided to start working on identifying and defining the members' Arctic interests, especially in relation to increased economic gains thus the report was devised (vestnordisk.is/1). The point of devising a joint strategy is to better reflect and safeguard West Nordic Arctic interests with the argument that they stand stronger together in influencing the NC's Arctic strategy, which furthermore can have an influence on the AC (Nielsson, 2014a; Nielsson, 2014).

All three members already have separate Arctic strategies (Bailes & Jákupsstovu, 2013) but in order to identify and define shared goals regarding Arctic affairs the WNC must first unify the respective government's Arctic interests (Appendix 7). After all, the interests of the respective parties regarding Arctic issues are not always in line since the challenges the members are experiencing are not always on the same scale but the argument is that there are more rationales for cooperating on a common Arctic strategy than having three independent strategies (Nielsson, 2014: 3). The greatest rationales for cooperating on this issue are the economic gains the countries can look forward to if they succeed (ibid.).

In accordance with small state theory the strategy of the WNC to influence the NC and the AC are very much in line with common small state behaviour since the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland are using the WNC as a channel to reach influence in greater institutions. Also, the role of the WNC as a cooperation of merely small countries with low populations must take an advantage of that they are finding themselves in a situation where their geographical location can be used as an asset in the international game, even though there is no actual war going on in the Arctic as Fox underlines is the reason for the attention small states get regarding their territory.

If the WNC succeeds in devising a joint Arctic strategy – which is in the making – the members of the WNC are doing right by stepping in character as an Arctic actor but not to benefit the great powers as suggested by Fox but to benefit its members: the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland. When using their geostrategic powers right it becomes central to them and their security. Another argument for the Council to succeed with a joint Arctic Strategy is to move away from being an object to greater powers and to become active players themselves and move from the category of

system-ineffectual to the system-affecting category. As an alliance they have the ability to influence greater states and thus influence the international system, here Arctic affairs, according to theory. Since the joint strategy is not carried out yet it is not possible to conclude whether or not the WNV actually will be able to influence the AC but as stated according to theory they have better chances of achieving influence together as a regional cooperation than doing it alone.

### **Joint Observer Status in the Arctic Council**

An application for seeking observer status in the AC was sent in August 2014 with the objective to obtain as much information on Arctic issues as possible (appendix 7; Nielsson, 2014a). All three countries are members of the AC ([arctic-council.org](http://arctic-council.org)) but as in accordance with the Authorisation Act the Faroes cannot be full members of an IO if Denmark is a member too which is the case with the AC, therefore the Faroes – and Greenland – are represented through the Danish delegation in the AC where Denmark holds the chair (Account of FFA, 2014: 20). As mentioned in 4.2 the west Nordic countries have not always been invited to the AC's meetings and the weak representation of the west Nordic region emphasises the importance of the WNC standing together as an observer in the AC (*ibid.*).

The Arctic is part of Greenland's territory and home thus they should have a significance saying within Arctic affairs, and be part in setting the agenda for arctic conversation and negotiation (Evaldsen, 11.04.15). The WNC can play a crucial role in empowering the west Nordic nations in the Arctic region, therefore the cooperation in the WNC is important to the respective countries (Konradsdóttir, 29.10.14: 4). Becoming an observer in the AC is an achievement the WNC's members can use for information sharing and to influence Arctic policy, which affects them considering they are Arctic countries themselves.

The role of an observer in the AC includes cooperation in working groups and contributions to the AC through the working groups; propose projects through an Arctic State or Permanent Participant; participation in the subsidiary bodies where they may be allowed to make statements, present written statements, submit relevant documents and provide their views on the issues under discussion ([arctic-council.org/1](http://arctic-council.org/1)). As an observer through the WNC the Faroes will first of all act independently from Denmark since the Faroes are a full member of the WNC and according to the Charter and Rules of Procedure of the WNC all members are equal in the WNC therefore the Faroes have as much authority in the Council as Iceland for example. The information gained can be used

for developing stronger Arctic strategies which in the end can put the Faroes – and the two other WNC members – into the system-affecting category regarding Arctic affairs.

As stated in analysis 4.1 the Faroes are already experiencing increased attention because of their Arctic involvement and this attention along with increased information on Arctic affairs can be used to influence Arctic policy which can help pursue and protect Faroese interests, again through the influence gained from cooperation in an IO – the West Nordic Council.

