

The Faroe Islands' Security Policy in a Process of Devolution.¹

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s there has been a remarkable change in the institutional context of safety and security policies for the Faroes. The end of the Cold War led to a reduction in the strategic importance of, and military presence in, the islands. However, today Faroese sea and air space is increasingly exposed to heavy civilian traffic due to expected oil production as well as new sailing routes from the High North. The Faroese government is in a process, nearly completed, of taking over the full responsibility for societal security policy, a field it used to share with the Danish state authorities. In April 2002, the Faroese authorities took over the responsibility for SAR in Faroese sea territory and established a MRCC Center in Tórshavn. A new civic security law was passed by Løgtingið (the parliament) in May 2012. This article discusses micro-states' options in the international arena; provides a brief overview of the history of Faroese security policy; and discusses the present and future challenges involved in assuring protection and rescue services for the Faroese region of the North Atlantic.

Keywords: Faroese autonomy; micro-states; security policy; SAR

Introduction

Approaches to security policy as a field of international relations emphasize states' need to protect their citizens against foreign aggression. A natural starting point for a study of the formation of Faroese security policy is to acknowledge that it is pointless for a semi-sovereign micro-state with less than 50,000 inhabitants to try to resist intervention by military means. The Faroes are as Greenland part of the Kingdom of Denmark (rigsfællesskab), however Danish state authorities also face the dilemma of not being able to ensure security to the North Atlantic territories. The Faroe Islands, either seen as a micro-protostate or as part of the small Kingdom of Denmark, have to face the fact stated by Thucydides that "the strong do what they have power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept" (Thucydides 416/5:402). This fatalistic view on domestic military defence strategies does not, however, justify a passive attitude towards accidents and catastrophes, man-made or natural, that may strike the Islands or the surrounding ocean in peace- or war-time. We shall in this article discuss security policy as a matter of public efforts to ensure people's survival by building and reforming the institutions of civil protection and rescue services.



Since the late 1990s there has been a remarkable change in the institutional context of safety and security policies for the Faroes, as the local administration are in the process of taking over the full responsibility for a policy field they used to share with Danish state authorities (and partly also with NATO/US forces).

This article focuses 1) on some main processes and events that may explain the origin of these changes, and 2) on how the Faroese authorities are coping with the challenges of the formal organization of civil security.

Little has been done previously to recapitulate what has happened on this field of Faroese policy performance, Bertelsen's (2010) analysis of security policy in the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland being an exception. As he emphasizes "All these societies are highly developed, thus, with large capabilities *relative* to their populations, but very limited capabilities in *absolute* terms." (Bertelsen 2010:27). The main challenges for security policy in the Faroe Islands (as well as Greenland and Iceland) are having the responsibility over vast strategically important air and sea spaces, whilst facing limited capabilities of public financing and public administration. However, the Faroe Islands *are* now taking over the responsibility for societal security on land, sea and air, and this article is about why and how the shifts in responsibilities are taking place.

The first section starts with a discussion on options for micro-states, facing challenges in managing relations on the international arena. The further discussion will follow the analytical model presented in the first section (Fig. 1). Firstly, the focus is on international relations, with an overview of Faroese security history, emphasizing the changes in threat perceptions after WWII. Secondly, changes in the Faroese-Danish relationship are discussed, and finally the focus is on how the Faroese authorities now reorganize and build new institutions to meet the demands for societal security.

1. Micro-state options in international arenas

A micro-state's international relations policy offers new perspectives on the challenge of smallness on the international arena. There is indeed, a difference between being a state with 5-10 million citizens, regarded as *small* when measured against a *super-power*, and being a *micro-state* with less than 50.000 inhabitants.

From a neo-realist point of view, based on the relative distribution of power between states and the structure of the international political system, small states' basic options for acquiring and enhancing the power and capability to defend their citizens is by external *balancing* (Waltz 1979, p. 126; Jackson and Sørensen 2003). By forming alliances with other states (often combined with increasing the state's own security capability, so-called internal balancing), the state may reduce the resources needed for its security, because the state can rely on its allies' resources. Yet depending on alliances is not without risks: "a state's allies might fail to meet their commitment to defend the state, leaving it vulnerable to attack" (Collins 2010:21).

Micro-states, as part of their security policy, also must find allies; but they are not, like most *small states*, able to offer substantial human forces and expensive military equipment. Their strength in international relations is that they possess a territory on the globe which other states may find interesting.

The micro-state's choice may therefore be to hand over some or all state sovereignty to a larger state in return for commitments to protection. The risk for the micro-state is that the larger state probably will prioritize its own national interests if the interests of the two nations do not coincide (the same problem mentioned above on alliances).

