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POLITICS, FISH, AND INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: THE BRITISH-ICELANDIC COD WAR

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EQUITABLE allocation of marine resources has generated considerable international discussion and debate. The three conferences on the law of the sea (1958, 1960, and 1974-1975) have focused on the living resources of the sea, the continental shelf, the deep-sea bed and ocean floor, marine pollution, navigation, and marine research. The perceived importance of these aspects depends on the levels of technological, economic, social, and political development of the nations involved. As a result, international deliberations have tended to result in package proposals in which individual countries present claims that give varying emphasis to the different aspects depending on needs and aspirations.

One aspect common to virtually all package proposals relates to territorial sea limits and fishing zones for coastal states. In turn, this jurisdictional concern is associated with allocation of control over the living marine resources that are concentrated above the continental shelves adjacent to coastlines. Numerous conflicts of interest have arisen between coastal nations and states with distant-water fleets over the right to harvest given species of fish or to harvest given waters for a variety of species.

A frequent cause of international fishery disputes has been unilateral extension of national jurisdiction by coastal states. Kasahara identifies the common characteristics of such disputes when he points out that "international disputes over fishery matters have a rather long history; and contrary to the widely accepted notion that most of the past fishery agreements have dealt only with the question of conservation, some of the early agreements quite squarely faced problems of a political or economic nature."¹ Developing the considerations identified by Kasahara, disputes can be conceptualized as having ecological, economic, legal, and political components. Although all of these components are important and interact with one another, this study is oriented toward the political one. The focus is on the dispute that erupted between Great Britain and Iceland following the latter's extension of its fishery jurisdiction from twelve to fifty miles on September 1, 1972. My ultimate purpose is to determine the importance of political considerations relative to resource management criteria in international fishery management.

¹ Hiroshi Kasahara: *International Fishery Disputes*, in *World Fisheries Policy: Multidisciplinary Views* (edited by Brian J. Rothschild; Univ. of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1972), pp. 14-34, reference on p. 17.

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ICELANDIC FISHERIES AND ANGLO-ICELANDIC DISPUTES

Jurisdiction over Icelandic waters has varied markedly. Between 1631 and 1859 the fishery limits claimed by Denmark and Norway, under whose rule Iceland lay, ranged from thirty-two to sixteen miles. In 1859 the restrictions were reduced to four miles and in 1901 to three miles. The jurisdiction was extended back to four miles in 1952. In 1958 and 1972 Iceland unilaterally extended the limits to twelve and fifty miles, respectively; and on July 15, 1975, a further extension, to 200 miles, was announced effective October 15, 1975.

Disputes erupted over the 1952, 1958, and 1972 extensions. In May, 1952, Iceland instituted a four-mile fishery limit and adopted a new base-line system from which limits were to be drawn, in order to improve control over fisheries, the mainstay of the Icelandic economy. Great Britain, whose vessels had fished Icelandic grounds since 1400, maintained that no evidence existed for overfishing and that this unilateral action was unacceptable.² The British Trawler Owners' Association called for a ban on landing of fresh fish in Britain from Icelandic vessels—and British dock workers heeded the call.

A significant consequence emerged as the boycott led to Iceland's taking its trade to the Soviet Union. In 1952 Great Britain was second only to the United States as a trading partner with Iceland and annually received about 25 percent of Iceland's fresh fish. A year after the boycott began, the Soviet Union offered Iceland a bilateral trade agreement under which it would take fish in exchange for petroleum and for building materials such as cement and lumber. By 1955 the Soviet Union was the largest single importer of Icelandic fish and had replaced Britain as Iceland's second largest trading partner.

The peculiar result of the situation was that Iceland, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in reacting to a trade boycott from another NATO country, developed strong trading ties with the Soviet bloc. Great Britain accepted Iceland's four-mile limit in 1956, but on September 1, 1958, the limit was extended to twelve miles. This action led to a Cod War that lasted until February, 1961.