### **Regional Search and Rescue Center**

As stated earlier, the Faroes have undertaken SAR from the Danish authorities as well as a new law on civil preparedness was passed in the Faroese parliament same year (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014: 130). New, global dimensions of security are a challenge the Faroes need to consider too, here the case is mostly concerning security in a geographical aspect since military threats are reduced since the end of the Cold War and the north Atlantic region is not affected by warfare (ibid.). Economic, societal and environmental security issues are aspects of security the Faroes need to cope with and that is done best through shelter relations within these areas. Looking at figure 1 Denmark provides the Faroes with shelter within these spheres, but not even Denmark is capable of protecting the territories without help from other countries (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014: 132).

The main challenge here is the responsibility of a large, strategic sea but the Faroes have limited resources to counter the issues (ibid.), therefore, shelter from an IO is important to the Faroes and thus they need to look beyond Denmark for support and assistance in regard to this issue. The report stresses the importance of a common regional SAR Center (Nielsson, 2014: 5) because the ASR call for safety and security - both for seafarers and the environment – therefore the WNC is working on a SAR plan for the west Nordic region (Justinusen, 05.11.14). Having a common regional SAR Center is very important now that the seaways traffic most likely will increase through the ASR and because all three countries, though they are scarcely populated, have great seaway territories which need to be secured (Nielsson, 2014: 5). Also, the countries will be cooperating on this issue instead of competing (ibid.).

Through a common WNC Arctic Strategy the Faroese can gain influence on issues regarding security (Olsen, 18.12.14: 11). Compared to the Nordic cooperation the Faroes only participate within soft political issues when it comes to SAR, defence and foreign policy etc. (ibid.). The sovereign Nordic countries have their own cooperation within these fields outside the Nordic

cooperation thus the Faroes have no influence on strategies within the mentioned fields (ibid.). Security of small states is determined by power politics and as with the case of the Faroes the security of the Faroe Islands has historically been maintained by greater powers such as the British and NATO, who have used the Faroese territory as a part in their defence strategies (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014.). Even though there is no war in the region the security issue is occurring because of the ASR, thus increased shipping activity in Faroese water (Nielsson, 2014), arguably, caused by politics beyond Faroese influence.

At the WNC meeting 1<sup>st</sup> of september 2014 where the respective authorities of the members' foreign affairs were present this issue was discussed, and there are still issues that the members need to consider before SAR-exercises can be conducted, but all parties were satisfied with the work so far (Appendix 7). Through a common SAR Center the members will stand together to counter inbuilt weaknesses of security and limited resources as a consequence of being small, thus regional cooperation is used as a mean to pursue and protect the respective members' interests in regard to security. When the regional SAR Center will be realised the WNC will function as political shelter providing security to the Faroes within an area, which in figure 1 is covered by Denmark and NATO but in the future the WNC might be added to that field as a shelter relation supporting the Faroes within a field Denmark no longer is obligated to.

### **A West Nordic Free Trade Zone**

In the report on Arctic economic opportunities "Report on Economic West Nordic Arctic Cooperation Between Faroes Islands, Greenland and Iceland" it is stated that there are great opportunities in creating a West Nordic Free Trade Zone either by extending the Hoyvik Agreement or managing a new trilateral agreement (Nielsson, 2014: 7). Therefore, the Council has now set a working group to examine the possibility for a West Nordic free trade zone (Appendix 7). The issue seems to have been that the Greenlandic industry has not been ready to compete with the ones of the Faroes and Iceland (Johansen, 19.12.14), but they are willing to work on the issue and examining the opportunities relating to this subject with the reservation that the WNC together creates a new agreement and not just extends the existing between Iceland and the Faroes (Evaldsen, 11.04.15).

The Greenlandic chair and WNC's vice chair has stated that he has great expectations about increased inter-state trade between Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes within this year (knr.gl). The objective with a West Nordic Free Trade Zone is that through it vast opportunities will spring which can lay the base for Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes to utilise their natural resources in a

sustainable manner and capitalize on their strategic geographic location (Nielsson, 2014: 8). And as observed with the bilateral free trade agreement between Iceland and the Faroes great developments have come around, which are strengthening the countries within areas, they are weak, such as education (Hovgaard et al., 2014).

The countries can act upon their situated location right to the Arctic gateway and become a service center in relation to the ASR while bridging the world's largest economies (Nielson, 2014: 7-8). As a point of departure the west Nordic countries together could utilise the free trade agreement between China and Iceland by exporting west Nordic natural resources to China and import directly from the Chinese market (ibid.). If this succeeds and the WNC becomes a regional cooperation with a Free Trade Area and Zone it would be one solution to the economic vulnerability the Faroes are dealing with as argued in analysis 4.3., with West Nordic free trade zone the Faroes would have more to offer than their humble domestic market, which is an issue when creating new trade relations as well if the Faroes should experience another crisis like the one of the Mackerel War the Faroes would be supported by the other west Nordic countries.

