

Faroese nationalism: To be and not to be a sovereign state, that is the question

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HANS ANDRIAS SØLVARÁ

1 Introduction and main question

The Faroese historian Hans Jacob Debes (1940–2003) argued in an article about nationalism as a historical phenomenon that in international research on nationalism, the Faroese case is unique (Debes, 1991, pp. 23–24). With reference to the famous work of Miroslav Hroch (1932–) on nationalism (Hroch, 1968/1985), Debes mentions that the Faroese national history can be divided into three periods—a cultural period until 1901–1906, a period with political agitation until 1940–1946, and a final period from 1946 to 1948 where the political question about full sovereignty from Denmark is the main question. However, even if the question of Faroese sovereignty was decided at a Faroese referendum on September 14, 1946, the Faroese decision did not result in Faroese independence. According to Hans Jacob Debes, this is unique, and he was not able to find any example in the international literature about another nation, which first decided on independence and then turned back to something less than independence. Hans Jacob Debes even invented a specific term to describe this unique Faroese example—phase of “relapse” (Debes, 1991, pp. 8–27).

However, in the 1991 article Hans Jacob Debes rightfully concludes that historians can only analyze the past, while the future belongs to the prophets. Now, nearly 30 years later, it can in retrospect be “prophesised” that the issue of independence is still disputed and unsolved in Faroese politics, and even if the question became a mayor political issue in the islands in the late 1990s, the question remains unsolved. The Faroese example may not be historically unique (Sølvará, 2017, pp. 84–85), but it certainly represents a “relapse” with mayor consequences for the development of the political life in the Faroe Islands.

In this chapter, the specific Faroese nationalist example will be described and discussed. A common definition of nationalism is that it is a political doctrine invented in Europe in the 19th century and that the political goal of nationalist movements is that national and political borders shall coincide in a nation-state (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). This idea was dynamite for the dominated European 17th century multinational state-model, organized independent of ethnic borders. However, while nationalist consciousness often implies the romantic view that national-

ist movement's only preserve a threatened culture or awake the repressed national consciousness of a repressed people, modern nationalist research implies the opposite. The nation is neither historically or logically a condition for nationalism, but nationalism is a movement that transforms peasant people without a written high culture into a high culture with a written cultural language and creates or invents nations and national consciousness (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990/1992; Østergård, 1996/2007). This modern constructionist view has also influenced research on Faroese nationalism (Joensen, 1991/2003); see also Simonsen, 2012). A relevant question to discuss in relation to the Faroese example is therefore how it happened that Faroese nationalism, which during the 19th and 20th centuries succeeded in the main effort to transform the threatened oral Faroese peasant language and culture into an educated culture with a successful Faroese literacy, has not resulted in an independent Faroese state. This question has focused on the unique character of Faroese nationalism mentioned by Debes. To answer the question, it is necessary to analyze 1) the historical-political relations between the Faroe Islands and Norway/Denmark, 2) the origin and development of Faroese nationalism, as well as 3) the development of the relations between the Faroe Islands and the Danish Kingdom in the contemporary modern globalized world.

Nations and national consciousness may be inventions of the 19th century, but they are not invented completely independent of any history and local traditions. Nations are invented by utilizing certain aspects of local tradition and transforming them into general images or perceptions of the nation. If the goal of nationalism is to create nations in order to establish nation-states, then many national movements have succeeded in their struggle (e.g., Iceland), others have only partially succeeded (e.g., Faroe Islands), while many potential nations failed as local cultures have faced extinction—some of them because of nationalism. If nationalism creates nations by transforming local tradition into the national identity of a larger population, then successful nationalisms necessarily challenge some local cultures. However, modern liberal democratic nation-states can't unconditionally be compared with 19th century new democratic nation-states—not to mention authoritarian 19th century nation-states. While state-nationalism in authoritarian nation-states necessarily encourages counter nationalisms, state-nationalism in modern liberal democratic states may under certain circumstances, to a certain degree, tolerate ethnic differences within the nation-state and therefore decrease the strength or radicalism of counter nationalism within the state. This distinction may indicate why specific context or time, early or late, when nationalism enters an area is relevant for the development or success of the movement. A national movement, which gains support within a specific part of a population in an authoritarian state, may—if not subjected—be motivated to establish an independent state, while a national movement that gains support late within a population inside

a liberal democratic nation-state may be inclined to accept a limited cultural and political recognition within the nation-state.

The thesis in this chapter is that the latter development fits better the Faroese example. This thesis will be discussed from an historical and contemporary point of view, where a comparison with the development of national movements in other comparable areas also will be made. If the success of any nationalism by definition is the establishment of a new independent nation-state, then the term ethnicity may be introduced to describe the success of national movements whose aim is limited to the invention and then the recognition of a high culture within the legal framework of an established liberal democratic nation-state (Østergård, 1996/2007, p. 547). Nationalism may by definition mean something, but in real history, there is no logical necessity between the advent or success of nationalism and the establishment of an independent nation-state. The Faroe Islands remain an historical example of this empirical fact.

However, as Hans Jacob Debes rightly points out, historians can't say anything about the future.

2 A Norwegian dependency

The Faroe Islands were settled in the 4th century AD (Church et al., 2013), probably by Celtic monks from Ireland, but in the early 9th century Norwegian Vikings drew the monks away and settled in the islands (Tierney, 1967, pp. 75–77). The Norse population has since been mixed with, for example, Celtic population, but the surviving tradition and language was the Norwegian cultural and political tradition and the West Norse language of Western Norway.

The islands were probably relatively independent in the beginning, but in the 11th century they came under the authority of Norway and the inhabitants were obliged to pay taxes to Norwegian Kings. Norwegian law became Faroese law in the 13th century, but the specific circumstances in the islands had the effect that in some areas specific Faroese law was implemented in the islands. The Sheep letter, a specific Faroese agricultural legislation, was registered in the Faroe Islands in 1298. In this letter, it is documented that the ancient Faroese parliament of Norwegian origin from the late 9th century, which in 1273 was converted into a representative Norwegian Løgting, was summoned in Tórshavn on Ólavsøku, Olai, the 29th of July, the death day of the famous Norwegian King Olav the Holy in 1030 AD (Mortensen, 1998, pp. 111–126). The Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Isle of Man, Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland became early part of the expanding realm of Norwegian Kings. However, already in the 13th and 15th centuries, Isle of Man, Orkney, Hebrides, and Shetland were lost to the Scottish king, while Danish Kings in the 16th century without success tried to sell the Faroe Island and Iceland to English kings. (Sølvará, 2016, p. 217). These events had fatal consequences for

the Norse culture and language in the Islands. It was only in the Faroe Islands and Iceland where the ancient Norse culture and language survived, while Scottish and English language replaced Norse in other islands—in Greenland, the Norse culture and the Norse settlers vanished in the 15th century and only Inuit people with Inuit culture and language survived.

