

Module 2: Framework: Citizenship, Institutions and Participation in Policy Making

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Overview

This module aims to provide a better understanding of the governing systems of Arctic states from a comparative perspective. *Comparative politics* is an academic discipline based on analytical models for comparative studies. The first module of this course provided some analytical tools. This module follows up on that endeavour, drawing on a model for comparing political institutions. These two modules cannot render justice to the complexity of comparative political analysis; however, with the background provided in module six of CS 100 Political Systems a basic understanding of the differences in Arctic states' organizational forms and methods of policy making has been provided.

Democracy comprises differences in organizational forms and ways of functioning. This module focuses on prerequisites of democratic governance, how they are met and how organizational structures differ among Arctic states. This module also outlines and compares various governing institutions within different political systems and between federal and unitary states. The last part of this module focuses on Arctic states, policies and cooperation in international institutions. The wide scope of this module calls for an overview to be filled in with further reading of relevant literature.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module you should be able to:

1. Outline the development of citizenship rights, laws, constitutions and democracy among Arctic states.
2. Outline various forms of political participation through organizations such as civil society, parties and elections among Arctic countries.
3. Compare and contrast governance institutions among Arctic states relevant to policy making branches (legislative, executive, judicial) and levels (national, regional, local) of government.
4. Identify international institutions relevant to policy making in the Arctic.

Required Readings (including web sites)

Poelzer, G., and Wilson, G. (2014). Governance in the Arctic: Political Systems and Geopolitics. Larsen, Joan Nymand; and Fondahl, Gail (eds.) in the Arctic Human Development Report Regional Processes and Global Linkages. Akureyri: Stefansson Institute. <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A788965&dswid=-4712>

Key Terms and Concepts

- Consensual Democracy
- Executive
- Federal Political System
- Governance
- Government
- Legislature
- Liberal democracy
- Political Environment
- Political System
- Politics
- Unitary Political System

Learning Material

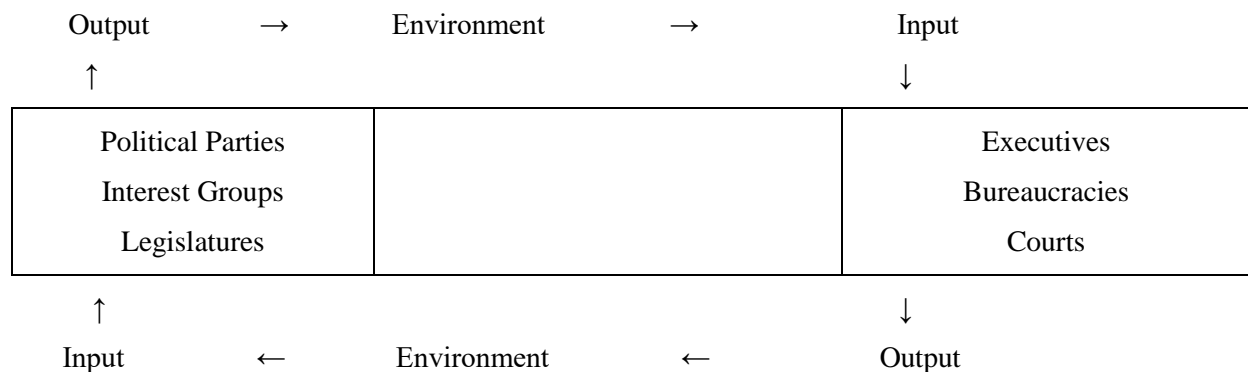
2.0 Introduction

No political system exists in a vacuum, rather they are formed and function out of internal (national) and external (international) environments. *Political systems* fundamentally change and adapt to developments in their environment as demonstrated by the change of the former Soviet Union to contemporary Russia. Change experienced by political systems is apparent over time even when no drastic reforms occur. In a sense political systems are “living organisms.”

As such, our point of departure is a *political system* that interacts with its environment, domestic economy, culture and society as a whole, receiving inputs and producing policies (outputs) that affect its environment. In a changing world where global economic, political and cultural impulses become more important in the way national systems function, the external environment plays an increasingly important role.

2.1. Comparing Political Systems

A *political system* consists of some essential structures such as those in the figure below:



These *six structures* are found in *modern political systems* (Almond, Powell, Strøm and Dalton, 2004) and enable systems to formulate, decide, implement and enforce policies. This does not mean they play the same role or are of equal importance. Similar structures may play different roles or differ in importance in their role of taking care of functions. In *comparative analysis* it is more fruitful to focus on essential functions of a political system and how these functions are managed by different structures or actors. In some political systems interest groups play a more important role in forming governmental policies and non-formal actors exert important influence. Although political parties are legitimate political actors linking the political system to its environment and representing people with multiple interests, businesses and special interest groups exert significant pressure on parties in order to privilege their own interests and thereby play an important role in forming public policy. The democratic right to influence politics by the principle of “one person – one vote” is in this case replaced by using other resources to influence politics and favour one’s own interests. This is an example of the value of focusing on functions and the way in which they are performed in political systems rather than limiting the scope to formal actors.

Learning Activity 1

Over the course of a week, look at the local newspaper and note to what degree the paper could be said to be a political actor influencing topics and solutions.

2.2. Federal and Unitary Systems

The eight Arctic states are made up of *federal* (multi-level) and *unitary* (single-level) systems of government and substantial differences among the states within and between these two categories can be found. The five unitary states – the Nordic states of Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway – have unicameral political systems of which three are monarchies and two are semi-presidential, and all practice parliamentary government.

The United States (U.S.), Canada and the Russian Federation have *federal systems*, but demonstrate significant differences in organization and manner of functioning. All are results of historic processes and not products of a linear line of development as illustrated by the Russian Federation that developed out of the former Soviet Union, which dissolved in the late 1980s.

The liberal democracies of the U.S. and Canada were established by people leaving their native countries for economic, political or religious reasons. They established communities, shaped forms of *self-rule* and developed *democratic political systems* over time. Alternatively, the Russian Federation came into being on the backdrop of a collapsed political and economic system, dominated by one-party rule. Participatory democratic government was a new experience for Russian people and their leaders, and was not rooted in the long-time practice of responsive, democratic government.

While the U.S. and Canada have a long history of democratic practice and a participatory political culture, the new Russian Federation must be regarded on its history of being a recently established political system. The Russian Federation came into being in 1991 with Boris Yeltsin as its first elected president. The country ratified a new constitution in 1993, representing a fundamental change in its political system while still anchored in the social and political culture of its past. The Russian democracy could be said to be in a *state of consolidation*, a process that takes time to root itself in the people’s minds and governing institutions. The change to a new political system originated from the system itself not external political pressure or imported solutions. Russian leaders refer to this as “*sovereign democracy*”, a term rooted in their own tradition and culture.

2.3 Citizenship Rights, Laws, Constitutions and Democracy Among the Arctic States

2.3.1 Prerequisites of Democracies

Modern government classifications are still rooted in Aristotle's classification of ancient Greek city states. This *classification* distinguishes between three broad categories: liberal democracies, illiberal democracies and authoritarian regimes (Harrop Hague, 2007). *Democracy* is a label that most countries like to use when referring to their political system. The concept comprises a variety of organizational forms and methods of functioning in policy making, yet all could be said to adhere to certain principles of democratic governance. Prerequisites have to be met before the political system can be said to be the rule of the people by the people, a governing political system that is in accordance with the people's preferences.