An extended trilateral free trade zone creates interdependence between the countries, and it could be argued that through such integration the Faroes would diffuse and reduce their dependence to both Denmark and the EU market, as claimed by Katzenstein. If so, the WNC would function as an economic shelter to the Faroes and figure 1 (appendix 6) would once again change into putting the WNC as an economic shelter along with Denmark, which at the moment is the only one.

## **Potential**

In this section three opportunities have been presented which all can enhance the Faroes' influence on Arctic issues as well increase their economic gains from the changes in the Arctic. These plans are still in working progress and the members have not yet implemented any of the recommendations (appendix 7). However, all the visions and potentials the members can gain from the cooperation demand that the cooperation will be furthered and thus calls for stronger regionalisation within the West Nordic region (Nielsson, 2014). As stated in analysis 4.3 and in 4.4 the WNC has not been prioritised in the respective governments, and in the Faroes the argument is that it is not an intergovernmental cooperation (Holm-Jacobsen, 04.12.14; Johansen, 18.12.14).

The report notes that the members should increase their cooperation to intergovernmental cooperation in regard to Arctic affairs because joint ministerial meetings and joint initiatives will

strengthen the parties' interests outwards and thus promote the region (Nielsson, 2014: 4). According to theory, political integration is the manner to counter small state weaknesses, which stems with the outlined report. This is also consistent with the Faroese prime minister where he emphasised increased cooperation between Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes as mentioned earlier, and Evaldsen notes that the WNC is planning to develop the cooperation between the actors where the respective ministers of the field can meet once a year with the aim of creating a structure identical with the one of the Nordic cooperation (Evaldsen, 11.04.15).

An example of ministerial cooperation between the members of the WNC is when the respective ministers of health care signed an agreement on cooperation within the health care system as suggested in the WNC's Recommendation ([vestnordisk.is/1](http://vestnordisk.is/1); [hmr.fo](http://hmr.fo)). The implementation of the WNC's recommendation is also an example of closer cooperation between the parties (Appendix 7: 41) but it can also be seen as an example of the need for intergovernmental cooperation between the members if the WNC's recommendations are to bear fruit and be implemented. Thus it can be argued that the WNC needs to become more intergovernmental in its approach to reach cooperation within areas where the respective interests of the members are strong.

### **Fisheries**

The report states that there are great opportunities in achieving sustainable fishing and economic gains from fisheries, and to represent West Nordic interests in international conflicts since fisheries is of utmost significance to the economies of the West Nordic countries (Nielsson, 2014: 4). Also, a joint political strategy for how to handle extern actors' interests in the West Nordic region and its resources can prevent a situation like the Mackerel War and protect the Faroes and Iceland from ending in that position again of being threatened and sanctioned (Justinusen, 05.11.14). Justinusen believes that the weak position of the small countries in the NEAFC negotiations can be changed through such joint political strategy for this type of weakness in the WNC (ibid.).

But not everyone agrees that a stronger cooperation within fisheries is possible with the argument that the respective countries' interests in fisheries are too strong and competitive, and will become conflicting thus it will be difficult to unite and agree upon cooperation on fisheries even though it is the prime interest of all three countries (Djurhuus, 29.10.14). Others are of the opinion that the conflicting interests within fisheries are exactly a reason why the countries should consider integrating fisheries on their common working agenda (Olsen, 18.12.14; Nielsson, 2014). Balle and

Hoydal agree that there are parts of the cooperation the parties do not wish to near in the WNC (Hoydal, 05.11.14: 11; Balle, 01.12.14).

### **The West Nordic Council, a Shelter?**

If the WNC increased their cooperation to become more intergovernmental in its nature and move further towards network regionalism then centralisation of policy-making would be a matter to the WNC and thus fisheries could become a WNC issue and field of responsibility. But as argued by Thorhallsson in chapter 2 the three parties together with Norway have actively chosen not to join the EU because of the CFP therefore it can be questioned if the Iceland, Greenland and the Faroes are willing to unite their interests in the WNC and not in the EU because as stated the three West Nordic countries are mutual conflicting within this area. At the WNC annual meeting last year they did agree on making Greenland a coastal state in the NEAFC negotiations (appendix 7), which indicates that they are already cooperating on this issue in the WNC. Also, as stated above stronger cooperation within fisheries would pursue sustainability which is a point of recognition in the WNC Charter (1997).

This development would also make the WNC become a shelter relation to the Faroes both in terms of economic and political, especially if the West Nordic free trade zone becomes real in the future. A joint position on fisheries towards international conflicts like the one of the Mackerel War could in the first place help reduce the risk and thus prevent the crisis. Iceland has a great and positive international status (Olsen, 18.12.14: 8) and Hoydal (05.11.14: 11) claims that EU did not dare to sanction Iceland when they sanctioned the Faroes during the Mackerel War because of Iceland's status and reputation as a respected sovereign.

