

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy

ICELAND

Pia Hansson
Tómas Joensen

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Historical Background

- Iceland under Danish/Norwegian rule until 1918
- Iceland sovereignty 1918 – Denmark carried out Iceland's foreign policy until WWII
- British occupation from 1941
- US took over in 1942
- Founding member of NATO 1949
- US Defence Agreement signed in 1951
- EFTA membership 1970
- EEA Agreement 1994
- EU membership application 2009
- EU application on hold from 2013

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Priorities / focus of Foreign Policy

- European integration
 - EEA Agreement
 - Schengen membership
- US relations
 - Defence agreement
- Increased focus on Iceland's Arctic identity
- Nordic cooperation
- Relations with other major powers – i.e. Chinese interest

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Institutions/Agencies

- Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Prime Minister's Office
 - National Security Council
- Alþingi – Icelandic Parliament
 - Foreign Affairs Committee
- Institute of International Affairs – University of Iceland
- United Nations Universities in Iceland
- Cooperation with local NGO's – i.e. UN Association in Iceland

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Bilateral Relations

- Iceland – US relations becoming increasingly important again – Iceland's strategic importance growing
 - Cold War initially – now Arctic and Russia/China relations
- Increased Nordic defence cooperation
 - Defence agreements with Denmark and Norway
- Free Trade Agreement with China
- Agreement with the UK concerning rights of UK/Iceland citizens and aviation control following Brexit
- Current minister's focus on bilateral Free Trade Agreements

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Multilateral Relations

- United Nations
 - Human Rights Council – taking a seat vacated by the US- strengthening the human rights identity for Iceland
 - Chairing the Third Committee
 - Rotation with the Nordic countries in running for a temporary seat in the Security Council
- Chairing the Arctic Council the next two years
 - Environmental and societal emphasis
 - Strengthening the Council

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Diplomatic Types

- Public diplomacy
 - Focus on human rights, gender, inclusiveness, rule of law
- Cultural diplomacy
 - Nordic
 - European
 - International
- Economic diplomacy
 - Free Trade Agreements
 - Through multilateral organizations i.e. EFTA
 - Bilaterally i.e. China

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Societal Beliefs

- In general, consensus on foreign policy – except:
 - Level of European integration
 - NATO membership has been contested
- Public opinion influence on foreign policy
 - Icesave
 - Climate change
- Strong fishery lobby – has affected foreign policy through the years – i.e. not joining the EU but joining the Russia sanctions signals a new era

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy -Challenges

- Increased strategic importance of Iceland as tensions escalate in the Arctic region
 - Playing to both sides?
 - Military build-up
- Increased pressure from China
 - Economic gains?
- Challenges related to climate change
 - Search and rescue
 - Natural resources exploitation