Iceland took this unilateral action in 1958 because it believed that overfishing by foreign fleets was depleting a natural resource on which its economy depended for survival. When the 1958 Law of the Sea Conference ended and no agreement had been reached on the width of fishery limits, Iceland extended its own to twelve miles. France, the Netherlands, and West Germany had vessels fishing on the continental shelf adjacent to Iceland. These countries protested the extension but advised their fishermen to respect the decree. Great Britain took a different stance. Declaring that no legal justification existed for such unilateral action, it used the Royal Navy to protect British trawlers from Icelandic coast guard vessels.

Once more NATO became involved. Some observers felt that the Icelandic fisheries minister, a member of the Communist Party, was using the fishery issue as a lever to achieve other political objectives relating to the closure of the American air base at Keflavik and to Iceland's withdrawal from NATO.³

Settlement was reached in 1961. Great Britain and West Germany were granted

² Lyman B. Burbank: Problems of NATO Diplomacy: Fish and an Air Base in Iceland, *South Atlantic Quart.*, Vol. 58, 1959, pp. 236-247, reference on p. 240.

³ Morris Davis: Iceland Extends Its Fisheries Limits: A Political Analysis (Universitetsforlaget, Scandinavian University Books, Oslo, 1963), pp. 51-69.

permission to fish in specific areas within the six-to-twelve mile zone for three years. The agreement stated that Iceland would continue to work toward further extension of its fishery jurisdiction. In this regard, however, Iceland was to provide six months' notice of any extension. Furthermore, if a subsequent extension were disputed, the matter would be referred to the International Court of Justice at the request of either Iceland or Great Britain.

In June, 1971, an election in Iceland resulted in the formation of a new coalition government. The following month the government announced that by September 1, 1972, new fifty-mile fishing limits and hundred-mile pollution limits were to be established. Furthermore, because of changed technological, economic, and social conditions, Iceland rejected its 1961 agreement with Great Britain. The major impact of this stance was that Iceland would no longer accept the role of the International Court of Justice in extensions. As the prime minister told the Althing (Icelandic Parliament) on November 9, 1971, "In our opinion disputes of this nature cannot properly be judged by the International Court of the [*sic*] Justice. This is first and foremost a political rather than a legal issue."⁴

The Althing approved the fifty-mile fishery limit on February 15, 1972. Great Britain protested, and during August the International Court of Justice requested both parties not to alter existing arrangements. In late August more than eighty British deep-sea trawlers, their names and registration numbers covered with black paint, sailed for Icelandic waters. On September 1 Iceland put the new limit into effect, and Great Britain declared the decision to have violated international law. Four days later an Icelandic coast guard vessel cut the warps of a British trawler. Shortly thereafter a Royal Navy frigate began patrolling seaward of the fifty-mile limit.

Harassment of British trawlers continued, and on May 17, 1973, the trawlers left Icelandic waters claiming lack of support from the British government. Two days later the trawlers returned under escort by two Royal Navy frigates. The following day Iceland's prime minister banned British military planes from landing at the Keflavik air base. On May 26 the dispute approached the boiling point when an Icelandic vessel shelled and hit a British trawler. Both governments protested to the United Nations. On the last day of May, Iceland expelled a British information officer for "security" reasons. During June, Iceland formally boycotted a meeting of the NATO Defence Planning Committee to protest the presence of Royal Navy frigates within the fifty-mile zone and initiated steps to have the United States withdraw from Keflavik.

Late in September, 1973, Iceland announced its intention to sever diplomatic relations with Great Britain unless Royal Navy frigates and support tugs withdrew. The vessels were withdrawn in early October, and Prime Minister Edward Heath invited his Icelandic counterpart, Olafur Johannesson, to London for meetings on October 15. The day after their meeting a two-year agreement was announced. The number and size of British trawlers fishing in Icelandic waters were to be reduced, and the catch was to be restricted to an annual harvest 70,000 metric tons below the average British catch between 1960 and 1969. Three areas, designated for "conservation" purposes, were to be closed at specified times to improve spawning (Fig. 1). Other areas were to be set aside for the exclusive use of the Icelandic small-boat fleet. The remaining waters between twelve and fifty miles from the Icelandic coast were to be divided

⁴ Quoted in "Iceland and The Law of the Sea" (Govt. of Iceland, Reykjavik, 1972), p. 34.