Second, standing together all three could assist the Faroes in a crisis for example through providing diplomatic support, which Iceland did during the Mackerel War; the Icelandic government supported the Faroes during the Mackerel War in setting their own unilateral quota (maritimedanmark.dk; Bailes, 2014), which can be defined as diplomatic support according to Thorhallsson (30.10.14). Third, it is possible to claim that the West Nordic countries would help each other after a crisis. After the financial crisis starting in 2008 and when the Icelandic economy crashed the Faroe Islands were Iceland's best neighbours and provided Iceland with an unconditional loan without any security for getting it back, whereas the other Nordic countries were hesitating about giving loans to Iceland (Bailes, 2014: 161; Konradsdóttir, 29.10.14: 4).

If the WNC would be able to support and assist the Faroes through these three steps in a crisis then the WNC would be a shelter to the Faroes as argued by Kristinsson and Thorhallsson because that is the role of shelter too. These three steps can be interpreted to contain all three types of shelter: economic, political and societal, depending on the crisis and what kind of support and assistance the one in crisis needs. If the cooperation in the WNC was of intergovernmental character it is arguable that the countries would be willing to assist and support even more because they would be interdependent. For example the loan the Faroes granted Iceland after the financial crisis was given after the countries entered into an extended free trade agreement, thus the financial crisis in Iceland has arguable had an indirect impact on the Faroes. The diplomatic support Iceland provided the Faroes can be argued was given because Iceland was in the same position and if they were not supporting the Faroes in their actions they would be arguing for their own actions since Iceland also demanded a higher quota.

Looking at the WNC as an economic shelter, through a trilateral West Nordic free trade agreement the Council could provide economic security within some of the criteria such as favourable market access, a common market and would thus supplement Denmark in this regard in figure 1.

Looking at the criteria for the political shelter role the ability of the WNC is limited because of it is not an intergovernmental cooperation with binding rules and treaties. First, since the cooperation is parliamentary there are no organisational rules for example in form of treaties that are binding to the members. The Charter (1997) is only signed in acknowledgement of how the countries will cooperate and what the aim of the cooperation is. However, it can be claimed that the Council's members are tied to norms that have emerged throughout the years, a norm stemming from their societal and cultural long term relationship. As described in section 4.4 the countries supported each other in the Nordic cooperation because they were all in the same situation which can be viewed as a form of protection as well as achieving more influence in the Nordic cooperation through starting an alliance. Therefore, diplomatic support is a protection the three can provide for each other.

Another example of diplomatic support is a joint observer status in the AC, here the objective is to achieve information and become active in influencing Arctic policy. Military backing is though an issue the WNC is not able to provide, since none of them have any military (Berg & Jákupsstovu, 2014). In other contexts Iceland is always viewed as the small one but in the WNC Iceland plays the role of a Big Brother being far larger in population and GDP compared to Greenland and the Faroes (Bailes, 2014: 156). However, it is not a typical Big Brother role Iceland

has since it cannot undertake the security of the two others when Iceland is not having any armed forces (ibid.).

As stated in the theoretical chapter military threats are not really an issue today but the West Nordic countries can be expecting other security issues in different forms such as security issues connected to the new ASR. Since security policy is under Danish authorisation Denmark and NATO are Faroes' shelter relations in regard to security but with the undertaken of SAR in 2012 the Faroes have now, and in the future, together with Greenland and Iceland the responsibility of SAR, therefore the WNC will function as a political shelter within that field.

The costs of having the WNC function as shelter is not as high as the price the Faroes are paying Denmark since the cooperation is not intergovernmental the Faroes are not giving up any sovereignty. The costs at the moment are the financial expenses all three countries have from running the WNC (Charter, 1997: 3) but in addition to that there are costs associated with the fact that they need to compromise when making strategies and etc.. As stated earlier, the members not always agree and sometimes they have distinct interests therefore a joint Arctic strategy, for example, will need the parties to compromise to be accomplished. If the cooperation is to be taken on a higher intergovernmental level the costs of this need to be considered because then the Faroes and the two other members would transform some sovereignty to the WNC as a part of the decentralisation of policy-making. Increased integration is expensive on the sovereignty account, however, there are also advantages linked to intergovernmental cooperation which perhaps could be very beneficial to the members of the WNC since the working area of the Council is within issues coherent to those of the Faroe Islands.