In reality, this proves to be more of an ideal to live up to than government in practice. Representative *liberal democracies* are founded on mass participation, competitive elections and basic civil rights. *Liberal democracies* are based on the rule of law, impartial courts, access to information, the right to organize, utter one's opinion on politics in speech and writing without risk of repercussions, and they are also secularized states, giving citizens equal access to exert political activity regardless of ethnic background, religious belief, gender and wealth. However, these principles have never been perfectly applied.

Robert A. Dahl distinguishes between the ideal form of democracy and the concept of polyarchy using the latter category to describe responsive democratic regimes founded on the principles of democracy (Dahl, 1971). *Democratic regimes* exist only if at least eight institutional guarantees are present:

1. Freedom to form and join organizations.
2. Freedom of expression.
3. The right to vote.
4. Eligibility for public offices.
5. The right for political leaders to compete for support and votes.
6. Alternative sources for information.
7. Free and fair elections.
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preferences.¹

Basic *civil rights* are usually guaranteed by the *constitution* if one exists. *Constitutions* are historic documents that may not always reflect the actual form of government. A country such as the United Kingdom could lack a written constitution and still be said to be one of the oldest democracies in the world. Most constitutions are updated to take into account changes in government practice and international law. Also constitutions may differ in the role they play in contemporary politics. While the argument that a law, bill or policy is unconstitutional often occurs in political life in the U.S., such political situations seldom occur in the Nordic countries. In fact, until recently Norway had a constitution that did not include any reference to its

¹ Quoted in Arend Lijphart: Democracies, Yale University Press 1984

parliamentarian form of government, a principle that guided the practice of forming governments since 1884.

Basic civil rights, access to information and freedom of the press are essential for democracies to function properly. Any democratic government must justify its policy to elected representatives and the general public. Open access to information and transparency of decision processes are needed to evaluate and advocate for policy solutions. Mass media plays an important role supporting or criticizing policies and political behaviour. Freedom of the press and access to information are vital for the proper functioning of democracy. Journalists and media must be able to carry out their functions without fear of repercussions from government or other actors and with the protection of the law.

Learning Activity 2

What characterizes and forms the political culture where you live?

A critical media press is bothersome for any regime, but essential for democracy to function in order to provide alternative information and viewpoints. Occasionally incidents such as the assassination of a critical journalist in Russia or embarrassing situations caused by internet publication of secret U.S. military documents by WikiLeaks risk legal follow up and diplomatic fallout. Irrespective of how bothersome or mistaken media can be, they are integral to providing transparency in working democracies.

A working democracy is a historical development based on *civil rights* and developed to establish and consolidate a culture of political participation by citizens. This cultural trait is essential to its function and closely linked to the legitimacy of the political regime. Legitimacy is not the same as legality, but stems from sources such as access to participation, rule of law, accepted procedures and acceptance of political outcomes. Low participation in political life can be the product of citizen contentment with the way a political system functions and produces goods, and not necessarily an expression of protest. Similarly, a high election turnout can indicate low legitimacy and dissatisfaction or be the result of a regime that coerces voters to the polls.

The Arctic states are democracies founded on political competition, elections and representative political systems. They display significant differences in the organization of their political systems, such as their *federal* or *unitary natures*.

2.3.2 Constitutions and Democracy

By comparing the role constitutions play in the eight Arctic states, we find important differences in their age, historical context, symbolic value and the role they play in daily political life.

There is perhaps no modern state where the constitution plays a more active political role than the **United States**. It is the oldest written constitution in the world still in force, written in 1787 and put into effect in 1789. The American system of government is rooted in the constitution and its division of power, checks and balances; presidency (executive branch), congress (legislative

branch) and the courts (judicial branch). The unity of the federal system was challenged by a civil war (1861-65), but the outcome made clear the federal character of the American system of government and the subordination of states to the federation.

Learning Highlight 1

In the Soviet Union, when the shift from the authoritarian one party rule to the multi-party democratic system occurred, what kind of challenges had to be met?

The constitution has had many amendments. The first ten amendments are known as the *Bill of Rights*. There has been a history of political struggle between the federal and state governments, often symbolized as ‘Washington’ versus individual states. This delicate political balance is still influential in American politics, and federal policy has occasionally been determined unconstitutional by courts and subsequently reversed. Supreme Court judges play a more political role than in other Arctic states, and the appointment of a new Supreme Court judge is a political decision that can influence the type and ability of federal policies to be made and implemented.

Canada has a long record of democratic government becoming an independent and self-governing dominion under the British Crown in 1867 with the passing of the British North American Act (BNA Act). This Act made Canada into a federal union copying the main features of the British political system: a parliament split into a representative lower and appointed upper houses; single member constituencies for the lower house; a parliamentary majority-based government; and civil rights based on the British legal tradition, but not distinctively expressed by the statute of law (Mahler, 2003). Until 1982 when the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted, amendments to the BNA Act had to be passed by the British parliament. The Canadian constitution was then placed under Canadian political control and a new document on civil rights was included. Canada from then on was *de facto* and *de jure* independent, but kept the link to the British Crown with an appointed Governor General. Political power is entirely in the hands of Canadian political institutions (Mahler, 2003).

Russian Federation is the youngest democracy having been established in 1991 on the ashes of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).² The 1990 election of deputies to the Supreme Soviet stimulated nationalistic and democratic movements, and opposition to then-President Mikhail Gorbachev tried to remove him from office with the potential use of military force. Boris Yeltsin intervened to stop the military coup and although the government gradually regained control, Yeltsin was viewed as the *de facto* leader. Subsequently, Gorbachev resigned and Boris Yeltsin became the new president in December 1991. Yeltsin issued a decree outlawing the Communist Party.

The following two years were a period of turmoil and confrontation until the army eventually closed ranks in support of Yeltsin after he moved to dissolve parliament and asked for a new election in December 1993. The new constitution was voted on in a national referendum making

² Gorbachev led Soviet politics from 1985 to 1991 and initiated the structural changes of the former Soviet political system by his glasnost and perestroika policy.

elections for the new parliament and political system frenzied. Although defying the logical order of getting voters to first approve a new constitution then establishing democratic institutions and hold elections for office, Yeltsin acted in accordance with the situation, not out of solemn legal and judicial observances, but got his constitution approved by voters. It was regarded as imperfect but legitimate.

The new Russian constitution established a semi-presidential political system resembling features of the 1958 French constitution with a powerful president and prime minister heading a government appointed by the president, but approved by parliament. This dual form of executive power exhibits elements of presidentialism and parliamentarism, but with the president as the leading political actor with the right to veto legislation and dissolve parliament. The president can also rule by decree in certain fields, holds certain extralegal rights in case of emergency situations, and can appoint and remove governors of the regional entities, including the majors centres of Moscow and St. Petersburg.³

When it comes to civil rights the constitution includes a chapter (II) on the “rights and freedoms of peoples and citizens.” The right to utter opinions by speaking or writing, and the right to assemble, go on strike, organize and participate in political life are constitutionally guaranteed. Non-governmental organizations can be legally established, however propaganda and agitation that nourish social, racial, national or religious hate or hostility are forbidden (Danks, 2009).