Important changes happened in 1380 when the Danish Crown inherited the Norwegian Kingdom. Formally, the Danish king became King of Norway as Norwegian King, but during the centuries the administration of the two kingdoms was centralized in Copenhagen and the administrative language in the kingdoms became Danish. In the 17th century, the Faroese trade center was moved from the Norwegian city Bergen to the Danish capital Copenhagen, and the administration of the Faroese Church matters was at the same time moved closer to the Danish Capital (Sølvará, 2002, p. 69). At the same time, the Kings power increased in the aftermath of the reformation in the 16th century, culminating with absolutism in the 17th century, when the king's administrative personal replaced local government.

3 Language and culture

This centralizing and professionalizing development of the administration together with the 19th century transformation of the subsistence peasant society into a market-oriented fishing society challenged local culture. The Norse culture and language in Orkney and Shetland extinguished already in the 17th century, while the Faroese culture and language survived the pressure from Danish culture and language—only as a spoken culture and vernacular of the common people.

Linguists tell us that specific Faroese characteristics are in the Sheep Letter and in preserved letters from the late 15th century; it appears clear that the Norse language in the Faroe Islands was about to develop into a particular West Nordic language (Marnersdóttir & Sigurðardóttir, 2011, p. 59). However, in the 16th century, no Faroese letters are preserved, the written administrative, clerical and biblical language in the islands is Danish, while Faroese language only survived as a deprived spoken vernacular of the common Faroese people. While Icelandic mainly because of the Icelandic middle age Saga literature survived as a written language, Faroese as well as Norwegian written language was replaced by Danish in administration and in church. In the late 18th century, the Faroese vernacular was so deprived by Danish influence that a learned Faroese academic, who did an immensely important pioneer work for the subsequent development of the Faroese language, thought that it would be best if Danish completely replaced Faroese (Svabo, 1976, p. 266). The Faroese language was apparently about to have the same fate as the Norse language in Orkney and Shetland, but the limited Danish presence in the islands probably saved the language.

From a Faroese point of view, it is interesting that the reformation, which already in the 16th century usually established local language as biblical language and subsequently became very important for the rise of vernaculars to written cultural language, in this respect took four centuries in the Faroe Islands. While the Bible already in the 16th century was translated from Hebrew and Greek or Latin into German, Danish or Icelandic, the Faroese had to wait until mid-20th century for the first Faroese translation of the Bible. It was only in 1939 that Faroese was recognized as church language in the Faroe Islands on equal terms as Danish, and in 1948, Faroese became the main language in the islands. The translation of biblical texts that happened simultaneously outside and within the official Danish Church in the Faroe Islands was of great importance to the development and general recognition of Faroese vernacular as written cultural language.

The Faroese language became in the 19th and 20th centuries the primary foundation behind Faroese nationalism and the construction of a Faroese identity, but specific historical circumstances were important or even decisive for the development and the eventual construction of a Faroese identity.

4 From Kiel to the Danish constitution

There are events that are of major importance for the future of a society. In relation to the Faroese society, such an event happened in Kiel in January 1814. The Danish Kingdom, a conglomerate state with a glorious colonial past, was a declining power. The eastern possessions of the conglomerate at the Baltic Sea were lost early, and Scania was lost to Sweden in the 17th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, unsuccessful participation on the losing side in the Napoleonic Wars threatened the mere existence of Denmark, but the British saved the core of a weak Danish state, which in the mid-19th century eventually was reduced to a small and relatively homogeneous Danish nation-state.

In January 1814, Denmark was under severe pressure from Sweden and its strong allies, England and Russia, on the winning side of the Napoleonic Wars. Sweden had in 1809 lost the Finnish parts of the state to Russia and wanted to achieve Norway from Denmark as a compensation—a claim backed by Russia and England. The Swedish army directly threatened Denmark from Schleswig, and the Danish King had to accept to give up Norway to the Swedish King. However, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, Norwegian possessions since the early middle ages, were for some still disputed reasons explicitly excluded from the Norwegian Kingdom offered to the Swedish King—and remained under the Danish King. Some historians have proposed that a clever Danish negotiator cheated a Swedish negotiator who was unaware that the islands belonged to Norway (Nielsen, 1886, p. 24; Nørregård, 1954, p. 170). Someone has stressed a supposed initiative from the powerful Swedish crown prince Karl Johan who was in Kiel in January 1814

(Wang, 2013). Others propose more likely that the British wanted to secure their maritime interests in the North Atlantic and prevent a strengthened Sweden to become a strong North Atlantic power (Gad, 1979), but the most likely explanation appears to be that lack of interest for the North Atlantic was the reason why the islands remained with a weak Danish King (Sølvará, 2018, pp. 101–138).

However, there were prominent persons in England and Sweden who argued for an annexation of the islands (Sølvará, 2018), and the possibility for another outcome with very different long-term consequences for the culture and language in the islands may be considered. If the Faroe Islands in 1814 had become a part of the British Empire, a very likely scenario would be that Faroese culture and language might not have survived. The powerful and attractive British culture might have been irresistible for the most talented Faroese intellectuals who would have been educated at British universities instead of Danish (Kjærgaard, 2016a/2016b). A more likely scenario is that the North Atlantic islands followed the actual Norway under the Swedish Crown, and some linguists have argued that this outcome might have had quite similar consequences (Brunstad, 2011, pp. 275–294). It may be that the threatened Faroese vernacular of west Nordic origin under these conditions disappeared into a likewise west Nordic originated Norwegian language and that Faroese would not exist as a written language today. If so, Faroese language would have met the same fate of extinction as Norse in, for example, Orkney and Shetland. Instead, Faroe Islands in 1814 became a cultural anomaly in a weak and powerless Danish Kingdom, whose culture and language originated from the eastern Nordic tradition. Further, already in the period 1813–1821, the Faroe Islands was established as a separate legislative area in the Danish kingdom, where the law became very different from the actual Denmark. Under these circumstances of otherness, Faroese language became the identifier for Faroese nationalism and since developed to an almost miraculously successful cultural language for only 50,000 people in the Faroe Islands. This may be the uniqueness with Faroese nationalism.

The question is how this successful development was possible for a population of 5000 in 1814.

5 Danish and Faroese nationalism

The development of Denmark from a conglomerate kingdom into a Danish nation-state continued after the major defeat in the Napoleonic Wars. In the 1830s, enlightenment and social revolution challenged absolutism, and the development against the democratic Danish constitution began from 1849. However, the self-confidence of the Danish King strengthened with the victory in the 1848 war against Prussia. In 1863, a confident democratic Danish state decided to annex Schleswig, which as part of the Duchy of Schleswig-Holstein had been in dominion with Denmark since 1460, into the new democratic Danish unitary state. This

decision led in 1864 Denmark to a catastrophic war with Prussia, which would not accept that the new Danish state annexed a part of a Duchy at the Prussian northern border. Denmark suffered in 1864 a major defeat with long-lasting consequences for the development of a new national consciousness in the democratic Danish nation-state. The logic of lost wars had eventually reduced the Danish conglomerate Kingdom to a small and powerless, but relatively homogeneous, Danish nation-state, which had to come to terms with the rise of a strong Prussian/German nation-state at the southern Danish border. Additionally, what the conglomerate Danish Kingdom had lost in terms of influence and power on the external world scene was on the internal state scene gained with the construction of common national values and social coherence.