In the theoretical chapter Kristinsson and Thorhallsson note that it is important to study all shelter relations of a small state since the formal external authority, in this case Denmark, might not be the actual shelter provider as has been analysed in section 1.2 because of differences and Faroes' increased responsibility. This study has focused on one shelter relation, the WNC, which according to figure 1 is a societal shelter to the Faroes and with this analysis the WNC is a possible political and economic shelter if the changes and developments visioned for the cooperation succeed and it holds great potential if the parties decide to cooperate on fisheries and even develop the cooperation to ministerial, intergovernmental, which will take the WNC closer to network regionalism. The WNC would then be moving into the category of system-affecting.

## **Joint Solutions for Common Challenges**

Looking at the challenges the Faroes are facing both in regard to their smallness and to the changes in the Arctic such as trade relations, limited influence and security challenges it is reasonable to suggest, that the WNC's visions and potential are coherent with those of the Faroes, and seem as great solutions to the issues put forward. Considering the situation of the Faroes in a power disparity; becoming a more active player in international politics through the WNC is one way of coping with the situation together with two countries who might be in the same situation as the Faroes since they are experiencing some of the same problems and are also small, remote societies with very low populations, which is why the WNC's visions are coherent with those of the Faroes. The WNC is specifically focusing on issues in the West Nordic region and the member's common issues. Therefore, the WNC holds great potential in becoming a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests, which is arguable is already happening with the work in progress put forward based on the new report. They stand stronger together than apart thus they need each other.

## **4.6 The (Special) Relationship**

**“...you can say that it is both deep and banal...”**

Hoydal, 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2014

The potential of benefitting from cooperating with Iceland and Greenland in the WNC is not only in regard to the visions of empowering the region and the members, and achieve geo-economic gains. The potential also lies within the relationship itself between Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes which has a long history and share characteristics of being remote societies with similar living conditions. The relational ties are the emphasis of the last analysis with the aim of understanding how the relationship contributes to greater potential of the cooperation in the WNC as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests.

## **A West Nordic Network**

Figure 1 points out that the Faroes have three different actors to provide them with societal shelter: Denmark, the NC and the WNC. Before the establishment of the WNC Greenland and Iceland would have taken the place of the WNC in the figure 1 since the relationship, as stated before, goes back to before the Council was formed. The relational ties might have been stronger and more reoccurring between the Faroes and Iceland than between the Faroes and Greenland since Greenland is further away than Iceland (Joensen, 2014). Fisheries has always been a uniting factor in the north Atlantic and is what started and maintained the relationship between the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland therefore the relations between the three was initiated by a bottom-up approach which today is a institutionalised cooperation (ibid.).

The relationship has become more a top-down than bottom-up cooperation because fisheries is now managed in the various RFMOs and because of the establishment of the WNC, which is now an important political forum and a mean to forge common west Nordic identity (ibid.). Formal political relations have been established gradually when needed to confront common challenges and problems (ibid.). The definition of a network is: stable patterns of social relations between the actors who have common interests or policy problems which is very coherent with the relationship of the members of the WNC. As noted in section 4.4 the WNC was formed because of difficulties in the NC therefore the countries took action and established a formal forum.

Furthermore, the cooperation has been quite stable until 1997 when the new Charter was adopted and the Arctic became a west Nordic issue (Nielsson, 2014a), now that the Arctic is becoming more and more a focus of the world the Council increases its cooperation and takes political action, for example, through the devising of a joint Arctic strategy. These actions signal behaviour where the cooperation becomes formal and political when there are challenges or problems ahead and it indicates that the actors in the WNC do have common challenges and policy problems. Therefore it is arguable that the WNC is a network institution. However, with the formal establishment of an institution the cooperation is also characterised by formal structures.

## **A Touch of Formality**

In section 4.4 it is concluded that the WNC is a formal institution with a formal set of rules launched in the Charter (1997) and Rules of Procedure (2004) even though the cooperation was initiated from a bottom-up approach. Therefore, the institutional settings in the WNC are formal which adds a hierarchical character to the institution. The formal settings do however not have the

power of decision-making thus the signed Charter (1997) cannot force the members to implement the recommendations devised by the WNC, and therefore it is not a forum for policy-making and the parties are not tied up following any policy which may influence their sovereignty and authority.

The Council has a presidium consisting of the chair of the WNC and one from each of the other two delegations, usually the vice chair and the second vice chair (vestnordisk.is/2). The presidium meets more often than the other members thus they have more influence than the other delegation members (Charter, 1997), which is also a hierarchical character along with having a hierarchy with a chair, vice chair and a second vice chair. The presidium can be interpreted as the core in the WNC which a network does not have. This hierarchical division of work is regulated through the Charter (1997) and the Rules of Procedure (2004) and is thus a consequence of having a formal framework for cooperation.