The **Nordic states** all have a long record of practicing *democracy* since transforming their political systems from absolute *monarchies* to representative democracies. The Napoleonic Wars had a great impact on their development as states and political systems. Sweden had to transfer governance of Finland to the Russian Empire as early as 1808, and Norway was transferred from Denmark to Sweden a few years later; both of these transferred states subsequently initiated new constitutions as the basis of their future political rules.

The **Norwegian** constitution ratified in 1814 established an elected parliament and reduced the level of Swedish political oversight to sharing the King and a common foreign policy. Executive power was dominated by Sweden and included a Norwegian branch of the executive split between Stockholm and Kristiania (Oslo). The King appointed cabinet ministers. Civil and democratic rights played an important role in the constitution laying the foundation for political participation by a greater proportion of citizens than was typical in Europe at that time. The new Swedish King, a former General under Napoleon, tried to weaken the constitution, but was met with confrontation; subsequently he adjusted his role and ruling ambitions (Stavang, 1964).

The Norwegian parliament, the *Stortinget*, was responsible for taxation and legislation, and during the 1870s a political battle took place regarding parliament’s right to make final decisions on laws without the consent of the King. This conflict ended with a government impeachment and led to the establishment of a new government rooted in and politically backed by parliament. The parliamentary principle of establishing cabinets was introduced in 1884 after several years of struggle between parliament and cabinet, but without concomitant changes to the constitution. Until recently the constitution contained a paragraph regarding the King’s right to appoint his

³ When Putin replaced Yeltsin as president, he initiated a constitutional change strengthening central power.

own ministers, although it was a dormant clause. Swedish influence was reduced in 1884 when the Prime Minister became head of the Norwegian branch of the government.

Development of increased parliamentary political power took place as a result of political realities not legal ones. The constitution updated in 2008 when parliament's control of executive power was included and the second legislative chamber was abolished. Previously, members of parliament split into two chambers when passing laws (Arter, 2008).

Denmark also changed the practice of parliamentary approved cabinet ministers without first amending its constitution. Parliamentarism was introduced in 1901 based on the political composition of the first chamber, Folketinget. The new 1953 constitution codified existing practice and abolished the second chamber and made parliament unicameral.

Absolute monarchy gradually weakened during the 1800s in Denmark and Sweden as political representation in parliament from different groups increased. In **Sweden** absolute monarchy ended as early as 1809 when a new constitution was established and Finland was transferred to Russia as a result of the King's war policy. The former parliament, Riksdagen, reorganized into two chambers in 1866 and lasted until 1975 when a new constitution abolished the second chamber and codified the practice of parliamentarism, which was forced upon the King in 1917 (Heidar, Berntzen, Bakke, 2008).

The development of representative democracy took a different path in **Finland**, which was transferred from Sweden to Russia in 1809. Their domestic political institutions resembled the Swedish and gave representation to four groups. Russian political supremacy lasted until Finland separated from Russia in December 1917 following a bloody civil war. Russian political supremacy had been weakened for many years due to domestic political problems, including a revolution and losing a war to Japan both in 1905. This made political space for Finland to set its own course and it established a unicameral parliament. Finland was the first European country to introduce general suffrage as early as 1906. The new constitution of 1919 was a modern democratic one that underlined political and civil rights as the platform of political life. Due to Finland's history the constitution played a more significant role in the development of Finnish democracy than the more incremental political democratic development of other Nordic countries (Arter, 2008). Finland updated its constitution in 2000 reducing the political role of the President and making the duties of the government and Prime Minister align with other Nordic states (Heidar, 2004).

Iceland was under Danish rule until 1918 when self-rule was introduced. Iceland continued to share the Danish King until 1944 when Iceland declared itself an independent republic with a new constitution. The Icelandic parliament, Alltinget, which was established in 1874, re-established an old representative tradition on Iceland from the time of the Vikings. Since 1874 law-making and fiscal policy had been decided domestically and a parliamentarian-based government was introduced in 1904. Development of representative democracy was gradual and resembled development in other Nordic countries (Heidar, Berntzen, Bakke, 2008).

The constitutions of the Arctic states developed under different circumstances and at different times. They have also played and are playing different political roles. All Arctic countries have

civil and political rights included in their constitutions. How these rights are executed depends on the political culture and traits of their political systems.

2.4 Forms of Political Participation: Civil Society, Political Parties and Elections Among the Arctic Countries

2.4.1 Civic Society and Political Participation

Democracies depend on citizens actively using their political rights. This involves selecting candidates for political assemblies, taking part in elections and engaging in a constant flow of activities through public debate, pressure groups and political parties. Policies in liberal democracies are formed at different levels and presuppose civil activity. A passive civil society is not a good sign for any democracy neither is a society marked by protest, conflict and turmoil. The former could be a sign of instability and a political system that is unable to meet the demands of its citizens. There must be a balance between political demands and support to achieve stability in a political system (Easton, 1953).

Media plays an important role in western democracies. A free press that reflects the diversity, tension and support found in the general public is an important watchdog for the health of the political system, and often serves as an agent for political agenda-setting by focusing on particular topics and solutions. Democracy is based on establishing compromise among conflicting values and prioritizing certain tasks and solutions. Lobby groups, independent media, public debate, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties are important actors in this respect. Conflicting viewpoints, ideologies and opposition are not dysfunctional aspects of a political system, but rather prerequisites of a properly functioning democracy.

Learning Activity 3

If you were working to achieve a specific political solution, what would you do to influence the outcome?

The political culture of the three *federal systems*, Canada, Russia and the United States are rooted in different historical contexts. The Russian Federation is the youngest and most diverse. Transformation from the former communist regime to democratic rule took place relatively peacefully. Since 1991, the Russian Federation has faced a challenging period fostering unity, improving organization and creating spaces for civil society to bring forth its demands. A political system requires time to develop and consolidate. Russia is in a developmental phase in contrast with the two other federal systems, United States and Canada, which have long records of practicing liberal democracy.

Political parties bridge the gap between society and legislative bodies. There are at least two important causal factors explaining party structure. One is the pattern of major and lasting *conflict dimensions* found in the particular society (Rokkan, 1987). The other is the *voting system* or how elections and representation are organized. One-member constituencies and a majority vote, as in the British system, favour a system of polarization and few political parties. By

contrast, a constituency with multiple representatives and proportional representation favours a multi-party structure.

The United States elects representatives from state constituencies for the Senate and House of Representatives. While all states have two senators for a total of 100, the number of elected delegates to the House of Representatives is dependent on population. For example, California elects fifty-three representatives while North Dakota elects only one (out of a total of 435). Senators are elected for a six-year period, with elections held at staggered two-year periods, e.g., one third of Senate seats are up for election every two years. By contrast, elections for the House of Representatives are held every two years and the President is elected for four years. A president and political party holding the majority of seats in Congress could easily lose it halfway through the president's term, a situation that frequently occurs. This system feature requires political compromises across party lines to be made or stalemate will result.