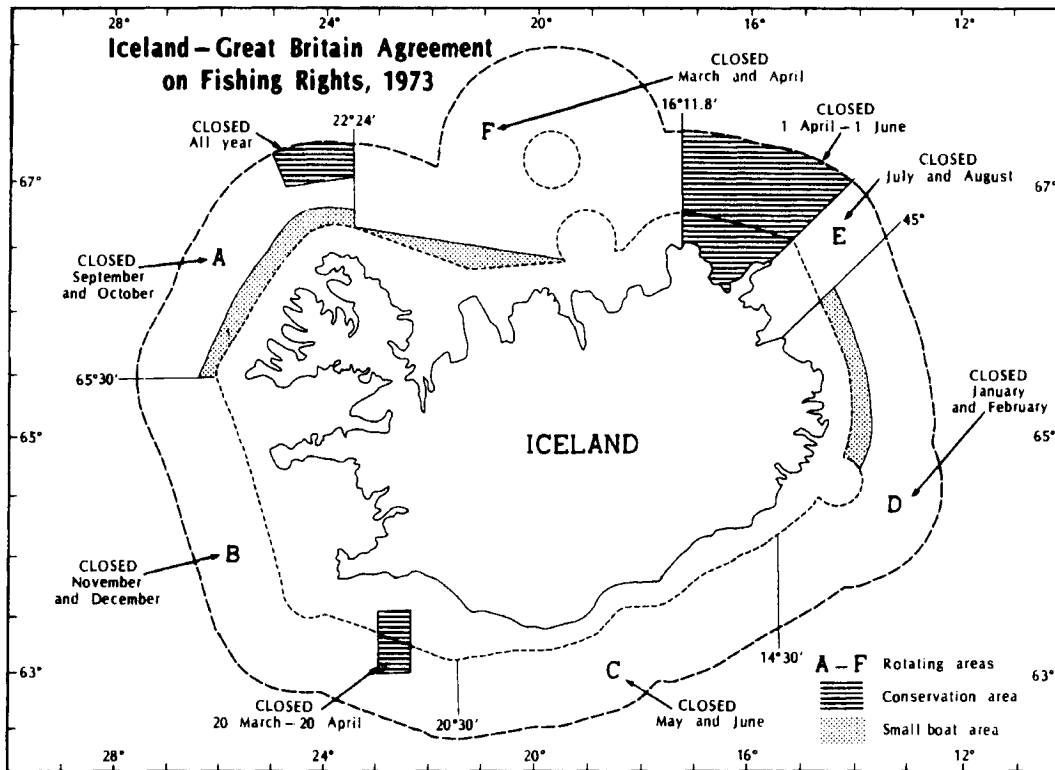


FIG. 1—Iceland-Great Britain agreement on fishing rights, 1973. Adapted from "Iceland-United Kingdom: Agreement Concerning Fishing Rights," *Internatl. Legal Materials*, Vol. 12, 1973, p. 1318.

into six zones open to British trawlers on a rotating basis. Thus, after fourteen months of often bitter disagreement, Great Britain and Iceland concluded their second Cod War.

To keep the issue in perspective, I should emphasize that Great Britain was not the only nation to have a distant-water fleet working the Icelandic grounds. Iceland had to reach agreements with other nations as well. Two examples will serve to illustrate the range of settlements reached. In July, 1973, Iceland and Norway agreed that fishing licenses for the twelve-to-fifty-mile zone were to be issued to about forty-five long-line vessels registered in Norway, on the assumption that no more than thirty such vessels would be fishing the Icelandic grounds at the same time.⁵ The licenses would be granted for two to four months and could be renewed. Six months' notice by either side was necessary to terminate the agreement. Iceland and Belgium reached a settlement in September, 1972, the month in which the extension to fifty miles went into effect.⁶ Nineteen Belgian vessels were identified in a treaty as being allowed to fish in designated areas (Fig. 2). Licenses would be issued for six-month periods and Icelandic coast guard vessels would have the right to examine the fishing gear of licensed vessels as well as to request any information deemed necessary concerning

⁵ "Iceland-Norway: Agreement Concerning Fishing Rights," *Internatl. Legal Materials*, Vol. 12, 1973, pp. 1313-1314.