If there were no formalities, it can be argued that the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland would not have come to the conclusion of devising a joint Arctic strategy since the members are conflicting within some Arctic issues as noted in previous section, therefore it is in this case a benefit to the members to have formal settings for cooperation. Notwithstanding, the interaction and interrelations between the members do not necessarily have to be of hierarchical character too.

Iceland holds 50 percent of the expenses running the WNC and the two other hold 25 percent each (Charter, 1997) and this is because Iceland is a bigger country with a higher population (Konradsdóttir, 29.10.14: 2). But this is not effecting the number of delegation members, here all parties have six parliamentarians each (Charter, 1997). In the NC for example, Iceland has seven delegation members and Denmark 16 (norden.org). Iceland accepts the Faroes and Greenland as semi-sovereign nations which only adds legitimacy to the cooperation and is argued to be an advantage for the two other semi-sovereigns: Greenland and the Faroes (Olsen, 2014: 9). This indicates that all members in the WNC are equal even though Iceland holds a greater part of the expenses because Iceland is still not ranked higher than the two other members.

Even though Iceland is the only sovereign of the three and the one who holds the greatest part of the expenses the members do not take note of the asymmetry between them when they are together (Konradsdóttir 29.10.14: 2-5). The interaction between the members is very informal and the environment is very positive and supportive according to Konradsdóttir (29.10.14: 2: 6). Both Evaldsen (11.04.15) and Hoydal (05.11.14) argue that the atmosphere and relationship between the

delegation members is very informal. This carries character of network cooperation, also because the Council takes up common interests that are not on the agenda and thus not an aim of cooperation (Konradsdóttir 29.10.14).

From the above analysis it can be concluded that the WNC is formal in its setting with hierarchical characteristics but the relationship between the members and the cooperative structure itself is very informal and carries a lot of network characteristics, which may be seen as a result of a long term relationship between the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland.

### **Strong Cooperation**

Olsen states that the delegations in the WNC are composed of parliamentarians who typically get close during their cooperation and the dialogue is informal and based on respect, openness and equality (Olsen, 18.12.14: 9). Mikkelsen (05.11.14) is of the view that the cooperation with Iceland and Greenland is different in that it is characterised more as a friendship and is less formal than other relations for example Faroes' relationship to Britain which is also a close neighbour. This informal behaviour has most likely continued in the formal work in the WNC understood as the relationship itself is characterised by informality and openness with cultural exchanges which decreases the hierarchical structure and makes the actors more equal as in networks.

Konradsdóttir (29.10.14) claims that the west Nordic cooperation did play a part when the Faroes decided to help Iceland out with a loan after the crisis, as accounted for in section 4.5, because the relationship between the parliamentarians in the WNC is positive and based on good connections as well as they know each other personally. This example shows that the relationship between the members is strong and indicates an interdependent relationship based on friendship between the countries and is similar to a strong tie network construction. Evaldsen states, that if Greenland were to cooperate with for example the USA Greenland would just fall in between and not have any influence at all since they would be the smaller part (Evaldsen, 11.04.15), which is more a weak tie relationship. Through such a cooperation Greenland would not gain the same from cooperating with the USA as they do by cooperating with Iceland and the Faroes which are more alike than Greenland and the USA (Evaldsen, 11.04.15).

### **The Power of Network**

The role of the WNC not only entails potential as a channel the Faroes can use to influence the NC or the AC or both, it also entails an opportunity for the West Nordic countries to share information

regarding Arctic issues among them if the WNC becomes an observer in the AC. The institutional structure of the WNC is important in this regard because a hierarchical structure does not emphasise this benefit of knowledge sharing among the members. The aim of a network structure is the ability to gather and spread knowledge among all actors, which is the intention with a joint observer status in the AC and it can benefit the member's individual Arctic strategies too, also the Faroes. Thus it gives them better opportunity to put forward their interests in regard to the Arctic.

This knowledge is also used to enhance the actors' competitiveness and thus links the actors to the rest of the world which also seems to be the case here. If the WNC is to be given an observer status in the AC they are better of forming a joint Arctic strategy, for example, because they can use all the information gained as an observer to compete with other Arctic strategies such as the one of the NC and perhaps influence the AC even more than without the observer status. Thus it can be argued that a network structure in the WNC links the members to the rest of the world through a free, horizontal information flow in the Council.