Majority voting has favoured a two-party system, the Democrats and Republicans. Both tend to be internally split with relatively low party cohesion. Republicans consist mainly of conservatives and Democrats consist mainly of liberals, although liberals and conservatives are found in both parties, therefore when voting on issues such diversity becomes apparent (Almond, Powell, Strøm, Dalton, 2004).

The United States is unique in bringing forth candidates for political positions where the role of political parties differs from state to state, e.g., in determining which candidate to choose to represent the party in federal elections. Some states have open primaries to determine party candidates in which there is no party registration. The selection of nominees is an open process involving a significant number of the electorate unlike Nordic countries where political parties are in full control of the nomination process. Turnout is low and voters must document themselves and preregister for voting. American voters vote on a number of issues thereby promoting voter input on a number of decisions.

Canada inherited the British political system with majority vote and single-member constituencies for elections to the lower house, the House of Commons. The Parliament's upper house, the Senate, is based on appointed members. Majority voting and single-member constituencies favour a two party system; however, Canada is known for a multiparty system or "two-party-plus" system, which in some cases has led to weak governments or governments where the opposition has become neglected (Mahler, 2003). As in the United Kingdom, there are two major contesting parties, Conservatives and Liberals. The left-leaning New Democratic Party and Bloc Quebecois should also be mentioned. The political parties as organizations are more distinctive than in the United States, but with different practices relating to party conventions and the development of policies. Party representatives at federal and provincial levels form the inner circles of the political parties (Mahler, 2003).

The government is based on the political backing of Parliament's lower house, so a parliamentary government can initiate elections at any time if the parliamentary political situation is problematic, i.e., legislation cannot be passed or by the end of five years. Voter turnout has been higher than in the United States, but has been falling as has turnout across the circumpolar North.

The third federal state, **Russia**, has a more complex system of representation. The State Duma is made up of 450 members and is elected by two separate ballots. Simple majority and single-member constituencies are used to elect 225 delegates. Others are elected by the principle of federal party lists and proportional representation that view the country as a whole as a constituency. Turnout is higher than in the United States or Canada and voters choose from a number of political parties. The Communist Party is a major one, but the Unity Party has grown in support and has become more influential. Fatherland-All Russia is a “twin brother” to the Unity Party, while the Union of Right-Wing Forces, Yabloko and Zhirinovskiy Bloc have few seats. A number of other less influential parties also exist (Danks, 2009; Roskin, 2011).

The short history of the multi-party system, in contrast to the old single-party rule by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), gives little information on inner party life and function. According to Danks, the party system represents a weakness in Russia’s democratization because it is poorly developed and leader-centred (Danks, 2009). In 2004 the Putin administration narrowed the possibility to establish new federal parties with the law “on Political Parties and Movements” that aimed to reduce the allowable number of parties (Danks, 2009). In addition, opposition parties complain about a lack of media access and ability to disclose policy alternatives to the public thereby questioning the level of media control by the Russian government.

The **Nordic countries** are all multiparty political systems with proportional representation. The number of representatives elected varies according to the number of citizens, which form the constituencies for elections to Parliament. The five-party model has been replaced by a party structure with a broader span, including a populist conservative party on the right wing and a radical social-democratic party on the left wing (Arter, 2008). The current party structure became more complex in the 1970s and consists of a Progress Party, Conservatives, Liberals, Agrarian Party, Christian Peoples Party, social democrats and a left-wing social democratic party. There are differences among the Nordic countries, in particular Iceland and Finland deviate, but the common denominator is the role of the social democrats, the Labour Parties. David Arter argues the dominance of the social democrats in Nordic democracies has weakened during the last few decades (Arter, 2008). The conservative wing has become stronger and the tendency to cooperate with liberals and other parties in the middle of a left-right scale has led to coalition governments. The average percentage of support for Social Democratic parties has dropped more in the last few years as documented in the following table signalling a complex political landscape.

Table 1: The average percentage of support for Nordic Social Democratic Parties 1920 - 2007

Country	1920 – 2007	1920 – 1939	1940 – 1971	1972 – 2007
Denmark	36.3	37.6	39.3	32.1
Finland	27.4	33.1	24.7	24.5
Norway	37.6	31.8	45.5	35.4
Sweden	42.6	38.7	47.6	41.6
Iceland	16.8	-	14.6	19.4

Table 4.1 in David Arter: Scandinavian Politics. Manchester University Press. 2008.

Another striking feature of the Nordic political system are the roles of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in forming and implementing public policies. NGOs form an important

link between society and government, and operate during different phases of the policy process where their interests are at stake. Lobbyist, NGO and pressure group activities are a well-known feature of Arctic countries except Russia. The United States Congress is particularly susceptible to lobbying activities. NGOs in Russia have a shorter history and have been met with restrictions in becoming public actors (Danks, 2009). The western practice of inclusion in the political system has not yet been adopted in Russia.

2.5 Governance Institutions Among the Arctic States: Branches and Levels of Government

2.5.1 Legislatures, Executives and the Courts

Essential to any democracy is the principle of separation of power and how this is followed up in practice. The rule of law and politically independent and impartial courts are a must. Another basic demand of democracy is that legislation be made by parliaments consisting of elected representatives from citizens through free and fair elections. Such principles are usually laid out in the constitution. However, the form and function of government institutions vary widely even among Arctic states.

While Russia and the United States have **presidential** systems, Canada has a **parliamentary** system and is formally headed by a Governor General who represents the Queen, who is also Queen of the United Kingdom. This arrangement is a remnant of Canada having been a British territory that has developed into a sovereign state. The Governor General plays a primarily symbolic political role. The executive political power is exercised by the Prime Minister and cabinet made up of representatives from the lower house, the House of Commons. Canada in this way is more similar to the parliamentary democracies found in the Nordic countries, than the presidential systems found in Russia and the United States. Coalition and minority governments can be established, but rarely are (Mahler, 2003).

Table 2. Political Systems of Arctic Federal (F) and Unitary (U) States

Land	Bicameral/Seats	Unicameral/Seats	Non-Parliament Government	Parliament Govt.
United States (F)	Senate / 100 House of Representatives / 453		X	
Russia (F)	Federation Council /178 State Duma / 450		X	
Canada (F)	Senate / 105 House of Commons/308			X
Finland (U)		Eduskunta / 200		X
Sweden (U)		Riksdagen / 349		X
Denmark (U)		Folketinget / 175		X
Norway (U)		Stortinget / 169		X
Iceland (U)		Alltinget / 63		X

The presidential systems found in **Russia** and the **United States** differ when it comes to forming cabinets. Russia has a prime minister and cabinet ministers who are not elected politicians, but professional administrators and consists of about 60 ministries and other agencies responsible for different government branches. The president is elected directly through a general election and thereby empowered by the will of the people. The prime minister is appointed by the president, but the president and cabinet need approval from the elected lower House of Representatives, the State Duma. The Duma has the ability to

reject the prime minister and cabinet. A Duma that is uncooperative with the president can risk a presidential decision to call a new general election and face the possibility of lost party seats and political influence.