⁶ "Belgium-Iceland: Agreement on Fishing within Fifty Mile Limit of Iceland," *ibid.*, Vol. 11, 1972, pp. 941-946.

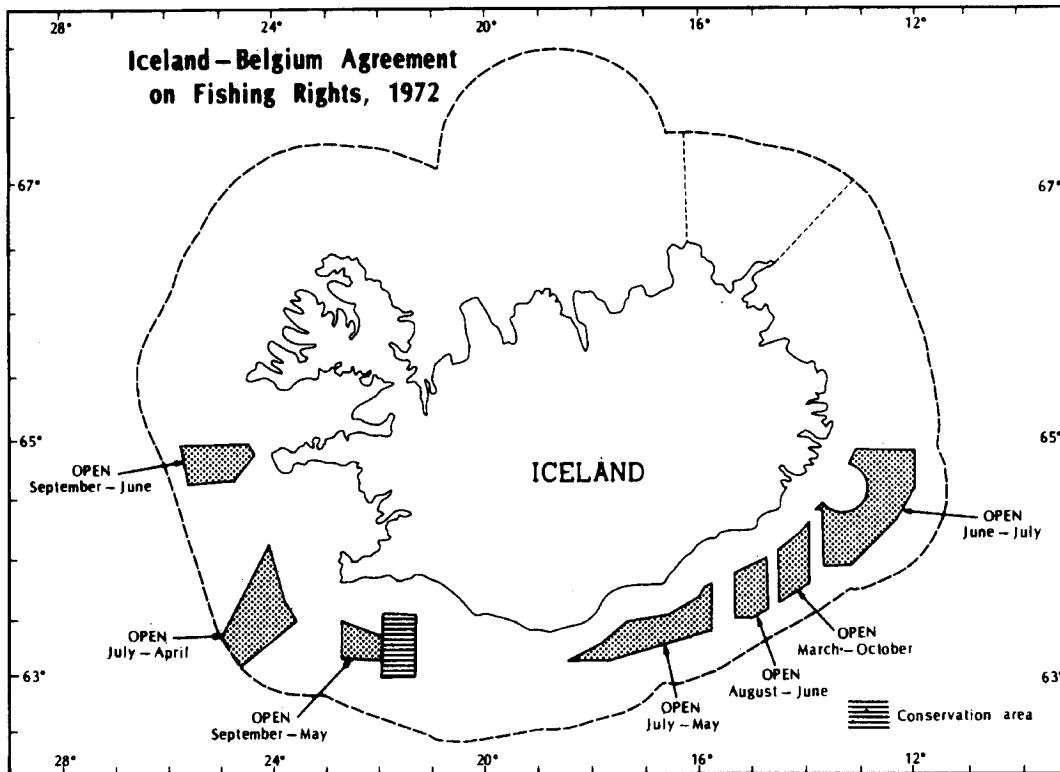


FIG. 2—Iceland-Belgium agreement on fishing rights, 1972. Adapted from Belgium-Iceland: Agreement on Fishing [see text footnote 6], p. 946.

the fishery. These two agreements, when compared to the settlement with Great Britain, suggest that the British trawler fleet received substantial opportunities to fish in Icelandic waters. Against this background the political component of the second Cod War will be examined in more detail.

POLITICS AND FISH

The political dimension can be discussed at two levels. At a macro scale, political considerations revolve around NATO, the stances of other interested parties, and the European Economic Community (EEC). At a micro level, attention focuses on the internal politics of both Great Britain and Iceland and incorporates the role of public relations firms employed by the two protagonists.