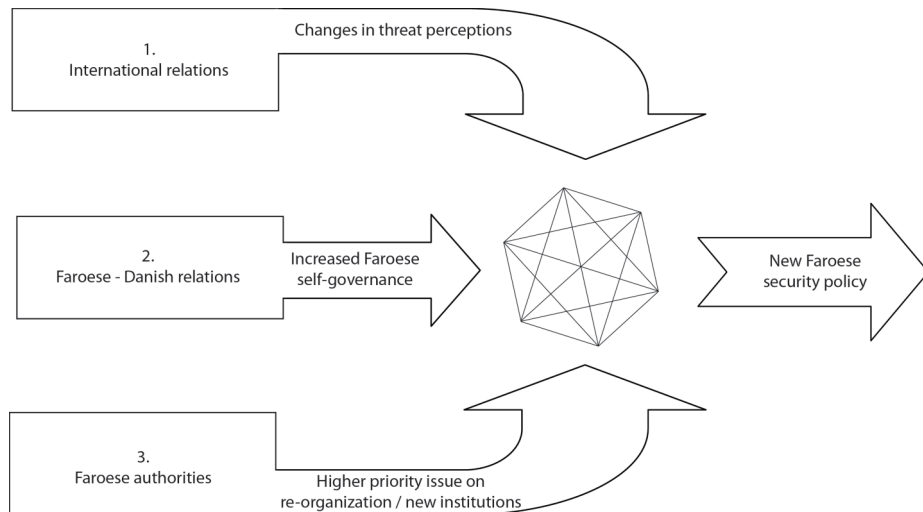
An alternative strategy may be a special form of balancing, which we here may choose to call *alternating*. A micro-state may under certain circumstances use the advantage of being tiny by not leaning solely towards one state or one alliance, but endeavouring to play the larger states against one another (Hansen 1991).

A third alternative is to abandon the realist perspective of *everyone's war against everyone* and to trust in the force of mutual agreements, as advocated by the liberal school of international politics (Mingst 2008). By *joining international organizations* with common rules and institutions, recognizing common interests, the micro-state can rely on aid from outside in case of security problems. The micro-state's challenge will then be to increase its national capacity to communicate with the international organizations, and to adapt to common rules at the national level.

We find that the history of Faroese security policy may be seen in terms of phases. Up to the 21st Century the Faroese leant on the Danish state's ability to dispose military and societal security. However, during the Cold War a strategy of *alternating* was also practised. The hallmark of Faroese security policy today is *joining international organizations*, meaning that the constitutional ties with the Danish state are becoming less important in this policy field.

This historic institutional approach emphasizes the impact of traditions, rules and standards, and the constraining effect of previous decisions on future action. The constraining or shaping effect – *path dependency* – leads to a degree of continuity supported by shared norms, bounded rationality, or what March and Olsen describe as *a logic of appropriateness* (Flinders 2008:45; March and Olsen 1989). Our sources, which are public reports and documents, supplemented with interviews, further indicate a pattern of *punctuated equilibrium* (Flinders 2008). Faroese security policy is undergoing change due to confluences of events at the opening of the 21st Century, which take effect at three levels of policy performance:

- At the *international* level: a dismantling of Cold War installations, partly replaced by a strengthening of the UN-linked International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- At the *state* level: a change in the relations between Denmark and the Faroes as the Faroes develop towards a self-governed (proto)state
- At the *local* and *civic* level, and probably also from *foreign investors*: pressures and expectations for the Faroese government to take care of essential security measures for tackling accidents connected with a possible Faroese oil industry.

Figure 1. Challenges for Faroese security policy ²

After a brief introduction to Faroese security history, emphasizing events that may have led to the abrupt changes after the end of the Cold War, we will discuss the present challenges outlined in Figure 1.

2. The history of Faroese security – from the Viking Era to the end of the Cold War

The political history of the Faroe Islands is a history of shaping security from on one hand a *local* and on the other hand from a *regional geopolitical* point of view. The islanders have tried to make provision for security of supply from continental Europe and/or Great Britain, while neighbouring countries have claimed authority over Faroese territory to guard against foreign aggression towards their own territories.

In 1035 the Faroes gave up its sovereignty to Norway. By that time the Faroes still had ships capable of commercial travel abroad, but the end of the Viking era meant less shipping. In 1271 the Norwegian King undertook to send two ships with provisions a year to the Faroes (the same as previous commitments to Iceland and Greenland in the 1260's) (Sølvará 2002:40). The Faroes chose to lean towards the Norwegian King to secure against isolation, and perhaps also as a buffer vis-a-vis the Hansa trade.

In 1380 Norway joined a union with Denmark, and gradually most of Faroese public affairs came to be administered from Copenhagen. However, in 1814 when Denmark lost Norway to Sweden, it was not obvious that the North Atlantic lands - i.e. the Faroe Islands and Iceland - and the colony of Greenland should remain in the Kingdom of Denmark. Recent studies by historians have revealed the strong influence that British participants in the Kiel negotiations had on the outcome, as Britain preferred a weak Denmark rather than a strong Sweden to have authority in the

North Atlantic (Sølvará 2003:154). The British also showed an interest in the Faroese territorial waters during the First World War, and when Nazi Germany occupied Denmark on April 9th 1940, Churchill swiftly declared on the BBC that the Faroes would be occupied by the British. During the war up to 7–8,000 British soldiers at a time stayed on the islands, which at that time had 30,000 inhabitants, nearly half of them less than 20 years old. The military action on land was limited, but the trading of fish to Britain during the war led to the loss of 132 fishermen's lives, "killed as a direct result of enemy activities" (West 1972:183).

During WWII the British built an airport on the Faroes: the same one that, enlarged, is used for civil purposes today. They also built a Loran A station on Suðuroy, which Denmark took over after the war. In the 1950s the shift from British to US dominance became obvious. The NATO alliance as well as the superpower USA had interests in using the Faroe Islands as a base for Loran C and for Early Warning (Thorsteinsson and Johansen 1999). However, the Faroese identity has been strongly linked to non-violence, and warfare is alien to most Faroese people. The Faroese (like the people of Iceland and Greenland) were never conscripted for military service, in contrast to the Danish. For Denmark, allowing the allies access to Faroese territory meant economizing on its own military spending; but allowing NATO and the US to militarize the islands in spite of Faroese demands on neutrality led to political tensions and growing support for the Faroese independence movement.