The president and prime minister are dependant on cooperation with the parliament in areas of law making, taxation and finance. The relationship can have a delicate political balance depending on the composition of the Duma. The constitution established a system with strong executive power; a president who presides over a vast administrative structure that supervises the federal government and most important ministries, the Foreign Ministry, Defence Ministry, Interior Ministry and Federal Security Service (Roskin, 2009). The president can appoint and remove deputy prime ministers and other ministers without parliamentary consent if formally suggested and approved by the prime minister. The president also appoints governors of regional entities, thereby demonstrating strong presidential power consistent with the level of executive power traditionally found in Russian history.

The United States' presidential system differs from the Russian Federation. The cabinet is appointed by the president, but individual cabinet members must be approved by the House of Representatives. Ministers, or secretaries as they are referred to in the United States, do not need to be members of the legislative body. Both governments have an important element of parliamentarism; each require legislative consent when appointing cabinet members and depend on good working relationships between legislative and executive powers, i.e., appointed cabinet members need to be able to functionally cooperate with elected members of legislative bodies regardless of differences along party lines.

The presidential system of the United States differs when it comes to the election of the president. Rather than being elected directly by voters in a general election, the president is elected indirectly by an electoral college. This process has been criticized as an outdated formality based upon the American founding fathers' distrust of voters during an era when direct political representation was infrequently used. Each state has a number of electoral college votes equivalent to its seats in the House of Representatives. The electoral college cast votes based solely on the will of the people of their respective state, generally on a winner-take-all basis (e.g., if 51 percent of a state's voters vote for a particular presidential candidate, that state's electoral college voters will all vote for that particular candidate.) In the United States the president is elected for a fixed four-year period and can only be re-elected once (for a maximum of eight years in office). The Russian president is also only allowed to serve two four-year terms.

The Nordic states have a political system known as **consensual democracy**, which are based on important features such as multi-party systems, proportional representation, multi-candidate constituencies, unicameralism, different forms of government depending on the composition of parliament, welfare state policies, and legislative control of the executive branch. Parliament is the most influential institution. The role of labor unions in negotiating wages for the private and public sectors under the auspices of government should be noted (Heidar, 2004; Arter, 2006). This arrangement has been crucially important to the gradual allocation of wealth and political support in the development of the welfare state in these countries.

Parliamentarism means the Government (i.e., Prime Minister and Cabinet) is formed with the consent of parliament and the government must step down if it lacks support or loses the confidence of the majority of parliament. Different forms of governments can be established, including a majority or single party government (i.e., a single party has over 50 percent of seats), a minority single party government (i.e., a single party has less than 50 percent of seats) or a coalition government involving two or more parties. These government types have occurred in recent political history of Nordic countries. Since social-democratic parties lost dominant positions in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, majority coalition governments have become common. Coalitions can be established prior to elections, campaigning for

support of cooperating parties or as a result of an election. Regardless of the form of government, it is essential that parliament be the strongest political actor in case of political tension and cabinet conflict. Cabinet members are appointed by the prime minister but unlike presidential systems, cabinet ministers are usually elected members of parliament.

The rationale of this political system is an inner framework that seeks cooperation and consensus-oriented political solutions. According to David Arter, parliaments are “working parliaments” in which standing committees play an essential role in establishing compromises and developing legislation (Arter, 2009). Canada has a parliamentary system where committees play a similarly important political role. However, the Canadian House of Commons more closely resembles the British Westminster version of parliament where parliamentary debate is oppositional rather than consensual.

Nordic countries do not have the habit of dissolving parliament in cases of conflict as do countries using the Canadian/Westminster system, although, in theory, it is possible to do so in Sweden and Denmark. In Norway no such formal right has been established. Elected members to the unicameral parliament serve four year terms and are responsible for forming a politically stable government. A minority government can be strong if it has no political alternative. However, if an alternative political platform exists, a proposition of distrust can be voted on that eventually leads to a change of government.

Nordic democracies function primarily the same way, although two have semi-presidential political systems. Finland and Iceland have elected presidents as the head of state, while Norway, Sweden and Denmark are monarchies in which the monarch is head of state with only representative functions. The presidents of the two semi-presidential political systems have similar representative roles, but more potential to act in forming governments. Heads of state (monarchs and presidents) generally have a symbolic role, whereas heads of government (prime ministers and presidents with executive power) have real political power.

2.5.2 Sub-National Levels of Government

Common denominators of the political systems of the United States, Canada and Russia are federalism and geographic size, however populations vary significantly.

Country	Territory	Population	Territorial Units
Canada	9,984,670 sq. km.	34,230,000	10 + 3
Russia	17,075,400 sq. km.	141,927,297	83
United States	9,826,675 sq. km.	310,144,000	50

Canada and the United States are the same size but differ in population and territorial units. The population of the United States is spread throughout the country with big cities in the east, west, south and north. The Canadian population is concentrated in the southern part of the country.

The United States is included in the Arctic Council because Alaska is its northernmost state. Alaska differs from the Canadian north due to its larger population (700,000 compared to 100,000) with the cities of Anchorage (286,174), Juneau (30,998) and Fairbanks (35,132)

making half of its population. Alaska became a state on January 3, 1959 and covers 1,717,854 sq. km., which is approximately 17 percent of the total United States' territory.

Alaska has two seats in the United States Senate and is represented by one representative in the House of Representatives. All fifty states have their own State Senate, House of Representatives, Governor and Government. The governor appoints heads (ministers) of different departments and there is a separation of power as at the federal level where the state congress creates laws and budgets, while the governor and ministers constitute the executive.