NATO AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

NATO became caught up in the dispute for several reasons. Iceland and Great Britain were both among the original charter members which signed the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949. Two of the fourteen articles that form the treaty were particularly relevant to the Cod War. Article 2 outlines the basis for political and economic cooperation within the alliance, stating that the members "will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them." Article 5, known as the "trigger"

clause, states that "an armed attack against one or more of . . . [the members of NATO] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them . . . will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, . . . such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic Area." With Royal Navy frigates accompanying British trawlers into the disputed waters to protect the fishermen from harassment by Icelandic coast guard vessels, both sides had good reason to view NATO as an appropriate agency to resolve the dispute.

Iceland was explicit in its demands to NATO. As Prime Minister Johannesson wrote, "What I regard as most serious is that Britain, a NATO country, has attacked its ally in NATO with its armed might."⁷ Iceland called on NATO to intervene to end the protection by British warships of illegal fishing activity, threatening to initiate the procedure for having the American-manned NATO base at Keflavik closed if NATO did not respond to its demands. Previous behavior indicated that Iceland was not posing an idle threat: As one government spokesman for Iceland commented, Iceland's request was "a test case. . . . It will show whether NATO is there only for militarily strong nations, or if there is something in it for Iceland too."⁸

The British attitude incorporated two concerns. The first was represented by a note, delivered to Reykjavik on May 29, 1973, by Ambassador John McKenzie, which stated that "we reject your assertion that the presence of the Royal Navy in the area constitutes an act of aggression against a NATO ally." Because the disputed waters formed part of the high seas the British trawling was legal. In fact, the continued harassment of British vessels by Icelandic coast guard vessels had forced the British government to provide naval protection. The note concluded that "it is the British Government, therefore, which has cause to complain of the use of force by a NATO ally, a use, moreover, that is in direct conflict with the order of the International Court of Justice."⁹ This type of reaction placed NATO in a double bind, in that Iceland and Great Britain each accused the other of armed attack.

Another British attitude, more sensitive to the political realities of the dispute, was contained in a *Times* editorial. The British Trawlers' Federation had demanded that the Royal Navy frigates arrest Icelandic coast guard vessels when the latter tried to block fishing. Reacting to this attitude, the *Times* editorial argued that "however strong Britain's legal right in the affair, and however provocative the Icelanders' actions, there is nothing to be gained by adopting a course of action that would be politically disastrous."¹⁰ According to the *Times* view, two negative consequences would result. Great Britain, by threatening Iceland with armed force, would place itself in the wrong in the eyes of the world. Moreover, there was a "very serious risk that we should push Iceland into leaving NATO and thereby finally settle the fate of the base at Keflavik." Rather than having Iceland become a second Suez, the *Times* urged, Great Britain should make it a second Malta. To accomplish this end, the editorial suggested that allied nations should be asked for help in reaching a settlement acceptable to the Icelandic government and that, if necessary, Great Britain should "bear the cost of it."

Although NATO may well have acted behind the scenes in attempting to bring the

⁷ "Caught in the NATO Net," *The Times* (London), May 29, 1973, p. 13.

⁸ "Iceland Demands NATO Action," *The Guardian* (Manchester), May 29, 1973, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Caught in the NATO Net [see footnote 7 above], p. 13.

two nations together, it did not play the role suggested by Articles 2 and 5. The involvement of NATO did have a direct bearing on the attitudes taken by other countries toward the dispute, however. President Nixon stated that Iceland and Great Britain should settle the Cod War without the involvement of the United States, although some observers felt the United States did place pressure on Great Britain to end the dispute and to safeguard the Keflavik air base.¹¹ The Soviet Union was a potential ally for Iceland, given the trading agreements that had resulted from the 1952 fishery dispute. Because of the potential for increasing a split within NATO, the Soviet Union might have been motivated to become involved. Yet neither the Soviet Union nor the United States interfered, for the interests of both countries in the law of the sea run in the same direction. For military and commercial reasons, these two nations wish as few international restrictions as possible.¹²