Thorsteinsson and Johansen (1999) have found documentary evidence for the US's advising the Danish government to increase its economic support to develop Faroese welfare in order to strengthen the local support for continuing the union with Denmark. Any change in the constitutional arrangements could have brought too many uncertain factors into the North Atlantic security balance. There is no reason to claim that this was the motivation for Denmark's decision to transfer more money into the Faroese economy in parallel with the permission to build a NATO base in the late 1950s; but the effect of introducing old age security and welfare benefits, as well as making loans and grants available for the fishing industry, may have contributed to the reduction of public support for Faroese separatism.

In the following two decades there was a relatively tacit standstill in the Faroese-Danish dissensions over the military presence on the islands. Political parties and peace activists regularly arranged marches, monitored by the Danish authorities and by American espionage which reported to the State Department – and left interesting documents for historians today to study.

There were other disputes between the Faroese and the Danish government on military issues in the 1960s and 1970s in which the Danes stressed their sovereignty over the Islands, possibly in an effort to strengthen their position as an actor in the NATO alliance. One old dispute between the Faroes and Denmark was over the defence of the fishing grounds. This issue became increasingly relevant with a new 12-mile fishing limit in 1964, and a 200-mile fishing limit in 1977. It was commonly held by the Faroese that the Danish Royal Navy exercising coast guard functions in Faroese territorial waters was not focussed upon or equipped for the task: its vessels

had shifting crew of conscripted youngsters, and its main focus seemed to be to train the crew to become marine officers, not to protect the means of livelihood for Faroese society. 1976 was the year when the first Coast Guard ship under Faroese command, *Tjaldrið*, was launched. The ship was unarmed as the Home Rule Act of 1948 stated that the military was to be under Danish rule. The second guard ship, *Brimil*, from 2000 was also unarmed; however a platform for a future cannon has been constructed on its deck.

In 1974 a unanimous *Løgting* chose not to follow Denmark into the European Economic Community (later EU), even though Denmark in 1973 by a referendum had chosen to be a member of the EEC. This meant that the EEC and the Faroes were opponents in fishery negotiations following the implementation of the 200-mile fishing limit by January 1st 1977. The Faroese government now entered the international fishery negotiation arena to defend the Faroes' economic interests, with the nation almost solely depending on fisheries for exports. Although foreign politics remained a matter of Danish state control, traditional procedures, involving Danish state officials, were now partly replaced by Faroese negotiators who were in a position to use the strategy of *alternation*. The Faroese government sent the signal that the islands' claim to military neutrality made fishery and trade agreements possible even with states hostile to NATO. Indeed, the Faroe Islands were to experience more benevolence from the Soviet Union than from the EU, where especially the UK tried to defend its fishery interests in Faroese waters (Hansen 1991). What made Faroese tactics viable was that the islands' territory was, militarily speaking, of high strategic interest during the Cold War. Although security issues and NATO interests were not openly invoked to strengthen the Faroese basis for negotiations, the presence of Soviet fishing vessels in Faroese waters, and from 1981 also in Faroese shipyards, seems to have been one of the trump cards in negotiations with the EU (*ibid.*). The concern to ensure continued Faroese goodwill for NATO's presence on the Islands may have been more important for some of the EU negotiators than the fishery interests of one of the member states.

At the same time as the Cold War ended, the Faroe Islands experienced a deep economic crisis (see section 4). The constitutional ties implied Faroese expectations of Danish state intervention to help the nation; however, there was no such immediate response from Denmark, nor from the EU or NATO. The Faroes seemed to have lost their strategic importance, and thereby the prospects of using *alternation* strategies. The Islands were obliged to find a new role in global society.

The Parliamentary election in 1998 gave a majority to the political parties in favour of Faroese independence, and steps were taken to prepare for negotiations with the Danish state and to prepare a referendum in the Islands. One of the challenges of the time was to find political solutions to ensure a continued security balance in the region, through a process of agreements³ These security questions were discussed with the British authorities and with NATO. Especially important was the Icelandic government's invitation to the Faroese Prime Minister Anfinn Kallsberg and vice Prime Minister Hogni Hoydal to join in a meeting with the new Secretary-General of

NATO and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council, the Scottish politician George Robertson, and the ambassadors to NATO, held at Reykjavik in November 1999.⁴ Lord Robertson held this position from October 1999 to January 2004. The Faroese authorities were given clear indications from the British that the Faroe Islands lay within the military sphere of interest of the United Kingdom (Hoydal, 27.04.2012). As mentioned above, the Faroes were occupied by the UK during World War II, and it is certain that the islands would be occupied by the UK again in case of a similar threat arising. While the strategic importance of the Faroes has decreased after the end of the Cold War, it remains in Britain's interest to maintain its own or friendly military forces in the area over the foreseeable future. In the event of Faroese independence, Robertson said, there would not be a problem for the Islands to for instance join NATO's Partnership for Peace, if not the alliance itself, and thus gaining access to the civic security aspects of NATO (Hoydal 27.04.2012).