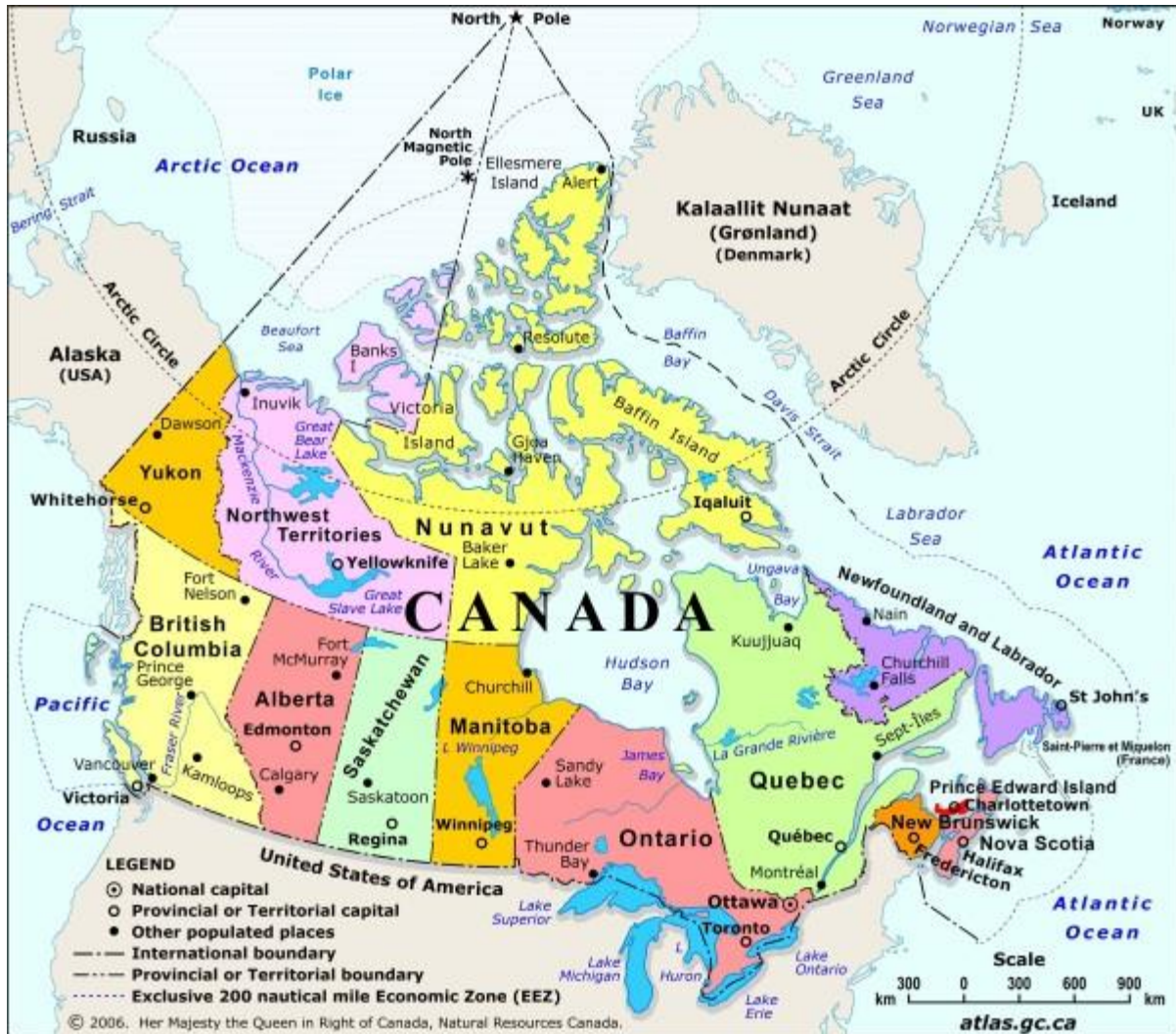
Not all of Alaska is organized into political units reflecting its size and sparsity outside main cities. Local government consists of cities and boroughs, the latter of which resemble counties and cover about one-third of the state.

Northern Canada is sparsely populated and its three governing units, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, contain 108,000 inhabitants; Nunavut 32,900, Yukon 34,246 and Northwest Territories 41,464. The province of Quebec stretches into the Arctic and its northern region contains few inhabitants, most of whom are Aboriginal. Labrador, with 26,728 people, is also part of Northern Canada. In addition, the norths of other Canadian provinces are often considered part of Northern Canada.

The Canadian south-north economic, political and cultural dimension is dominated by the south, although self-governing rights of the northern territories, mostly inhabited by Aboriginal peoples, have recently modified this. The 1867 British North America Act made Canada a federation with sovereign tasks and rights allotted to the provinces. The balance between federal and provincial authority is an important issue in Canadian politics (Grace, Sheldrick, 2006). The Canadian federation includes Quebec, a French-speaking province, creating a cultural-nationalist split that has historically represented a challenge to national identity and unity. The political space for federal authority is limited and challenged. Some Canadians perceive the country as two-nations rather than a federal unit, giving Quebec special status among the provinces (Mahler, 2003).

Provincial legislatures consist of elected representatives from different political parties in a system of single representative constituencies. The political composition of the provincial legislature controls the cabinet and is led by a premier.

While provinces have enjoyed constitutional rights of self-rule, until the late 1970s territories were traditionally ruled by federal authorities and had little political autonomy. In 1999, when Nunavut was established by splitting the Northwest Territories into two parts, Indigenous dominated political jurisdiction was granted to Nunavut. Although the broader policy was to grant more political autonomy to the territories, they continue to lack constitutional rights and responsibilities assigned to provinces. Devolution of power and increased political empowerment of the territories are highly debated topics in Canadian politics. Territorial politics tend not to follow general party politics. While the Yukon assembly is divided along party lines, the other territories have a consensus-style government rooted in Indigenous culture (Grace, Sheldrick, 2006).



Source: The Atlas of Canada

The Russian Federation is the largest country in the world and is almost double the size of the United States, but has less than half the population. When focusing on Russia as a political actor, its size tends to be neglected. Russia stretches over the northern part of Asia, constitutes 40 percent of Europe, shares borders with a large number of countries and covers nine time zones.

Russia is made up of 83 federal subjects, constituent territorial units, which have different levels of autonomy. Russia has 21 republics, 6 kraia (territories), 10 autonomous districts, 2 cities, 1 autonomous oblast and 49 oblasts (Mahler, 2003). Russian federal authorities face a complex situation with regard to self-governing rights. In the North Caucasus, ethnic groups question Russian political supremacy. The Republic of Chechnya declared independence from Russia in 1991, but was forced to join the federation with the use of military power.

In the unitary states of the Nordic countries the contrasts are striking. Authority of central or national governments is not questioned. Regional and municipal councils have no law making authority. Administrative tasks are delegated from the national level to counties and municipalities. Numbers of regional governing entities and municipalities differ out of

population size, historic and domestic political concerns. Iceland and Finland have no regional governing units. Finland bases regional governing needs on inter-communal boards (252) and service (38) and planning districts (20). Among its regional units, Sweden includes Gotland, a municipal entity. The trend has been to reduce the number of units to improve economic efficiency, but often conflicts with concerns for local democracy. The municipality is the lowest governmental level and is funded by state transfers and local taxes. Municipalities play a crucial role in the function of Nordic welfare state systems, enforcing state laws and rendering legal services.

Nordic countries have a few areas with special home rule jurisdiction. Finland has the Åland Isles. Denmark has the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Norway has the special district of the Svalbard Isles, governed by an international treaty established in 1920. Greenland achieved Home Rule in 1979 and Self Rule in 2010, but close to half of its budget is transferred from the Danish state, and Danish authorities handle its foreign affairs. Greenland continues to seek increased influence on matters of importance for the Greenlandic community and self-governance arrangement are getting stronger.

Three Fenno-Scandinavian (Norway, Sweden and Finland) countries have Sami parliaments for their Indigenous population. These parliaments, funded by state transfers, have decision-making power on Sami cultural policy and allocation of state allowances; otherwise, they provide only an advisory function. The Sami cooperate across borders and are ethnically organized rather than geographically. The Sami people exert political influence through municipal and county councils, and in some municipalities form a majority as an ethnic group. The Norwegian Sami Parliament increased its political influence through the Finnmark Act and corresponding land property agency, Finnmarkseiendommen. It has decision making authority over vast areas of land and water previously owned and managed by the state in Finnmark county.