Danish nationalism, which intended to strengthen the Danishness within a new Danish nation-state, was in part a reaction to the defeat in the 1864 war against Prussia. Similarly, Faroese nationalism was in part a reaction to pressure from Danish nationalism. Before the advent of state nationalism, in 1814, Denmark inherited the old and culturally different North Atlantic possessions from Norway. It was not evident how or if the Danish Kingdom planned to integrate the islands into the Kingdom, but in the 1830s it appears evident that the intention was to integrate the Nordic areas into the Danish state, while the Danish colonies in Greenland, West India, and India still should to be treated as colonies. The basis for this development was a kind of romantic Nordic nationalism in Denmark at the beginning of the 19th century. The Danish linguist Rasmus Chr. Rask (1787–1832) became in 1804 interested in Icelandic and Faroese language. Rask had the romantic view that these two languages were the original languages spoken in Scandinavia in the Viking and middle ages. Rask was especially interested in Icelandic, but also other Danes, for example, Hans Chr. Lyngbye (1782–1837), Niels M. Petersen (1791–1862), Carl Chr. Rafn (1795–1864), Sven Grundtvig (1825–1883), and Jørgen Bloch (1839–1910), contributed with important work for Faroese language. Lyngbye published in 1822 the first book, a collection of Faroese Ballads, in Faroese and Rafn published in 1832 the 13th century Icelandic Saga about the Faroese in Faroese (Lyngbye, 1822; Rafn, 1832). Lyngbye and Rafn did not have any established Faroese orthography to rely on, but help from the Faroese priest Johan Hendrik Schrøter (1771–1851) who translated and published the second book in Faroese, the Gospel of Matthew in 1823 (Schrøter, 1823), was of crucial importance for Lyngbye's work with the Faroese ballads. Furthermore, the late 18th century work of the Faroese Jens Christian Svabo (1746–1824) about Faroese orthography was, even if it was only published in mid-20th century, vital for anything that was done for the establishment of a Faroese orthography (Djupeal, 2016).

However, the spoken Faroese language, which Jens Christian Svabo in the late 18th century (e.g., some years before the Treaty of Kiel in 1814) characterized as so depraved that he recommended to replace it with Danish (Svabo, 1976, p. 266),

came a few years after the Kiel-treaty in focus of Danish academics who were inspired by romantic Scandinavian nationalism. This major change in the interest in Faroese language together with the chronological order of the change became important for the fate of the Faroese language. If the Faroe Islands had remained with Norway after 1814, Faroese language may not have existed today, but the interest for Faroese language especially among Danish academics in the years following the Treaty of Kiel actually became a milestone for the subsequent work, which later led to the construction of a Faroese orthography. On the other hand, Danish state nationalism in the 1840s to 1860s, which intended to create political and cultural unity within the new Danish nation-state, also appears to have both provoked and inspired rise of a Faroese nationalism, which from the beginning focused on the Faroese language as the national identifier. Additionally, at exactly this point Faroese as a west Nordic language—despite romantic views about Icelandic and Faroese as the common Scandinavian Viking age language—differed more from Danish as an east Nordic language.

In the period 1831–1864 when the remains of the former so glorious absolutist Danish Kingdom were reorganized into a democratic constitutional kingdom, a small Danish nation-state, the intention was to incorporate the (alleged) Danish areas at the southern border and the Nordic islands in the North Atlantic into the new democratic Danish state. The intention was never to incorporate the colonies who did not have an indigenous Nordic population into the new Danish democratic state, but the important thing in our context is that it only succeeded to incorporate the Faroe Islands into the new Danish state. A strong Icelandic national movement, which became powerful already in the 1830s, managed to achieve acceptance from Denmark to have the ancient Icelandic parliament (the *Alting*), abolished in 1800 and resurrected already in 1843. The new Icelandic parliament opposed in 1851 the Danish intentions to register the constitution in Iceland. Prussia forced in 1864 the Danes to abolish their intentions to incorporate Schleswig into the new Danish state. Even if some Faroese individuals already in the 1840s sent applications to the Danes authorities about home rule, the claims were weak (Jensen, 1934, p. 607). They couldn't prevent the Danish authorities from incorporating the Faroe Islands into the new democratic Danish unitary state—without consulting any Faroese representation, without asking any Faroese, and without any protests from any Faroese assembly or persons (Patursson, 1903; Thorsteinsson, 1990). Instead, the Faroe Islands subsequently, in 1852, had the ancient parliament (the *Løgting*), abolished in 1816 and resurrected as a consultative body within the constitutional borders of the new unitary Danish state.

To sum up, Icelandic nationalism became so powerful already under the non-democratic diversity under absolutism that it managed to preserve a relatively independent Icelandic position before the advent of the new Danish unitary state. Faroese nationalism, on the other hand, came later and was so weak that it could

not preserve the relative independence of the Faroe Islands before the advent of the new Danish unitary state. Therefore, in the Faroe Islands, nationalism could not prevent the Danish authorities from incorporating the island into the new Danish state. In fact, nationalism did not really come to the Faroe Islands until Denmark had become a democratic state. This chronology of events can in part explain why Icelandic and Faroe nationalism developed in very different ways.

However, even if it is claimed that nationalism first came to the Faroe Islands in 1888, the origin of Faroese nationalism may be traced back to 1844 when the first application for Faroese home rule was sent to the Danish state authorities. In accordance with Danish romantic nationalism, Danish authorities wanted to promote Danish values within the Danish state. This was indicated in 1844 when a debate about the implementation of the first regular school system in the Faroe Islands was held in a temporary Danish representative assembly (Tarbensen, 1993, pp. 155–180). There was as with the implementation of the constitution no Faroese representative in the assembly, whose members had the view that Danish language should be the teaching language in the Faroese schools. This question was not a great issue among the common Faroese people in mid-19th century. Faroese peasants were more interested in the expenses that a regular school would lay on them and that a regular school would prevent the children from participating in the work on the land or fishing. Nevertheless, Faroese academics in Copenhagen were astonished by the lack of knowledge about Faroese language among the Danish representatives in the assembly who, for example, claimed that Faroese was only a deprived Danish dialect. These events actually started the process that led to the construction of a Faroese orthography.

V.U. Hammershaimb (1819–1909), a young Faroese theology student in Copenhagen, protested against this ignorance in an article in a Danish newspaper in 1844 (Grundtvig, 1978, pp. 83–87), and in 1845 his Danish friend Svend Grundtvig pseudonymously published a booklet about the question, where he provokingly compared the Danish attitude to Faroese with the German attitude to Danish in Schleswig (Grundtvig, 1978). The school system was implemented in 1846, but it was because of many Faroese complaints, which as mentioned were not mainly about the teaching language, abolished already in 1854. However, the long-term consequence of the debate in the Danish assembly about the Faroese language was the important linguistic work that eventually resulted in the construction of the etymological Faroese orthography of 1846, which constitutes modern Faroese orthography. In popular Faroese national culture, it is often claimed that Hammershaimb constructed the Faroese orthography, but scholars have for almost a century recognized that the Danish linguist Niels M. Petersen and especially the Icelandic linguist and historian Jón Sigurðsson (1811–1879) constructed the Faroese orthography (Matras, 1951; Lindqvist, 2018). However, the major work of Ham-

mershaimb for the Faroese language can't be underestimated just as the major work of Danish and Icelandic academics for Faroese language must be acknowledged.