Such direct meetings with central actors in the international arena may have opened up a Faroese awareness of alternatives to the Danish defence. Other models could also be used, such as that of the Isle of Man, which (like the Faroes) has significant political autonomy, including total independence from the UK on matters of direct taxation. The UK, however, "remains responsible for defence and foreign relations, for which the Island makes an annual contribution." (Carmichael 2002:261). One could imagine that if an independent Faroese state had to pay for the defence of its citizens, Denmark - being so distant - might not be the first choice as provider.⁵

As long as the Faroes are part of the Danish Kingdom, the UK, Norway and other neighbouring countries will respect Danish sovereignty. However, this mutual understanding need not hamper institutional changes in case of Faroese independence. The established *path dependency* would then become less obvious. But perhaps there is no need for the Faroes to arrange for defence, living in a region surrounded by friendly states?

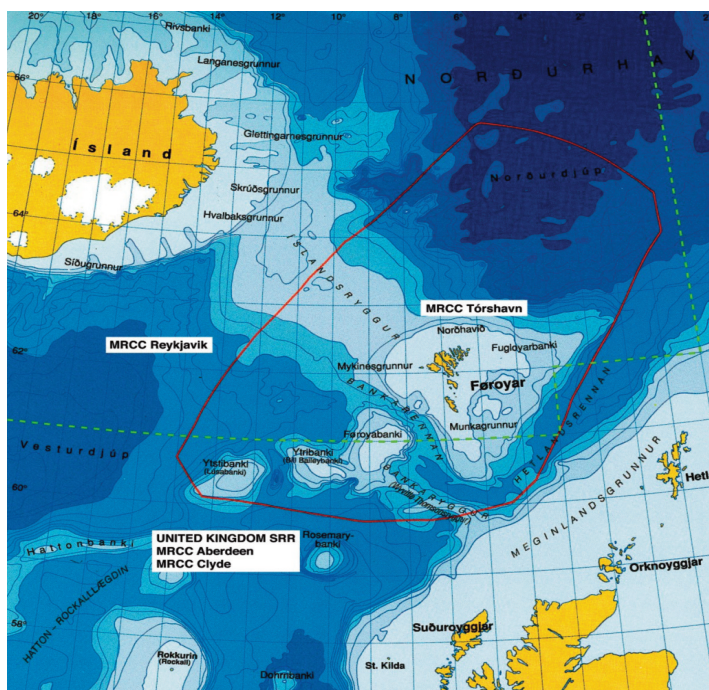
3. The 21st Century: Changes in threat perceptions

Living on "fly specks" on the world map, the security risks faced by the Faroese are two-sided. On the one hand it may be an advantage to be close to invisible. During the Cold War the Faroese people experienced the permanent fear of being a target in case of war, as a result of unwillingly housing strategic military installations. On the other hand, even the smallest nation needs to be reckoned as worth protecting. The Faroese authorities face the challenge of how to get help from neighbour states to protect their citizens in case of emergencies. There are institutions with standard procedures for emergency response, capable of handling small-scale local accidents, but difficulties arise when more challenging rescue actions are needed. The limit of rescue capacity may be illustrated by an incident in 2011, when the only fully equipped helicopter in the Islands was unavailable to fetch a patient from a fishing vessel. The lesson is that, firstly, a similar event involving more people in danger is a probable scenario that must be prepared for; and secondly, as a small society like the Faroes cannot afford losing personnel, the rescue services must be upgraded. The nation's

vulnerability caused by the limits on economic capacity for providing sufficient rescue assets (ships, helicopters and so on) has become more evident as communication systems today, compared to some decades ago, make it easier for people to call for help; and it is now practicable to reach these people, provided only that the rescue capability is available.

Much of the technology for navigation and weather forecasting that used to be controlled by secret intelligence is now available for civic use. The geopolitical situation has changed. The Cold War regime, dominated by two superpowers, is gone. The new main actor on the global maritime scene is the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations' specialized agency responsible for safety and security of shipping. The UN organisation for search and rescue (SAR) has provided a non-military alternative for the Faroes and other states and societies dependent on the sea. The Faroese branch of the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres, MRCC Tórshavn, is responsible for the Faroese waters in a 200 nautical miles radius (see Figure 2) and cooperates with MRCC Aberdeen and JRCC Iceland. In case of accidents on the sea, the Danish military is ready to help from its command centre in Nuuk, Greenland, if required.

Figure 2. Areas of Faroese Responsibility for Sea Rescue⁶



Loran C is a low frequency terrestrial navigation system, based on a chain of transmitting stations.⁷ As mentioned in section 2, a Loran C installation was placed in the

Faroes in the 1950s. Contrary to the expectations of the Faroese authorities (and perhaps also NATO) the Loran installations never proved to be especially useful for civic navigation purposes. Their main force was the ability to assist submarines. According to Thorsteinsson and Johansen (1999), the Faroese authorities seem to not have been informed of the military strategic importance of Loran C for the Polaris programme (submarines carrying nuclear missiles in the North Atlantic).⁸

The Loran system has now been succeeded by the high frequency satellite navigation system GPS, and in 1994-95 the US decided to shut down their Loran C activity. In 2008 the US Department of Transportation and Department of Homeland Security decided on a transition from Loran-C to eLoran. This decision was reversed by the Obama Administration and the close-down of the US Loran-C was completed in 2010 (Ramskov 2010). Nevertheless, the Loran C system is still active through the Loran-Europe Network,⁹ and one NATO member in particular, France, has worked to keep the stations running. Denmark is no longer participating in the Loran system, but does not oppose the Loran activity in the Faroes continuing so long as France is paying the costs (Ramskov 2006). Norway has chosen to finance the continued operations of its Loran C stations; and the UK authorities, previously not participating in the European Loran C network, are now keen on modernizing the system. This renewed interest in Loran is due to incidents where the GPS system has been jammed intentionally and also unintentionally. Concerns persist over the vulnerability of the GPS system in face of natural space disturbances (solar flare explosions), as well as the risk of deliberate disruption by hostile states or individuals. Even though navigators everywhere now use the GPS system, a landbased Loran system may be a prudent investment in a situation where a back-up might be needed. This refers particularly to the timing signals, widely used for synchronization in mobile networks, datacommunication networks and so forth (Carlsson 2009).