Table 3. Territorial Organization of Nordic Countries 2004

	Sweden	Denmark	Norway	Finland	Iceland
County Councils/ Regional Units	21	14	19	20 Plan Districts	–
Municipalities	289	271	434	452	104
Home Rule Areas	–	Faroe Isl. Greenland		Åland Isl.	–
Special Districts	–	–	Spitsbergen (Svalbard)	–	–
Indigenous Parliaments	Sami Parliament		Sami Parliament	Sami Parliament	

Source: Heidar, 2004

1.5.3. High North Politics and International Cooperation

The eight member countries of the Arctic Council differ in their level of political focus on the High North and Arctic issues. The United States and Russia, as superpowers, have commercial, military security and strategic political interests in the region. Arctic resources, not least the potential for energy resources, have been highlighted as a result of changing climate conditions and a retreating polar ice cap. The Northwest and Northeast passages are no longer just passages for adventurous explorers but may become sea transportation routes if the ice continues to melt. The final settlement of a variety of maritime borders in parts of the Arctic Ocean and adjoining seas remain unresolved between the United States and Russia, the United States and Canada,

and Canada and Denmark. The recent border resolution between Russia and Norway in the Barents Sea signals the will and ability to negotiate bilateral solutions within the existing international legal framework.

Canada has a long Arctic coastline and diversified interests in the North. About 40 percent of Canadian land area is found in the High North, but it remains sparsely populated. About 108,000 people live in the territories of the Canadian North, mostly Indigenous peoples. Canada's political focus on the High North revolves around four political pillars:

- Exercising Arctic sovereignty;
- Economic and social development;
- Environmental protection; and
- Governance and the devolution of regional control.

Canada has traditionally had a more active High North political strategy than its American neighbor. National sovereignty has become a pressing need due to international focus on northern resources. This situation has consequences for the economic and social development of northern communities.

Economically better off, Alaska is rich in oil, fish resources and has a relatively diversified industrial structure, cities and economic centres as well as more population. Oil revenues benefit the state and its citizens, who receive annual dividends. Alaska's political representation of two senators and one member to the House of Representatives is equal to other U.S. states. Alaska elects a governor who appoints all heads of state departments, but because the state borders Russia, the federal government manages energy, security and international environmental issues.

Federal political focus on the Arctic was low in 1959 when Alaska became the 49th state; however, the economic and political importance of the state have changed with the thawing of ice and increased international interest in the Arctic. By the end of the 1990s, there was a shift to more proactive policy underlining sovereignty and security presence in the Arctic. The Bush administration issued a Presidential decree in 2009 stating American Arctic policy should reflect the changing situation of the region⁴ and;

- Meet national and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region;
- Protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources;
- Ensure natural resource management and economic development in the region are environmentally sustainable;
- Strengthen institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden);
- Involve the Arctic's Indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and
- Enhance scientific monitoring and research into local, regional and global environmental issues.

Russia remains the most dominant actor in the High North with its Arctic coastline stretching from the Norse Sea to the Pacific Ocean.⁵ Russian Arctic policy resembles Canadian priorities,

⁵ The Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation is understood to be that section of the Arctic that in whole or in part includes the territories of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia); Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Oblast; Krasnoyarsk Krai; the Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets

but with a stronger emphasis on the federal dimension and less on regional control. The North holds most of the country's potential energy resources and Russia has frequently articulated its sovereignty claims to Arctic areas, including its continental shelf as it extends beyond the 200 nautical mile economic zone. Few people live on the Russian Arctic coastline and political leaders have underlined the will to sustainably develop the North emphasizing environmental protection. According to the decree by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on September 18, 2008, the following goals are to be pursued:

- Use the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation as a strategic resource base, allowing for the solution of socio-economic development problems;
- Safeguard the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation;
- Conserve the Arctic's unique ecosystems; and
- Use the Northern Sea Route as a Russian Federation national integrated transport-communication system.

Nordic states display shared and separate priorities regarding High North policies. As small states operating in an international environment, Nordic states have traditionally sought coordination and cooperation through bodies like the Nordic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Arctic Council. Political outcomes have resulted in different area programs for bilateral or multilateral projects with focus on sustainable economic development based on regional natural resources. Cooperation and funding also entails regional development on a broader scale.

Separate national priorities differ based on geographic and political alignments, as Sweden, Finland and Denmark are European Union members while Norway and Iceland are not. Norway and Iceland are Arctic coastal states while Denmark takes a strong interest in Arctic issues because it is responsible for Greenland's foreign relations. Sweden is the Nordic country with the lowest priority for High North policy as reflected by its institutional arrangements. While Finland and Norway have established specialized secretariats for Barents cooperation development work, Sweden's two northernmost counties administrate such issues. The difference between Sweden and Finland is underlined by Finland's adoption of a strategy for the Arctic region relating to security, environment, economy, infrastructure, Indigenous peoples and international institutions and cooperation.⁶ Finland has also taken a strong interest in the Arctic Council and is a strong advocate for the EU's Northern Dimension policy, a political initiative that is shared by other Nordic countries, the United States and Canada.

Norway has a long record of High North policy due to its jurisdiction over the Svalbard Isles, Bear Island and Jan Mayen Island. Since 1977 when Norway established its exclusive economic zone, sharing the Barents Sea with Russia including a contested area known as the Grey Zone,

and Chukotka Autonomous Okrugs, as defined by the USSR Council of Ministers State Commission on the Arctic dated April 22nd, 1989; as well as the lands and islands, mentioned in the Decree of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee dated April 15th, 1926, "On the Declaration of Soviet land and island territories located in the Arctic Ocean", and adjacent to the aforementioned, internal waterways, territorial waters, exclusive economic zone and the Russian Federation's continental shelf, within which Russia possesses sovereign rights and jurisdictions in accordance with international law.

⁶ Press release 207/2010 Government Communications Unit.

the High North has been an area of vital concern for Norway's foreign policy. The responsibility for sustainable fishing practices in Norway's economic zone and growing pressure to access these waters by the international petroleum industry have called for a comprehensive management policy. A management plan for the Norwegian portion of the Norse and Barents Seas has been developed and adopted. With the new political system in Russia and the end of the Cold War, increased cooperation became a priority and a renewed High North strategy became a corner stone of Norwegian foreign policy.

High North politics and international cooperation are subject to devolution and different cross-border governance structures. Bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation have been highlighted and organized from the North. The Barents Region Cooperation was established in 1993 and has been a driving force in cross-border cooperation. The small town of Kirkenes located close to the Russian border and with street signs in Russian and Norwegian has become a centre for cross-border cooperation, as has the secretariat for the Euro-Barents cooperation located in Kirkenes. Such structures are found in other parts of the world but such cooperation is new in the Arctic. Visa free passage has been established for Russians and Norwegians living close to the border. The Norwegian Sami community is strong in this area and the Sami organization has taken a leading role for Indigenous cross-boundary cooperation in the Arctic.

Learning Highlight 2

The federal and unitary political systems of the eight Arctic states display similarities and differences in organization and function. Identify these similarities and differences.