In 1854, Hammershaimb published the first Faroese grammar, based on Sigurðsson's etymological Faroese orthography (Hammershaimb, 1854), which with some minor changes is still used. At that time, he had already collected and published Faroese Ballads (Hammershaimb, 1851) and published a Faroese Anthology in 1886–1891 (Hammershaimb, 1891).

Jakob Jakobsen (1864–1918), the first Faroese linguist, became in 1897 the first Faroese Doctor with a thesis on the extinct Norn language in Shetland (Jakobsen, 1897). Jakobsen wrote in 1892 a biography about Páll Nolsøe (1766–1809), usually called Nólsoyar Páll, who in 1804 built the first Faroese owned sea-going vessel for many centuries (Jakobsen, 1892). During the troublesome Napoleonic Wars, when it was a challenge to supply the Faroe Islands, Nolsøe sailed between the Faroe Islands and Denmark/Norway/England with merchandize, but he never arrived in the Faroe Islands from his last sea-journey from London, from where he left late in 1808. In Jakobsen's biography, published in a Faroese edition in 1912 (Jakobsen, 1912/1966), where he used his own phonetic proposal from 1898 of a new Faroese orthography, he constructed a picture of Páll Nolsøe as a Faroese national hero. Jakobsen also collected Faroese folktales, which he published from 1898 (Jakobsen, 1898–1901), and he laid the foundation for a Faroese literature. Jakob Jakobsen was in his engaged work for Faroese language obviously motivated by a fear for that Faroese would meet the same fate as Norn in Shetland (Joensen, 2010, pp. 232–233), and it has since been claimed that a few committed and engaged persons like Jakobsen saved Faroese from facing the same fate of extinction as Norn in Shetland (Joensen (2010, p. 240).

Gradually, and naturally, Faroese academics as time went became the major figures in the struggle and work for Faroese language, while the role of Danish and Icelandic academics just as naturally declined. However, the interesting point is that Faroese nationalism was both inspired from the 19th century Danish national culture—through inspiration from Danish universities on Faroese students and through work of Danish academics with Faroese language and culture—and a Faroese reaction against the more narrow Danish state nationalism, which developed in the period 1831–1864. This context doesn't in principle distinguish Faroese nationalism from nationalism elsewhere, but if we keep in mind that Faroese nationalism developed within a weak democratic state, we have a likely explanation of the fact that Faroese nationalism never developed into a strong and irresistible secession movement.¹

Gradually, the Faroese language gained acceptance from the Faroese people, and when the Faroese Association was founded in Tórshavn in 1889, Faroese language

¹For the development of the Faroese secession movement, see Sølvará (2014) and in English Sølvará (2016a).

and culture became the main issue. With the first newspaper, *Føringatíðindi* from 1890, published in Faroese, based on the etymological orthography of Sigurðsson, a broader Faroese public for the first time regularly could read Faroese (Matras, 1969; Debes, 1969). Disputes between supporters of the etymological orthography of Sigurðsson and supporters of the phonetic orthography of Jakobsen grew within the association, but the disagreements were not only about the orthography. A moderate wing wanted to promote Faroese as the common language in the Faroe Islands, without challenging Danish as the cultural language (among them was an old and more moderate Hammershaimb) (Debes, 1982, pp. 368–369), while a radical wing on the basis of Sigurðsson’s etymological orthography intended to establish Faroese as the cultural language in the Faroe Islands on the same level as Danish. The moderate wing claimed that the etymological orthography was “Icelandic” and separated Faroese from Danish. The other side argued that the etymological orthography was well suited to embrace the dialectal variations in the Faroe Islands (Hammershaimb, 1891, pp. LIV–LVI). A phonetic orthography had the advantage that the written language would remain close to the spoken language, but the challenge would be to find a standard independent of any specific dialect. The critics said that the standard would most likely become the language spoken in Tórshavn, where the influence from Danish would also be the most significant. In the end, the etymological orthography prevailed, but the discussion is still ongoing in the Faroe Islands (see Nauerby, 1996). At the beginning of the 20th century, the Faroese Association split up, but at that time, the interest for Faroese language and its place in the Faroese society had changed from an academic one in 1844 to an issue of major political interest for a large part of the Faroese people.

However, the almost restraint free way in which the written Faroese language in the 19th and 20th centuries developed within the Danish state context and gained acceptance in the Faroe Islands created an ambivalent element toward Denmark within modern Faroese nationalism. Faroese nationalists—as nationalists in general—tend to describe opponents, Faroese or Danes, in negative terms, but many of them recognize at the same time that modern Faroese culture and language is deeply in debt to Danish culture and intellectuals who have inspired and promoted Faroese culture and language (e.g., Jacobsen, 1927, pp. 79, 80, 87; Hoydal, 2000, p. 23).

6 Between home rule and independence

Traditionally, Faroese research on nationalism, for example, Hans Jacob Debes, are in line with Miroslav Hroch and distinguish between a cultural and a political period (Debes, 1982). The cultural period begins around 1888, when participants at a famous Christmas meeting in Tórshavn decided to establish the Faroese Association of 1889 in order to preserve the Faroese language and Faroese culture.

The first Faroese newspaper published in Faroese (*Føringatíðindi* from 1890) was a result of this meeting. Following the cultural period, the association in 1901–1906 splits into a conservative and progressive wing, which marked the beginning of the political period. The characteristic of the cultural period is the focus on the preservation of language and culture, while it is the focus on the political consequences of the new national awareness, eventually leading to secession, which characterizes the political period.

In retrospect, this kind of periodization can give researchers a better view over national periods, but historically, methodologically, and philosophically researchers may draw wrong conclusions if they confuse these models with reality. First, it is empirically difficult with basis in the Faroese material to distinguish between a cultural and a political period. It may be relevant to distinguish between an intellectual and a popular period in the development of Faroese nationalism, but in chronological terms, it is difficult to separate the cultural and the political track. Nothing indicates that the interest for the preservation of Faroese language preceded the interest for political home rule. Similarly, the focus on the Christmas meeting in 1888 appears flawed and incidental. Second, in methodological terms the focus on Miroslav Hroch's periodization appears to have led some Faroese researchers to overlook empirical evidence, which indicates, that the political track is parallel—not following—the cultural track. Third, empirical models relating to the development of nationalism from a cultural period over a political period to independence can lead researchers to the philosophical view that secession is the determined goal of any nationalism—a view that may underlie Hans Jacob Debes' apparent surprise over the fact that Faroese nationalism did not result in secession from Denmark. Lastly, researchers of nationalism may, if they study inside a national culture, be biased and tempted to overlook or underestimate broader contexts and contributions from intellectuals from outside.