In the end all this can enhance the Faroes' role in the international society and make the Faroes become an active actor on the international arena. Furthermore, it can be argued that a network cooperative manner is the way for the Faroes to achieve international influence and exercise power within international affairs. What makes this all possible is in the end the equality between the members of the WNC allowing the Faroes to act on same terms as the other members which ads authority and possibility to act and influence the work in the WNC and thus also how the WNC acts outwards. Also, this implies that the cooperation in the WNC is more a like network regionalism which is based on network modes and collaboration rather than competition, except that there is still no decentralisation of policy responsibilities in the WNC.

## **Equality**

The cooperation in the WNC carries both features of hierarchy and network structures. Characteristics of hierarchy are mostly found in the formal arrangements set in the charter and the Rules of Procedures, which makes the WNC a formal institution. Network characteristics are dominating the relation between the actors as well as the overall structure of the cooperation, where the parties are seen as equals who all obtain the same knowledge and information and have the same ability to influence the work in the WNC since none is ranked higher than others. An institution can consist of both as is the case here, but it is arguable that the WNC entails more

characteristics of network than hierarchy since the relational ties between the members is strong and all members are represented equally both in terms of quantity and rights.

A network structure is thus recommendable to small semi-states in that it enhances the small semi-states' ability to influence which provides them with the opportunities to prioritise its interests, which is what the Faroes are capable of as an actor in the WNC. This is an important quality in relation to the Faroes because through knowledge and information the Faroes can pursue and protect their interests best since a network mode of cooperation allows the members to influence, which gives them the power to put forward their interests. In conclusion the WNC and its activities makes the Faroes become an active actor with the capability to exercise its power together with the two other countries but since they are so similar in characteristics the chances of being able to influence the common work in the Council are great and the fact that they are all equals adds more to it. Based on this the WNC is a mean the Faroes can use to gain influence and put forward its interests.

## **Conclusion**

The cooperation in the WNC entails the tools the Faroes can use in gaining influence on international affairs to pursue and protect Faroese interests. First, the network structure in the WNC allows the members to have equal influence on the work and visions of the Council since they are all full members of the WNC without any ranking. The relationship between the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland is a strong relational tie built upon mutual issues and interests, which gives the members equal rights to information, knowledge and participation to include their respective interests.

Second, the visions and the potential the WNC holds are great solutions to some of the issues the Faroes need to deal with both in terms of their size and statehood and in terms of changes in the international political landscape, which is making room for non-sovereign actors on the international arena. Third, the WNC is quite unique in its aim and objective for institutional cooperation, which partly is because of the special constellation of only small countries whereas two of them are non-sovereign. Therefore, the WNC is created and shaped to fit the aims and needs

of small actors and non-sovereign actors, which is a base for finding common solutions to challenges and opportunities.

Fourth, the Faroes do not have a foreign affairs strategy that fully meets their need as a small semi-state. The focus might be on achieving trade agreements and to gain influence through international cooperation, but it is not enough if the Faroes are to provide economic growth and political stability for the Faroese people. Their external relations need to be deeper and embrace more areas of relational ties. The WNC hold the potential to help the Faroes and assist them in filling the gap of missing strong relational ties if the parties take the cooperation further and succeed with their presented visions.

Fifth, with increasing responsibility of foreign affairs the relationship to Denmark weakens and the time when the Faroes could rely on Denmark as their provider of protection within economic, political and societal fields are vanishing, both because of Denmark no longer being obligated to attend Faroese interests where the Faroes have undertaken the authority, and because of their mutual conflicting interests. This implies and indicates that the Faroes need to ally themselves with countries that have mutual interests, where their responsibilities are similar and where they share common challenges and opportunities.

Sixth, the changes in the relationship between Denmark and the Faroes are influencing the actions and behaviour of the Faroes, and are providing them with a greater room of manoeuvre in regard to foreign affairs. A greater room of manoeuvre leads to greater ability to exercise power rather than being an object used by other greater actors in their defence strategies. Because of Faroes' smallness they are still limited in reaching influence on international affairs but with exercising their power through the cooperation in the WNC, the Faroes are able to reach further and put their interests on the international agenda, especially within Arctic affairs. Through the cooperation in the WNC the Faroes are coping with their situation as a small semi-state.

Based on the above conclusions it is necessary to take the interests of the Faroes into the context of the reached results. Faroes' geostrategic location has been used as an asset to Denmark, the British and NATO in recent history. Now the Faroes have gotten the ability to utilise and benefit from this asset themselves through using it in exercising power. Thus their territory, because of their location, has become an interest the Faroes need to both pursue and to protect. To pursue this interests will

give the Faroes the ability to gain influence since it is a power asset external actors have an interest in, therefore the Faroes must gain from this.