At the governmental level several policy action plans have been launched documenting the importance of an active and continuous High North policy, followed by business cooperation and development especially in oil and gas. The foreign minister recently stated the success of High North policy is dependent on policy generated by the region and perceived as its own.⁷

2.6 International Institutions in the Arctic

Prospects for growing economic activity in the Arctic demonstrate the necessity to cooperate and solve unsettled questions. The retreating ice cap will open new shipping routes and access to new fishing areas. Warming Arctic waters are altering the habitats of commercial species and opening new areas for petroleum resource exploration. The Arctic has become a renewed and targeted area for economic exploitation, inciting environmental concerns and calling into question borders and jurisdictional responsibility. Unsettled Arctic sea border questions create potential for conflict. Renewed interest in extending national jurisdiction over extended continental shelves complicates the delimitation of national waters and borders.

At the end of 2011, the following are unsettled maritime boundary questions and disputes:

- Russia and the United States in the Bering Sea

⁷ Stated in an introduction by Jonas Gahr Støre in "Nordområdepolitikk sett fra nord". Kunnskapsforlaget 2010.

- Canada and other nations concerning the Northwest Passage as internal waters versus an international strait
- Canada and the United States in the Beaufort Sea
- Canada and Greenland/Denmark regarding Hans Island

The forty-year dispute between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea was resolved in 2010 with both parties compromising within the framework of the Law of the Sea. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, established by UNCLOS, have to-date proven to be sufficient platforms for negotiating solutions. All five Arctic maritime states have publicly adopted the Law of the Sea framework, but are unwilling to adopt the EU Parliament's strategy to establish a new Arctic Treaty, like the Antarctic Treaty, which would open EU political influence on Arctic resource exploitation.

The Arctic Council is the other cornerstone of international cooperation for Arctic states. Established in 1996, the Arctic Council has six expert working groups covering a wide range of environmental and sustainability topics, which provide scientific knowledge for recommendations in support of Council policy-making. Decisions are consensus based among member states, which result in time-intensive political processes with limits on tasks that can be efficiently handled by the Council. In 2011, a permanent secretariat was in the process of being established but assessed contributions remain lacking. Council leadership rotates two-year chairmanships among members limiting the scope of medium- and long-term planning and program implementation. Regardless, the Arctic Council has become an important forum for environmental and sustainable development issues.

While the term 'Arctic' previously referred to only the High North, i.e., tundra and ice covered areas, the Arctic Council extends the concept and its mandate to encompass greater areas of the northern world. Most of northern Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands are included in the Arctic Council's targeted region making it increasingly interesting for players such as China, Japan and the European Union, all of whom applied for permanent observer status.

Aside from UN forums and the Arctic Council, an impressive number of regional, international and Indigenous organizations cooperate internationally in the Arctic.⁸ This cooperation involves multiple levels of governance that bridge different government levels and various civil society actors. Such diffuse governing structures have become increasingly important in policy formation processes in modern times (Ball, Peters, 2000).

Conclusion

This module has examined the analyses of comparative government. While institutional arrangements of Arctic states differ, they illustrate the diversity of organizational forms among democracies. A description of only the political institutional landscape does not give much insight into the function of exercising democratic policy processes. Therefore, when comparing political systems other approaches should be considered. One approach is to focus on essential

⁸ More on this in module 8. Arctic cooperation

functions required in any democracy and then examine structures that are guiding these functions.

Modern states no longer operate with clear lines between the public and private sectors. They are often intertwined and characterized by interdependencies. Input functions cannot work well without the freedom to organize and promote individual and group interests or without a free press that serves as a watchdog for political processes and provides space for critical voices. Freedom and opportunity to exert basic civil rights are the fundamental basis of liberal democracy. The digital information revolution the world is experiencing could strengthen possibilities for democratic rule.

Political systems are dynamic and changing. Distances between northern communities and northern policy makers vary depending on the characteristics of specific states, political cultures and systems. Policy making is determined in several ways and on several levels in the North. Accordingly, cooperation is growing and the North is playing an increasing role in determining its future.

Discussion Questions

1. What conclusions can you make if you evaluate democracy as practiced in your country?
2. Devolution of decision-making powers may increase regional legitimacy, but can also lead to differences in standards from region to region. Do you agree with this statement? How would you recommend processes of devolution or centralization of political power move forward?

Study Questions

1. What is meant by political citizenship rights?
2. What role does mass media play in political processes?
3. Why is a free and competitive press an asset for democracy?
4. How can elected political leaders be controlled?
5. What is the difference between a political party and an interest organization?
6. What is meant by a parliamentary government?
7. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of a majority versus a minority government?
8. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of a single party versus a coalition government?
9. Why are Arctic states unwilling to include other states in the Arctic Council?

Glossary of Terms

Conflict Dimensions: Perceptions of societal issues and values held by differing groups.

Consensual Democracy: A governing system that seeks compromise and consensus for making binding decisions and often is contrasted with majority rule or the Westminster model of government.

Constituency: The body of voters or residents of a district represented by an elected legislator or official or the district so represented.

Decentralization: Delegation of aspects of administrative or governance state power to lower government levels.

Devolution: Transfer of power or authority from a central government to a local or lower government levels, e.g., regions.

Executive: The institution with sole authority and responsibility for implementation of policies and daily administration of the state. The term is often used as a synonym for cabinet or government.

Federal State: A type of sovereign state characterized by a union of partially self-governing states or regions united by a central (federal) government.

Governance: Denotes the activity of collective decision making in which government institutions may or may not lead or play a part. The concept often refers to governing situations where a mixture of public and private actors perform a political role sometimes across governing levels (multi-level governance). Governance tends to have three dimensions: authority, decision-making and accountability. The function of good governance is to achieve organizational and societal goals.

Legality: Refers to what can be derived and rooted in formal acts of law.

Legislative: The public institution or branch having power to create laws or referring to basic tasks of parliaments or a synonym for parliament.

Legitimacy: Rooted in what citizens regard as fair and just but not necessarily rooted in law.

Liberal Democracy: A political system based on tolerance and freedom combined with mass participation. A common form of representative democracy also known as constitutional democracy.

Majority Government: A government backed by the majority of members in parliament. Majority government most often occurs when a government is formed by one party with a majority over all other parties in a legislature but can involve a coalition of parties.

Minority Government: A government that does not hold the majority of votes in parliament and can include a single party or coalition of parties.

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): An organization, interest group or formal pressure group that operates independently from government.

Parliamentarian Government: A government that is politically responsible to parliament and accepted by parliament.

Policy: A plan or specific course of action of a government, political party or business intended to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters.

Policy Process: The different policy making stages including implementation and feedback to the political system.

Politics: The activities involved in making binding decisions for society as a whole. Activities associated with the governance of a country or area. Activities of governments concerning the political relations between countries.

Political Culture: Values and attitudes regarding politics and society.

Political System: The system of politics and government. All institutions involved in making binding decisions for a specific society.

Unicameral: Refers to a parliament with one chamber.

Unitary State: A state governed as a single unit in which the central (national) government is supreme and administrative divisions (subnational units) exercise only powers that the central government chooses to delegate.

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