This chapter is written with these reflections in mind and when this chapter about the struggle for home rule also starts with the traditional periodization, we must keep these limitations in mind. The point is not that Faroese nationalism eventually became progressive and political in 1901–1906, while the opponents were only conservative remnants from a dying cultural period. The point is that at the beginning of the 20th century Faroese nationalism, for example, the cultural and political issue, increasingly became a subject, which was relevant for a large part of the Faroese population. In this respect, we can argue that Benedict Andersons term “print-language” can be applied to a Faroese context from 1890, when a large part of the population got access to printed Faroese texts (Anderson, 1983). This is an empirical fact—not a normative or philosophical claim about the direction or strength of Faroese nationalism.

The major Danish defeat in 1864 resulted in a conservative Danish reaction that led to a conservative revision of the constitution in 1867. The position of the King

in the political system remained strong against the parliament, and any attempts to move the unitary Danish state in a federal direction was overruled (Østergård, 2012, p. 38). The Faroese parliament's attempts in the late 19th century to liberalize, democratize, or increase the authority of the Løgting were denied (Sølvará, 2002, pp. 125–130). At the end of the 19th century, the King ruled with preliminary laws, while the majority in the Danish parliament became increasingly in favor of reducing the power of the King. In 1901, the King eventually gave up and appointed a government with bases in the liberal majority in the parliament. At the same time, the Faroese representatives in the Danish parliament were in favor of extended Faroese home rule within the Danish Kingdom (Debes, 1993, pp. 129–137).

This Danish context created the Faroese political framework underlying the development of modern Faroese politics and modern democratic nationalism in the Faroe Islands. In 1901, the Faroese voters elected Jóannes Patursson (1866–1946), the undisputed leader of the Faroese national movement, as a Faroese representative in the Danish parliament. Patursson published in 1903 the book “Faroese Politics” (*Færøsk Politik*), written in Danish and intended to Danish politicians, where he criticized that the Danish authorities in 1850 registered the constitution in the Faroe Islands without consulting the Faroese people or any Faroese (Patursson, 1903). This argument remains a part of the political vocabulary of modern Faroese nationalism, and it remains undisputed that the interest of the Faroese for the constitution is weak. Three times, in 1920, 1939, and 1953, have there been referendums in Denmark and the Faroe Islands about changes in the constitution. The poll in Denmark was, respectively, 49.6%, 48.9% and 59.1%, but in the Faroe Islands, the comparable numbers were 24.9%, 10.7%, and 8.7% (Sølvará, 2017, pp. 62–64). The constitution required that a majority of at least 45% of the electorate was necessary in order to accept the changes. Interestingly, 45.8% of the Danish electorate voted in favor of the constitution in 1953, while only 6.7% of the Faroese electorate voted in favor of the new constitution. These numbers indicate that even if the constitution remains valid in the Faroe Islands, the legitimacy of the constitution in the islands can be questioned. Paterson's message with the book was that the Faroe Islands should be recognized home rule within the Danish realm. Three years later, in 1906, he managed to get an offer from the Danish government on extended home rule to the Løgting (Sølvará, 2011, pp. 20–39). The Løgting should be recognized as extended power in some domestic affairs and with consent from the Danish government authority to collect taxes in the Faroe Islands. The debate in the Faroe Islands was harsh, and following an electoral campaign to the Løgting, where the dominating discourse was high Faroese taxes, the Løgting rejected the offer from the Danish government about home rule.

The result was the establishment of the first political parties in the Faroe Islands, the Unionist Party (1906), which wanted to preserve the relations between the

Faroe Islands and Denmark as they were, and the Home Rule Party of 1909, which wanted legislative power to the Løgting in Faroese matters and full rights to Faroese in Faroese matters. This dividing line has since been defining in Faroese politics and was the main political conflict during most of the interwar period. Even if the Unionist Party had the majority in the Løgting during most of the interwar period, a majority in the Løgting in 1919 accepted to consult the Danish government with a proposal, which would change the constitution in a way that would authorize the Danish parliament to give the Løgting legislative power in internal Faroese matters (Sølvará, 2017, p. 60). However, when the first referendum on the constitution was in 1920, the proposed change was not included in the changes in the text. This affected the view of the Home Rule Party against the referendum as well as against the Danish authorities in a negative way. The constitution has since been part of a legal argument against extended Faroese home rule, and it constitutes the interpretive context related to the status of the Faroe Islands within the Danish state.

At the same time, in the period 1918–1923, the Løgting several times accepted to give the Faroese language the same position as Danish in the school and in the church, but it was not until 1939 that Faroese achieved the same right as Danish in the Faroese school and church (Sølvará, 2013, pp. 167–170). At that time, two new parties, the Social Democratic Party (1925) and the Industry Party (1935), who added a new left-right dimension to the unionist-home rule dimension in Faroese politics, had achieved representatives in the Løgting, and both parties were more nationally oriented than the Unionist Party. However, the definitive nationalist question of Faroese secession, expressed for the first time in 1925 (Sølvará, 2016, pp. 140–141), had to wait for the Second World War to achieve extensive political support from the Faroese population. Instead, extensive Danish state grants, which were intended to fund the necessary modernization of the Faroese society, especially to fund the construction of modern harbors in the new industrial fishing places, were with Faroese political consent sent to the Faroe Islands in the interwar period (Steining, 1953, pp. 148–149).

Under the Second World War, the Germans occupied Denmark, while the British occupied the Faroe Islands. The Faroese flag, drawn in 1919 by Faroese students in Copenhagen, was in 1940 recognized by the British to use at sea. Further, a preliminary constitution recognized the Løgting together with the Danish Governor a kind of legislative power in domestic Faroese issues. In addition, economically the war years were very lucrative for the Faroese society. These special circumstances strengthened the Faroese independence movement, which had been weak during the pre-war economic crises (Sølvará, 2016, pp. 141–143). The independent minded Peoples Party (1939), which achieved six representatives in the Løgting at the pre-war election in 1940, achieved 12 of 25 representatives in the Løgting at the late wartime election in 1943. However, the Peoples Party never

achieved the majority in the Løgting and the British occupiers made it clear that they would never accept any Faroese decision to secede from Denmark without consultation with a liberated Danish government (Sørensen, 1998, pp. 212–213). It was clear that the question about independence would not disappear, but the British decision postponed it to after the war.