A process of demilitarizing the North-West Atlantic has been the positive outcome of globalization and new, transparent and available, technology. The arena has been taken over by supranational institutions such as IMO, organizing their safety and rescue activities on the sea through alternative monitoring and communication technology systems, such as Navtex.

Due to their decreased military-strategic relevance, military installations in the Faroes have now been dismantled: the Danish marine station was converted into a nursing home, and the NATO Early Warning base is now used as a prison. The recommendations from a joint Danish, Faroese and Greenlandic report from May 19th 2011 have led to the closing of Denmark's former separate military commands, *Færøernes* and *Grønlands Kommando*. A new *Værnsfælles Arktisk Kommando* is situated in Nuuk, leaving only a handful of liaison personnel in the Faroes.¹⁰ However, the Danish navy and NATO are still active in Faroese sea waters, one example being the NATO-coordinated Dynamic Mercy joint rescue training exercise held on April 10th, 2012 for two Faroese, one Icelandic and one Danish coast guard ships, and one Faroese rescue helicopter.

4. Changes in the Faroese-Danish relationship

The end of the Cold War coincided with less sense of shared community between Denmark and the Faroes. The Faroese economy collapsed in late 1989, a crisis which lasted to around 1995, and was at its peak in 1992-94. Unemployment was severe, the average wage level fell by 20 per cent, and approximately 10 per cent of the population migrated. The crisis was not met with Danish state counter-measures during its first years, and this Danish *laissez-faire* attitude gave fresh impetus to the Faroese independence movement.

As mentioned above, the Parliamentary elections in 1998 gave a majority to the parties in favour of an independent Faroese state, and steps were taken to prepare for negotiations with the Danish state on the transition period. One year later, in 1999, the government was able to present the report *Hvítabók* (White Book), elucidating various economical and administrative issues to consider in the further political process. Thus also security, safety and rescue questions came on to the political agenda.

In the 1990s steps were taken towards Faroese administration of search and rescue (SAR). Under treaties made in 2003 and 2006, the Faroe Islands have had sole responsibility for human and societal security in the Islands since 2007 (the police force still being Danish is an exception). This is a challenge as the Faroes have limited manpower in public administration, no tradition for conscription or other forms of drafting personnel, and a vast territory. Furthermore, there are only vague traditions for using the Faroese tax-payers' money to finance provisions for security issues that may or may not occur. There is no separate defence or security department, and a closer look at *Fígjarlógin*, i.e. the public budget framed at the Faroese Treasury and passed in the *Løgting*, shows that the relevant responsibilities are spread between three ministries. Most of the issues are placed in the Ministry of Fisheries, but others are placed in the Ministry of Interior and the Foreign Service. All items on the budget are in principle open to debate in parliament; however, politicians have agreed not to reduce the allowances to the new Faroese institutions that are in charge of Faroese societal security. The process of drawing up the security reports that formed the basis for the Faroese take-over in 2007 involved many people, and more were involved in rescue training and in testing the security systems. The inauguration of the new arrangements may have contributed to a securitization of the new institutions, using the concept of Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998 (Emmers 2007). The most recent example is the Parliament's (*Løgtingið*) unanimous approval of a new Civic Security Law (see section 6 below).

The Faroes could choose an alternative route of action for the future, namely relying on the Danish state's readiness to protect the Islands. However, as Bailes (2008, p.138) writes, the Nordic states "see defence/security in largely national and territorial terms: their mental maps of what has to be defended does not go much beyond their own territorial waters." The Faroese experience has been that the Danish state's mental map does not always include the Faroes as part of their national territory to be defended. As mentioned above, studies in Danish and US archives disclose that the Faroes (and Greenland) during the Cold War were used as cards in a

game to reduce Danish military expenses, by permitting NATO and US military use of these territories against the will of the local people. Also, the Faroes today seem to be under the British, rather than the Danish, military sphere of influence.

The Faroese authorities have faced the fact that the best way of protecting the vulnerable Faroese society and the surrounding environment against threats is to assume full responsibility for this policy field. This may be viable as Faroese politics today are highly separate from Danish politics, including separate tax systems and separate processes for adopting laws. Since Home rule was introduced in 1948, responsibility for different fields has lain either in Denmark or in the Faroes, depending on the Faroese requests and financial abilities to provide the corresponding services. As Table 1 shows, most issues are now the responsibility of Faroese ministries. A few issues are still under Danish ministries, and others are tasks for Faroese municipalities. For one of the issues, air traffic, Iceland is the executor, though under the Danish authorities' direction. The devolution process has always gone in one direction, with a single exception. The police, which used to be Faroese, was in 1958 taken over by the Danish authorities, mainly because of pressure from the police profession to acquire Danish rates of pay and working conditions (Skálagarð 2000).