That they have done by devising an Arctic strategy which enhances Faroes' role as an Arctic country thus it provides the Faroes with power. As a small semi-state the Faroes do not have much influence on external relations but together with Iceland and Greenland the Faroes can achieve more influence on Arctic affairs by devising a joint Arctic strategy that entails a joint observer status, which can give the Faroes more information and knowledge to be used in pursuing their interest. This interest also needs to be protected from external actors if it is not to end up as an object in larger states' game. By becoming active and exercise their power on this field the Faroes can shield themselves from being abused, which can be done through their Arctic strategy.

If the Faroes are to gain influence as well this is done more effective through one joint West Nordic Arctic strategy, where one issue to be handled is a joint SAR Center. Here, the members cooperate on protecting their territories and is arguable to benefit the members more than if they do it themselves. By this the WNC is protecting Faroese territory, a Faroese interest. Thus the conclusion of this is, that the cooperation in the WNC can be understood as a mean to pursue and protect Faroes' geostrategic interests, if the WNC's joint Arctic Strategy will be launched and succeed.

Another great interest of the Faroes are their trade relations and to create new trade relations. As argued, the Faroes have specific challenges within this area since they are both a small and non-sovereign state. The Faroes are having problems with pursuing this interest since it is difficult to create new trade relations when they have little to offer the other partner. With West Nordic free trade zone it will be easier for the Faroes to pursue this interest because they will have a greater market to offer, as well as Greenland will then become a new trading partner. Through a West Nordic free trade zone the Faroes will be protected in form of support and assistance during a crisis. A free trade zone will make the parties interdependent and a crisis will most likely affect all. Based on this, it is concluded that the cooperation in the WNC can be understood as a mean to pursue and protect Faroes trade relations, if the work on the West Nordic free trade zone succeeds.

One of the greatest interests of the Faroes is fisheries, which is the main sector and export good of the Faroes. Within fisheries the Faroes are perceived as any other nation and participates in RFMOs thus pursuing their fisheries interests does not seem to be a great issue to the Faroes. With the Mackerel War the Faroes stood up against the EU and they got what they wanted; an acceptable

agreement. That the Faroes are able to do on their own but in regard to the WNC it can withstand the Faroes in pursuing West Nordic interests within the RFMOs where all three are members, for example in the NEAFC. If Greenland also becomes as coastal state in the NEAFC negotiations the three will stand stronger representing a huge area enriched with natural resources.

In this way, their interests will also be protected both in terms of overfishing, since they will fish in accordance with the allocated quotas, and in terms of not being exploited and allocated the quota they are entitled to through mutual support. Going beyond that, the WNC does not have any visions within the field of fisheries and as of now there are no potential in making the WNC become one actor managing all three countries fisheries, which is the case with the EU and its CFP. Neither does it seem as if the members have any interests at the moment in furthering their cooperation within fisheries. Therefore, it can be concluded that the WNC can only to a degree be understood as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests since there are no visions or work directly related to increasing the member's cooperation within fisheries as there is on the two other areas of Faroese interests.

## **Perspectivation**

Understanding the WNC as a mean to pursue and protect Faroese interests can be taken further into areas of cooperation that the members have not cooperated on before if the visions put forward will succeed. The so called spill-over effect is a common concept within regional integration being released by positive results, and considering the increased relationship between the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland it might be released also considering the changes in the international political landscape, which allow new constellations of cooperation between different actors including non-sovereign.

The dissertation is built on a case study design thus it is not possible to generalise the conclusion, however, the conclusion can encourage analysing all international relations and memberships of the Faroes to reach an understanding of how Faroese foreign affairs are best managed, and through which cooperation Faroese interests are best represented, especially, considering the limited resources of small states, such as the Faroes, and the necessity to priorities international participation. It may also become necessary to study the Faroes' international network and how the Faroes are best protected if the Faroese people one day will vote for independence from Denmark,

which is an aim of several political parties of the Faroes. Therefore, it is argued that the usability of this dissertation is high and can lead to further studies of Faroese foreign affairs.

Historically, small states have allied themselves with larger states. This research has specifically shown that regional cooperation between three small countries can be beneficial to the actors if they seek to empower themselves on the international arena. The consequence of the research is that it is conducted on a case of cooperation that has not yet developed into what it is striving to become. Therefore, there is a consequence of creating a too normative study of how the WNC can be understood as a mean for the Faroes to achieve international influence, which will not be possible in practice. However, the visions presented in the research are made by the WNC itself and different working groups are set on the projects which makes it not entirely an academic work, but also a plan that is being carried out at this very moment. The equality and the trustworthiness between the members is claimed to be one reason that the potential of the cooperation not only stays as potential but will be the future of the West Nordic Council.

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