Past-war negotiations did not lead to any Faroese consensus, and the Danish government in early 1946 eventually proposed a solution within the constitution that none of the Faroese parties were fond of. The Unionist Party thought that the proposal was too radical, the Social Democratic party didn't think it was radical enough, while the Peoples Party could not accept it at all. In the end, the unionist majority in the Løgting understood that the proposal was an ultimatum and decided to hold a Faroese referendum about the Danish government's proposal or secession (Sølvará, 2017, pp. 65–78). The Peoples Party, which wanted the Faroe Islands to have an independent dominion relation to the Danish Kingdom, was against the accepted "either-or" referendum without a positive alternative to the government's proposal, but the Danish government accepted the proposed referendum. The unionist parties as well as the Peoples Party suspected that the either-or referendum would result in a majority for the government's proposal, but when the result of the referendum on September 14, 1946, was official, a unified political elite in Denmark and in the Faroe Islands was astonished. A marginal majority, 50.7% of the poll, 67.6%, was in favor of secession. However, when a small majority in the Løgting decided to undertake the preparations for secession, the Danish King (the government) resolved the Løgting with reference to §18 in the constitution. The government now interpreted the constitution in a way that rendered the referendum consultative, and the decision of the Løgting illegal, because the final and binding decision about Faroese secession could only be taken by the Danish parliament.

The political system in the Faroe Islands generally accepted the Danish decision, but the election to the Løgting in November 1946 changed the secessionist majority in the Løgting to a unionist one. The new unionist majority interpreted the result of the referendum as a rejection of both proposals and undertook new negotiations with the Danish government. Eventually the unionist majority and the Danish government agreed on the Home Rule Law of April 1948, which despite the constitution furnished the Løgting with legislative authority in domestic Faroese matters, while, for example, foreign policy and defence belonged to the Danish authorities. Further, 400 years after the reformation, the Faroese language was recognized as the main language in the Faroe Islands. Additionally, the Løgting was authorized to collect taxes in the Faroe Islands. If the Danish authorities wanted to keep the Faroe Islands within the Danish state, they had to accept this unprecedented Home Rule Act (Mayer, 1947, pp. 289–299), but historical research indicates, on the other hand, that the Home Rule Law in respect to foreign pol-

icy and defence was deliberately constructed to fit American interests during the Cold War (Thorsteinsson, 1999, p. 44; see also Jensen, 2004). The Home Rule Law allowed Danish authorities to register the NATO treaty in the Faroe Islands even though the Løgting in 1940 had decided that the Faroe Islands should be outside all military alliances. The decision was renewed later and the Danish decision to build a NATO station in the Faroe Islands led to massive public protests in the 1950s. The left-wing oriented Republican Party, founded in 1948 because of the “betrayal” against the result of the referendum in 1946, gained substantial support during this period and established itself as one of the four big political parties in the Faroe Islands.

However, even though there were major crises between the Faroe Islands and Denmark during the home rule period, and the Republican Party established itself as a strong political secession party in the period, the Faroe Islands subsequently developed into a semi-independent top-modern society within the home rule system. Even though the independence-minded parties, the Peoples Party and the Republican Party, didn't accept the Home Rule Law, the Home Rule Law furnished the political system and the Faroese People with the authority and opportunity to achieve most of the goals of the national movement, except full secession. The Faroese language was recognized as the main language in the Faroe Islands and the Løgting, which according to the home rule system had the opportunity to increase its influence by taking over the legislative power and economic responsibility of Faroese areas, could during the period establish itself as the main legislator of the Faroe Islands. The Faroese language has within the framework of the Home Rule Law also in praxis developed into the administrative and the cultural language in the Faroe Islands. Additionally, the legislative power, which until 1948 exclusively was with the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen, where the Faroe Islands since 1851 have had two representatives, is in the 21th century almost exclusively with the Faroese Løgting. Furthermore, because of the Home Rule Law, the Løgting in 1974 was able to decide that the Faroe Islands would not follow Denmark into the EEC (now EU). The Danish colony of Greenland, which as the Faroe Islands and Iceland became a Danish possession in 1814, was only included into the constitutional realm in 1953, when colonialism was about to be passé, but without home rule Greenland became as an integrated part of Denmark member of EEC. Greenland could only leave the EEC 1982, for example, when Greenland in 1979 had achieved home rule as the Faroe Islands in 1948. It was also during the home rule period that the Faroe Islands with Danish inspiration and extensive economic subsidies from the Danish state developed into a modern and prosperous welfare society.

Of course, there have also been crises in the relationship between Denmark and the Faroe Islands, for example, during deep economic crises in the 1950s and 1990s, which put extensive pressure on the relationship. Both in the 1960s and the late

1990s independence-minded parties achieved the majority in the Løgting and succeeded to agree on independent-minded coalitions. However, in the end these crises and combined Danish-Faroese efforts to support and reconstruct the very sensitive fishery-dependent Faroese economy appear in the long run to have strengthened the ties between the countries (see Mikkelsen, 2001). The deep economic crises in the Faroe Islands in the 1990s damaged the Danish-Faroese political relations so much on the short term that an election to the Løgting in 1998 for the first time resulted in an independence-minded majority and consequently the establishment of a new Faroese government, which intended to establish an independent Faroese state (Sølvará, 2002, pp. 372–385). The ultimate political goal of the national movement in the Faroe Islands appeared to be very close around 2000.

In the 1980s, Faroese authorities with the Home Rule Law had achieved control over the Faroese economy, and experienced by the crises in the 1950s, the Danish authorities were reluctant to interfere in Faroese matters. Furthermore, the fear of losing control over the fish resources in the Faroese sea territories, which in 1977 were extended to 200 miles from the coast, to the European Economic Community (EEC), made the Faroese skeptical toward a membership of EEC. The vital importance of the fishing industry for the Faroese economy and the decision to stay outside EEC gave the Faroe Islands an even more independent status within the Danish state. Consequently, Faroese authorities can relatively independently negotiate with independent states about fishing agreements and they can act relatively independent in some Foreign policy matters. In order to utilize the limited fish resources in Faroese waters and protect the sensitive Faroese economy from world market fluctuations following the first oil crises in 1973, the Faroese governments during the 1980s undertook heavily to subsidize the fishing industry with the Faroese taxpayer's money. The consequence was a major economic crisis, which in 1992 forced the Faroese government to ask the Danish government for economic help. The Danish pecuniary help was extensive, but the condition was that the Danish government got control over the Faroese economy. The unemployment rate—an otherwise unknown phenomenon in the Faroe Islands—grew to 24% and 13% of the population immigrated. The economy gradually recovered during the late 1990s, but the consequence was a major political crisis in the relations between Denmark and the Faroe Islands. A Faroese government coalition between the Peoples Party, the Republican Party and the Home Rule Party following the election in 1998 proclaimed their main goal to be to establish the Faroe Islands as an independent state with its own constitution—in a dominion relation to the Danish Crown. During the negotiations with the Danish government in 2000, the Faroese government also intended to reach an agreement about a gradual reduction of the Danish subsidies over 15 years, but the Danish government could not accept a transition period longer than 4 years. After four meetings, the negotiations ended in October 2000 without an agreement. The Faroese Prime Minister

(Løgmaður) cancelled because of this, two referendums, which should be in 2001, on a Faroese constitution and on the agreement with Denmark about, for example, the economic transition period. Instead, the Faroese government coalition - with authorization in the Home Rule Law—decided to take the responsibility for some expensive domestic areas. Consequently, the Danish state expenses in the Faroe Islands—approximately 1.300 million Danish Krona—were reduced with 366 million Danish Krona in 2002. In 1997, the Danish state expenses in the Faroe Islands were 20% of the Faroese GDP. In 2002, the number was about 10% (Sølvará, 2002, p. 383).