Table 1. Devolution process of security issues

Security Issue	National Authority	Administrative responsibility
Infrastructure	Faroese, 1948	The Ministry of the Interior, Municipalities
Communications	Faroese, 1948 and 1997	The Ministry of Fisheries
Energy	Faroese, 1948	Municipal Authorities
Environment	Faroese, 1948	The Ministry of the Interior, The Ministry of Fisheries
Fire Services	Faroese, 1948	Municipal Authorities
The Police	Danish, 1958	Danish Ministry of Justice, local sheriff
Coast Guard	Faroese, 1976	The Ministry of Fisheries
Media	Faroese, 2006	The Ministry of Culture
Contingency Planning	Faroese, 2007	The Ministry of Fisheries
Weather Forecasting	Faroese, 2009	The Ministry of Fisheries
Health System	Faroese 1948, 1976, 1988	Faroese Ministry of Health (Chief medical officer still under the Danish authorities)
Air Traffic	Danish	Icelandic execution
Radiological security	Shared	

The command-lines for environmental disasters illuminate the role division between Danish and Faroese authorities, as they will differ by *sea* and by *land*. The Faroese

authorities have since 2003 had responsibility for the environment *at sea*, including preventing and/or cleaning up oil spills within the 200 nautical mile limit.¹¹ *On land*, however, it is the local Danish sheriff who is responsible for coordination in cases of major catastrophes and accidents on land, lakes or in fjords, even though other – Faroese – agencies have a responsibility to ensure that they are sufficiently fit to react to such events.

Radiological security is labelled *shared* in Table 1. In case a nuclear event is affecting the Faroe Islands, Denmark will inform Faroese authorities and the police so they can bring the necessary information to the Faroese people, and Danish personnel and equipment will be flown to the Faroes within hours.

The devolution process has at times brought tensions between the Danish state and the Faroes, but as time passed, the two sides have apparently come to accept a development towards Faroese self-government. Even those Faroese politicians who are in favour of a continuing union with the Danish Kingdom do not want to reverse the development towards increased Faroese self-government, and are continuing the process of bringing policy fields under Faroese responsibility and administration: if not all, then as many as possible.

5. Local demands for public security and rescue services

The 1998 election, coupled with the increasing prospects of oil being found in the Faroe Islands, led to significantly more political interest in Faroese security matters. Security was linked with the sovereignty question – who should protect the Faroe Islands militarily – as well as with the question of whether a Faroese state would be able to protect the Faroe Islands in case of a major emergency. The likelihood of finding oil spurred discussion on Faroese civic security. If the Islands were to lose the support of relevant Danish military and civic organs, this meant that the Islands would have to cover civic security by themselves or in cooperation with other countries, and an oil industry would require significant clean-up, search and rescue, and infrastructural capacities (Hoydal, 2012).

In June 2003 this led to the Faroese Minister of Fisheries contacting the Danish Minister of Interior and Health.¹² The Faroese wished to acquire full control of the civic security area, and the Danish agreed to set up a group to look into this. Even though the independence coalition fell apart shortly after this and two pro-union parties together with a third party entered the subsequent coalition, the group was asked to continue looking into the possibility of the Faroese taking over the portfolio of civic security.

The Faroese authorities could to some degree proceed by making use of already established public services. The public institutions for monitoring and organizing rescue services in the Faroes have been small and mostly without formal coordination; but operating in such a transparent society, with ‘personalized’ responsibility for the different tasks, communication problems do not seem to have delayed local emergency actions. Bailes and Gylfason’s (2008:152) description of the conditions in Iceland fits for the Faroes as well: “...*improvisation does actually work pretty well in such a small, close-knit, skilled and inventive society.*” However, the new challenge of taking on full responsibility

for ensuring stable and reliable rescue services, covering all the islands and the surrounding ocean, triggered a broad review of existing arrangements that was documented in two reports from 2003 and 2006 (TBSF 2003; TBSF 2006). A variety of practical rescue training was also arranged for the rescue corps, medical personnel, transport services and so on.

The authorities recognize the valuable assistance of voluntary organisations in this context, but also see the limits of their activities, depending as they do on charismatic leaders and/or local traditions and dedication to this kind of work. Two voluntary organisations in particular have sought to contribute to human security in the Faroe Islands and the surrounding sea. In 1926 a Faroese branch of the Red Cross was founded, and in 1957 the first local *Bjargingarfelag*, rescue corps, was founded, following the model of Icelandic *Slysavarnarfelag*. Reyði Krossur Føroya arranges practical nurse and first aid courses, but most of their activities go to relief funds for people in need in other parts of the world. Some of the local *Bjargingarfelag* have at times been active in arranging rescue training, and not least, in raising money for equipment such as high-speed rescue boats. The ten active *Bjargingarfelag* get financial support through the Faroese national budget. However, not all local communities have organized rescue corps, underlining the fragility of voluntary work, and the fact that public institutions based on legal authority must ultimately be in charge.¹³

6. New Civic Security Law

On 2. May 2012, the Faroese Løgting (Parliament) unanimously agreed to implement a new law governing all the Faroese emergency and civic security services, in case of a security-related crisis or a potential crisis (*Løgtingsmál 183/2011*). The law's effectiveness will be assessed during the next two years, after which it is likely to be somewhat modified. Bearing that in mind, the latest provisions governing the Faroese Civil Security Services in case of a major emergency are as follows:

Each Minister is responsible for being prepared for emergencies related to his/her portfolio. The minister with the portfolio of emergency planning will be in charge of coordinating and advising in case of an emergency. The ministers will be advised by a national emergency council (*Løgtingsmál 183/2011*). The national emergency council will consist of eight people: one representing the minister of emergency planning (who will be the Chair), one from MRCC Tórshavn, one from the municipalities, one will be the Minister of Health and one the Minister of the Environment. The Chief Medical Officer of the Islands and the Chief Veterinarian will also be in the council, and the Chief of the Faroese Police will be the Vice-Chair. Other people can be called to the council when this is deemed to be necessary, and the council has the power to independently look into security-related issues if it deems this to be necessary.

The voluntary sector will be incorporated into the national emergency response, and both the involvement of such organizations in emergency handling and their training will increase. The different ministers will decide on national rules regarding what the voluntary emergency groups should take care of within their respective portfolios, and the minister of emergency planning will be responsible for the coordination of such responses.

In addition to the security aspects that the municipalities until now have taken care of, such as the fire services, the new law demands that municipalities should be able to house and feed displaced people as well as offer assistance to one another. Similarly the municipalities will also have their own emergency councils, and will be required to provide detailed lists of what emergency equipment and personnel they possess, as well as to draw up their own emergency plans.

Both municipal and national authorities have the right to override the right of property in a crisis situation. If the local leader of the emergency efforts deems it necessary, it is legal to enter private property as well as to demolish buildings. Any person available on the scene of an emergency can be ordered to assist the emergency personnel, and everyone is required to follow the orders of the security personnel during a crisis. Perhaps similarly, any company running operations that involve risk is required to have its own emergency apparatus; and any company deemed to provide vital societal services, such as food, can be required to have emergency backup plans.

The coordinated effort to manage an emergency will be organized by the police for the contingencies on land, and by MRCC Tórshavn for cases at sea.

The aim of the Civic Security Law is to establish clear lines of command. As such, it does not seek to offer a detailed description of what is to be done in which case, but rather addresses the question of *by whom* and *how* the emergency response should be coordinated in case of a crisis. It defines who is in charge and who has the right to take which decisions; thus making it easier to cooperate within the Faroe Islands as well as internationally when this is required.

The law indicates that as much power as possible should be kept at as local a level as possible, with the primary emergency response resting with the municipalities. When the emergency is too big for a single municipality to handle, the different municipal emergency services in the country are required to help one another. And, finally, in case of large or extraordinary crises, the national authorities are in charge.

Perhaps most importantly, the law clearly defines the command structure for all types of emergency. Through the permanent institution of the National Security Council it seems to attribute more importance to formalizing security institutions than has traditionally been the case in the Faroe Islands, making it easier and more natural for the national and municipal authorities to prepare for emergencies.

This first Faroese security law is still not a complete framework for Faroese civilian security issues. When it is up for re-assessment in two years' time, it is likely to be revised, expanded and become more detailed.

7. Air Space

Currently Faroese air space is controlled by the Danish authorities, with Iceland as the executor. At the moment this means that for every civil aircraft passing through Faroese airspace, small sums of money, varying in accordance with the size of the aircraft, are paid to Iceland and Denmark for taking care of the security in the area. This money is used solely for search and rescue preparedness, weather forecasts and providing services for air traffic.¹⁴

The Faroese government, based on a unanimous decision by the parliament (*Løgtingið*), has started a process together with the Danish state government to look at possibilities for Faroese airspace to be controlled by the Faroese authorities. If this proposition should become reality, the expected income from levies on aircraft would as a minimum be 50–100 million DKR, which could easily fund Faroese SAR, weather services, airspace-related infrastructural services and so forth (*Løgtingsmál 178/2011 and 179/2011*). Most of the SAR equipment and training related to air traffic emergencies would be effective in other SAR activities as well. As such this would significantly increase the Faroese capability for handling SAR operations in general.¹⁵

8. Future challenges

In this article we have focused on some of the processes and events, in the distant and not so distant past, that may explain some of the ongoing changes in Faroese security policy. Summing up, we find interplay between changes in the international and geopolitical interests of the Faroe Islands, changes in the relations between Denmark and the Faroes, and internal changes in Faroese society, as prospective changes in the resource foundation for the Faroese economy impact upon relationships between the local political authorities and civil society. We may now summarize the substance of these factors and their interaction as depicted in Fig. 1 above:

1. *International relations*: The end of the Cold War has meant reduced interest in the North-West Atlantic Ocean from a security-political viewpoint. This is a situation that of course may change, but thus far the trend of demilitarization seems to benefit the Islands. The permanent anxiety among the population about being a target in a nuclear war is less widespread if not entirely vanished. Instead the mental picture is about how the Faroes can and should join in and interact in international society so as to strengthen societal security by land, sea and in the air. Some of these tasks are coordinated by the UN (IMO), and since 2002 the Faroese MRCC Torshavn has responsibility for the sea areas between the British Isles, Iceland and Norway. Faroese civil security is also strengthened by bilateral and multilateral agreements with neighbouring countries. This has affected the way the Faroese authorities now try to organize their civil security, the new civic security law being illustrative of the present level of attainment and prevailing policy consensus.

2. *Faroese-Danish Relations*: The Home Rule act from 1948, following the referendum in 1946 which gave a small majority for independence, has opened the way for devolution along with the Faroese interest in taking over responsibility for major fields, provided that the Faroes can also furnish the relevant financing. Faroese sovereignty over the Islands' resources was expanded in 1993 to include the resources in Faroese subsoil. Table 1 summarizes the process of devolution of security issues, and the present policy focus is directed towards a takeover of the police.