However, the sovereignty government lost the majority in the Faroese parliament in 2004, and even if the Faroese economy is strong and never has been more independent of Danish subsidies than now (2014–2019), there has never since been a majority for Faroese sovereignty in the Faroese parliament. Following the international economic crises in 2008, which only subsequently effected the Faroese economy, the unionist led Faroese government from 2011 negotiated with the Danish government about raising the subsidies with hundreds of millions to a price indexed pre-2002 level, but the Danish government only accepted that they were price indexed with a few millions from the 2011 level. Since then the political debate in the Faroe Islands about the Danish subsidies has mainly been about if they shall be price indexed or not, while the work with a constitution has continued until recently. The intention was to have a referendum about the constitution in 2018, but political disagreements and priorities effected that there has not yet been a referendum. The intention with a Faroese constitution is to establish the rights of the Faroese People and that the sovereignty issue is solely with the Faroese people. The origin to the work on the constitution is the political aftermath of the economic crises in the 1990s, but the problem is just as old as the Danish 1849 constitution, registered in the Faroe Islands in 1850. The Danish state authorities have ever since interpreted the constitution in such a way that it defines Denmark as a unitary state and that the legislative power according to the constitution is with the Danish parliament (Ross, 1980, p. 496). The constitution has been used as an argument against Faroese home rule. Attempts to change the constitution in order to authorize the Løgting legislative power were overlooked. The referendum in 1946 was defined as consultative, and the subsequent decisions of the Løgting based on the referendum were therefore illegal according to the unitary Danish interpretation of the constitution. Danish state authorities have—based on the constitution—defined the Home Rule Law as only a one-sided delegation of the Danish parliament's legislative power to the Løgting (Thorsteinsson & Rasmussen, 1999, p. 525). Moreover, the Danish state authorities hold the view that a specific Faroese constitution will only be accepted if it is corresponding with the Danish state constitution. However, the Danish government has accepted the current proposal for a Faroese constitution, but interestingly, the Faroese Unionist Party claimed that

the proposal in reality means Faroese secession from Denmark, despite the fact that the text explicitly reads that another referendum is necessary if the Faroe Islands is to become a sovereign state. The proposed Faroese constitutional text doesn't—if accepted at a referendum—establish a sovereign Faroese state, but, if accepted, the constitution places the authority to decide to establish a sovereign Faroese state with the Faroese people only.

These questions may not be of vital importance as the Danish state authorities—independent of who holds the Danish governmental power—also politically hold the view that they will respect a Faroese decision to establish an independent Faroese state. In addition, in political praxis the Faroese home rule authorities independent of formal interpretations of the constitution have the legislative and executive authority in the Faroe Islands. Interestingly, already in 1950, the Faroese judicial expert Edward Mitens (1889–1973) interpreted the Home Rule Law in broader historical context and argued that the Home Rule was an agreement, which recognized the Faroe Islands “partial state quality” (Mitens, 1950, p. 91). Anyway, the new Faroese coalition between the Unionist Party, the Peoples Party and the Centre Party, which took over in September 2019, when the Faroese economy was as strong as ever before, has no plans to continue the work with the Faroese constitution. This appears peculiar because the general political pattern since the Home Rule Law in 1948 has been that in economically good times the independence movement has been strong, while it has been weak in economically bad times.

7 The state of mind in the 21st century

The national movement in the Faroe Islands has occasionally succeeded to bring independence on the political agenda in the Faroe Islands. However, it mainly appears to be a consequence of external factors, for example, the Second World War and the political crises in the relations between the Faroe Islands and Denmark in the aftermath of the economic crises in the 1990s. In addition, the development in Faroese politics in the 21st century appears to indicate that even in economically good times the secessionist agenda fails to convince the majority of Faroese voters. The ultimate national goal of an independent Faroese state in a culturally homogenous Faroese society seems to be beyond reach.

The unionist Andras Samuelsen (1873–1954), who became the first Faroese prime minister in 1948 under the Home Rule Law, represented occasionally the Faroe Islands in the Danish parliament. In 1923, he said this in the Danish parliament: “Also the unionist people are Faroese and nationally minded Faroese, but we believe that our national peculiarities not only can be preserved, but that they only can be preserved in union with Denmark.” (Translated from the Danish in

Sølvará, 2013, p. 196). This almost 100 year old, unionist—and national—view may indicate an explanation of the Faroese development in relation to nationalism.

Faroese late 19th century nationalism, which culturally became interested in the Faroese language, was inspired and partially supported from Denmark. However, at that time, at the beginning of the 19th century, when the Faroe Islands became a possession of the Danish king, the Faroese language was threatened by especially Danish language, but within the new democratic Danish state, Faroese language gradually could develop into the main cultural language in the Faroe Islands. The Faroese language is no longer a threatened language, and it certainly isn't threatened by Danish language. If anything threatens the Faroese language in the 21st century, then it would be the English language. A Faroese university, which with other institutions makes research in relevant Faroese issues on many fields—issues related to natural science, social science, and human science—was founded in 1965. Thus, the 19th and 20th centuries' struggle for establishing the Faroese language a space within a Danish-dominated cultural and linguistic context is over. Inspired by Andras Samuelsen, we may conclude that the establishment of the Faroese language was possible in cooperation with Denmark; maybe, it was only possible in a liberal democratic Danish context, and the challenges ahead are not from the Danish language, but they come from English, which through the social media dominates the youth.

Nobody can challenge the proposition that national Faroese culture and modern Faroese literacy, based on Sigurðsson's etymological orthography, is a remarkable success. However, any national standard, which is constructed or invented with the intention to build bridges across local variations, will by necessity loose or suppress some elements in the original variations in local cultures. If we look at the victorious Faroese etymological orthography, we may conclude that its advantage is that it embraces very well the large number of Faroese dialects, but the cost is that it creates a difference between the spoken and the more difficult written language. More importantly, since the Home Rule Law, Faroese politics, authorities, and institutions have been concentrated in the capital of Tórshavn, while the fishing industry is concentrated outside the capital. Consequently, the educated Faroese elite is concentrated in Tórshavn, where many of the governmentally financed research institutions are situated. This tendency has, since the home rule, created a division between the administrative center and the industrial areas outside the capital. In the recent years, it has become obvious that old disputes between the administrative capital and the industrial areas have become the major axe in Faroese politics, while the secession-union and, to some degree, the left-right axe have become secondary. However, the political left-right axe can be interpreted as a part of the division between the largely politically left oriented capital Tórshavn and the largely right oriented industrial areas in the north. Disagreements about the distribution of wealth between geographical areas and population groups in

the Faroe Islands is more tense than disagreements about the relations between the Faroe Islands and Denmark. This has been obvious since 2013, when discussions about how to distribute (allocate or sell) very valuable mackerel quotas to the fishing industry were happening in the Løgting. The disputes inside the Faroe Islands remain just as important as the disputes between Denmark and the Faroe Islands. In conclusion, nationalism has not succeeded to establish national coherence in any secessionist interpretation of the concept in the Faroe Islands, which is one of the world's most ethnically homogeneous, egalitarian, and prosperous societies.