3. *Faroese authorities*: The Faroese economy is heavily dependent on fishing. In the 1990s many dreamed of the prospects of prosperity from an oil industry. However, an oil industry would require significant safety and rescue capacities. In the beginning the security issue was not high on the political agenda as the Faroes were confident of

Danish support in case of emergency; but when further devolution and independence came on to the political agenda in 1998, the security for oil operations was one of the issues to be considered. Faroese civic security competences and capacities had to be further formalized to manage potential crises of dimensions far beyond the experience of traditionally organized rescue systems.

The Faroes are currently following a path towards further devolution. The Faroese authorities have taken charge of security on the sea and are planning to take over similar responsibilities in the air. The next step will probably be to take over the police, and thus the formal responsibility for security on land. Unless this trend changes, it is likely that the Faroes sooner or later will experience some form of free association with the Danish Kingdom or full independence. This would require that the Faroes cooperate directly rather than through Denmark with its neighbours, such as the UK and Iceland, on security-related issues. Furthermore, an independent Faroes would have to enter into agreements with international organisations such as the UN, NATO and the EU. An independent or more devolved Scotland as well as Greenland would require direct cooperation with these nations as well.

Environmental and rescue challenges are likely to increase in the near future, due to increased maritime traffic from the oil industry, and due to climate change which is expected to bring more extreme weather, as well as traffic through the Arctic as the ice is melting (Bertelsen 2010). Increased traffic would require that the Faroes and the surrounding countries be ready to provide support capabilities, both related to shipping and in case of emergencies.

All in all, for the Faroes, the time for seeking security solely from the Danish state seems to have gone for good. Now the Faroese people coordinate their national resources and strengthen their networks with partners amongst the full range of their neighbours. The mutually vulnerable and interdependent North Atlantic countries will need increased cooperation for security. For the Faroese people, civic security is still the main focus, while for the surrounding states also military security is important, as Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg affirmed in an interview with the Faroese broadcasting service on May 17th 2012: “The Faroe Islands are an important base for activity in this sea-territory. Here we need cooperation, we need more presence, and Norway is expanding their presence by among other acts, considerable investments in the navy, new fighters, and in strengthening our coast guard to be able to be more present in the sea-territory North in the Atlantic. (...) We need rules, we need SAR services, and we need strong enforcement of strong environmental provisions for a vulnerable nature in the Arctic territory”.¹⁶

The Faroe Islands may once again be taking on a key position in the North Atlantic. In contrast, however, to their previous role as a borderline state between two super-powers, now the Faroes will have an active role as partners in a region of states where the value of highest priority is that of peace and friendship.

Notes

- 1 The article is based on a paper presented in the NBSS (Nordic-Baltic Small States) project's second international workshop *Security and co-operation* at the University of Stavanger, Norway, on 24 May 2012. Special thanks to Martin Mohr Olsen for fruitful discussions on the subjects during Spring 2012; to Dr. Archie Simpson, teaching fellow at the University of Aberdeen, for good comments and reference suggestions; and not least, to Alyson Bailes for her contribution to substance, design and proof-reading. Also we want to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their recommendations. Weak points are, however, the authors' responsibility alone.
- 2 Inspiration to the figure, see www.yhteiskunnanturvallisuus.fi
- 3 Løgmannsskrivstovan, Uttanlandsdeildin 8.10.99.
- 4 The Danish ambassador left the room when the representatives from the Faroese government entered the meeting.
- 5 A theme seldom touched in discourses about the gains of being part of the Kingdom of Denmark, is the Danish state's inability to provide territorial defense in the North Atlantic during the Napoleonic wars, WWI and WWII, but had to cede control to the UK and the USA.
- 6 SAR-Faroe Islands, p. 39.
- 7 See eLoran, Background Information. Research and Radionavigation. General Lighthouse Authorities. United Kingdom and Ireland. http://www.gla-rnnav.org/radionavigation/eloran/background_information.html
- 8 Most Faroese approved of the presence of Loran C for navigation purpose, while the protests were almost unanimous, but in vain, against the presence of a NATO Early Warning Station (including a USAF Troposcatter that was kept secret for the Faroese authorities, according to Thorsteinsson and Johansen 1999). The Faroese authorities were not able to deny Denmark to make agreements with NATO and/or the USA.
- 9 See <http://www.loran-europe.eu/news.php>.
- 10 According to *Soværnets* homepage May 9th 2012: "med et mindre forbindelseselement i Tórshavn." <http://forsvaret.dk/SOK/Nyt%20og%20Presse/oevrigenyheder/Pages/DomicilNuuk.aspx>
- 11 Heilsufroðiliga Starvsstovan and Skipaefirlitið are responsible authorities, while Fiskiveiðueftirlitið has the operative responsibility, and MRCC Tórshavn will coordinate actions when needed
- 12 Lars Løkke Rasmussen, with close family relations to the Faroe Islands; Prime Minister of Denmark (2009-2011).
- 13 During recent years another type of private actor has also come on to the scene, namely two enterprises who offer training in rescue operations: *Trygdarmiðstöðin* www.seasafe.fo and *Tilbúgvingarstovan* www.tbs.fo. This security business may augur the end of the traditionally organized security courses, but may also inspire the participants to get more involved in unpaid voluntary work in this sector.
- 14 The system of route charges, see <http://www.eurocontrol.int/articles/route-charges-system>; and <http://www.naviair.dk/Dansk-07/Benchmarking-Pris>
- 15 The Faroese SAR responsibilities were recently expanded due to the Arctic SAR cooperation, initiated by the Arctic council.
- 16 Authors' translation from the Norwegian used in the television interview: http://www.kringvarp.fo/Archive_Articles/2012/05/18/samroda-vid-jens-stoltenberg

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