If we look at the political objectives of nationalism, we may conclude that many of them have found their practical solution within the context of the home rule, where it has been possible gradually to widen the maneuvering possibilities of the Faroese authorities. If not in formality, then in reality the Faroese parliament and government is responsible for the Faroe Islands, legally, politically, culturally, and economically. The limits in Foreign policy are widened during the home rule period and appear to be widened even more in the future independent of the political color of the Faroese or Danish governments. The Faroe Islands have today their own representations (embassies and representatives/ambassadors in the capital of several independent states (Copenhagen, London, Brussels, Moscow, Beijing, and in 2020 also in Tel Aviv), where important Faroese interests are, but the Faroese “embassies” are for practical and principal reasons, connected to and under the auspices of the Danish embassies.

There are of course limits in especially relations to the international community that the Faroese home rule authorities can't pass, for example, membership of the United Nations and other international organizations for sovereign states. On the other hand, the home rule system has despite the Danish view that Denmark is a unitary state given the Faroe Islands, which historically belongs to the West Norse Scandinavian tradition, that is, Iceland and Norway, who are outside the European Union (EU), the opportunity to stay outside the EU, where the independent East Norse countries, that is, Denmark and Sweden, are members. This Faroese peculiarity, which we may compare with the position of the none-EU members Isle of Man and Guernsey under the British Crown, challenges the concept of a Danish unitary state. During the Crimean crises in 2014, when Russia annexed Ukrainian Crim, the EU decided to implement trade restrictions on Russia. These restrictions did not affect the Faroe Islands as a none-EU member. However, at the same time, the Faroe Islands was in a major conflict with the coastal states, some of them members of the EU, about how to share the mackerel quotas. In this situation, the EU, where Denmark is member, also decided to implement restrictions on the Faroese fish export to EU. In this remarkable situation, the unitary Danish state seemed to be in conflict with itself, but what made the situation even more extraordinary was that the Faroese prime minister in this sensitive situation travelled to Moscow with the intention to increase the Faroese fish export to Russia. This sensitive situ-

ation challenged the concept of a unitary Danish state and demonstrated the wide degree of maneuverability that the Faroe Islands has within the home rule system. The coastal states eventually reached an agreement about to share the mackerel quotas, but the major Faroese increase in the fish export to Russia appears to be a long-term consequence of the conflict. However, this extensive Faroese maneuverability in foreign relations also demonstrates the potential for national conflict between Denmark and the Faroe Islands if/when the interests of the countries are conflicting. Another area where conflicting interests could generate national conflicts between Denmark and the Faroe Islands is the growing international interest in the Arctic following the climate changes. The North Atlantic Faroe Islands and especially Greenland may as Arctic nations not have the same interests as the actual non-arctic mainland and EU oriented Denmark.

Apart from extensive maneuverability in most domestic Faroese (and foreign) matters, the Faroese people have advantages as part of the Danish state. Economically the Faroese receive subsidies from the Danish state to run the welfare systems. Vital institutions, court, police, financial control with the banks, the monetary system, and citizenship are still under Danish authority. Further, to overcome the deep economic crises in the 1950s and 1990s, economic and political support from Denmark was required, but the global financial crises in 2008 demonstrated the challenges, which small states with their own monetary system face in a modern globalized world. The Faroese could observe how the Icelandic bank system and economy collapsed, while the Icelandic state of 1918 could do little but watch. The Faroese banks were not as vulnerable as the Icelandic who had acted remarkably offensive on the international arena, but in 2010 was one of the two great Faroese banks about to collapse. However, the difference was that while the Icelandic banks were on their own, the Faroese bank system was included in the Danish bank system, Financial Stability, which saved the bank from collapse. Thus, while the independent Icelandic economy collapsed during the global financial crises, the Faroese bank system and Faroese economy remained stable because of the home rule system.

Following the smooth solution of the bank crises, the unionists won the election in 2011 and for the first time since 2002 intended a government to increase the subsidies from Denmark. In addition, since then Faroese politics appears to have changed in a way that indicates that the secession-union axe has become secondary in Faroese politics. During most of the home rule period (1948–2015), at least one of the political parties from the former government has always continued in the following government. However, that changed in 2015, when coalitions in 2015 and 2019 were established between parties, which none were part of the former coalition. This indicates that Danish bloc politics (e.g., left- or right-wing governments) may be on the way in the Faroe Islands also, but the important thing is that the two major independence-minded parties, the Peoples Party and the Republican

Party, who historically used to constitute the strong Faroese independence wing, are in opposite blocs. This indicates that the major issues in Faroese politics are questions about industry, social issues, and local issues, while the question about establishing an independent Faroese state is about to become a secondary issue. Only a crisis in the relations between Denmark and the Faroe Islands, which appears very unlikely for the time being, can change this tendency, while the Faroese voters and parties concentrate their attention about other subjects, for example, the welfare society, how to organize the industry and distribution of public wealth and public services across the Faroe Islands.

Most of the Faroese voters appear to think—despite the Danish insistence on a unitary Danish state—that the home rule system through the Løgting in almost any practical sense allows them freedom to govern the Faroe Islands, as they want them to be governed. Anyway, it does not appear to be Danish politics, which prevents the Faroese politicians from addressing demanding challenges in the Faroese society. In 2018, Magni Arge (1959–), the Faroese republican representative in the Danish parliament invited Carles Puigdemont (1962–), the former Catalan president and secession leader, to speak in the Danish parliament and to the Faroe Islands. Since the referendum in Catalonia on October 1, 2017, about secession from Spain, Puigdemont had lived in exile in Belgium. Arge's intention was to attract political attention on the Spanish governments' violent behavior against the Catalan secessionists who won the referendum, which the Spanish government had declared illegal. Additionally, he wanted to through light on the issue of self-determination and to promote the Faroese secessionists political struggle for Faroese independence. The Faroese unionists on the other hand used the visits as an argument for the great extent of freedom that Faroese secessionists—in contrast to Catalan secessionists—have within the Danish state to work politically toward their ultimate political goal. The Faroese secessionists lost the following election to the Danish parliament, where two unionists now represent the Faroe Islands. Nothing indicates that Faroese voters, Danish citizens outside the EU who don't pay taxes to Denmark and travel with EU passports, for the time being will offer the rights that they have in the Danish state for independence. For a small country with a small population and a sensitive economy, it can be an advantage to be under the auspices of a greater democratic state, especially when the small part has achieved extensive political liberties. Only conflicts between the Faroe Islands and Denmark related to conflicting interests in the EU or in the Arctic appear to have the potential to generate a real national conflict between Denmark and the Faroe Islands. Now Faroese voters don't appear interested in replacing their internal freedom with full sovereignty. Without full sovereignty, the Faroese appear to have freedom to be and act as Faroese.

The Faroe Islands may well be described as a semi-independent society with “partial state quality.” To be and not to be an independent state can sometimes be an advantage for small populations.

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