The maneuvering of nations and organizations for position during the dispute brought in the EEC.¹³ On April 1, 1973, a free-trade agreement between Iceland and the EEC was to go into effect. During March, 1973, however, the ministers of the Community decided that the most important part of the pact would not be implemented on April 1. This pact involved exports of fish products from Iceland and included a substantial tariff cut on fish shipped from Iceland to the EEC. Implementation of the fish-trade portion of the agreement was conditional on satisfactory settlement of the Cod War. Thus, on June 8, 1973, the EEC reminded Iceland that the postponed part of the treaty was to be reviewed before the end of June, when the first tariff cuts were scheduled to take effect. Not surprisingly, most of the ministers of the Community represented nations that had distant-water trawler fleets. Thus, while Iceland had the Keflavik air base as a lever to use against NATO, Britain had a free-trade agreement involving fish exports with which to counter through the EEC.

The involvement of NATO and the roles played by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the EEC emphasize the range of political considerations in an international fishery dispute. Strategies may be adopted and viewpoints taken that relate only indirectly to the resource management problem at hand. Or, groups and nations may see the resource issue as a lever by which other goals may be achieved. In this situation the specific resource question becomes more of a pawn in a complicated match that includes political, economic, and cultural objectives.

BRITISH AND ICELANDIC INTERNAL POLITICS

Strategic maneuvering was not confined to the international scale. It also applied to internal politics within Great Britain and Iceland. In the former, at least two considerations arose. The first involved the relationship between national and regional interests. The direct effect of the Cod War focused on the distant-water fishing ports of Hull, Grimsby, and Fleetwood. There, fishermen favored restriction of fishing limits, even though they were not being observably hurt by the Cod War owing to the significant increases in the price of fish.¹⁴ Conversely, other regions of the nation, where inshore fishing fleets prevailed, would benefit through a general extension of

¹¹ "Atmosphere Cool as Nixon and Pompidou Open Icelandic Talks," *The Guardian* (Manchester), June 1, 1973, p. 2.

¹² "The Sea's a Jungle," *The Economist* (London), Oct. 13, 1973, p. 77.

¹³ "Iceland Warned by E.E.C.," *Irish Times*, June 9, 1973, p. 6.

¹⁴ "More Tugs of War Inside Iceland's Limits," *The Economist* (London), Apr. 28, 1973, p. 88; and "Iceland Vital for Hull's Profits," *Sunday Times* (London), Sept. 30, 1973, p. 9.

fishing limits around the world. The British government, therefore, had to balance the needs of a distant-water trawler fleet against the needs of the inshore fleets in Britain. A complicating element was that the different interests associated with extensions had the potential for polarizing a split between English and Scottish members of Parliament. "In Scotland most of the fisheries are inshore, and most interests have favoured protection of nearer waters, while English fisheries are dominated by the distant-water sector, whose interests were best served by fishing limits at minimal distances from land."¹⁵ The implications were important. At negotiations, Iceland was able to present a united front. Great Britain, on the other hand, owing to different internal needs, could not take as strong a stand. By opposing the fifty-mile extension Great Britain could place itself in a situation from which it would be difficult to take action later to protect its inshore fishermen.

Woven around these considerations was the selection of individuals to represent Britain in negotiations. The discussions were dominated by officials oriented toward foreign affairs: Prime Minister Heath; Sir Alex Douglas-Home, the British foreign secretary; and Lady Tweedsmuir, minister of state in the Foreign Office. Final negotiations were led by Prime Minister Heath in October, 1973. Personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food appeared to play a secondary role, more as advisers to those from foreign affairs. Thus the ecological dimension may well have been less important than the other dimensions we are considering, especially the legal and political aspects.

In Iceland, the Cod War became symbolic of other concerns, such as the nation's cultural and economic survival. To understand the importance of the Cod War for Iceland's political parties, it is necessary to appreciate several events that occurred before the June, 1971, election. In June, 1944, Iceland became independent. The goals of the new nation soon began to conflict with military plans of the United States, which had established an air base in Iceland during World War II. In the postwar era the maintenance of this base was considered an integral part of a network for surveillance of Soviet air and naval activity in the North Atlantic. The issue of a foreign military base caused a stormy debate in Iceland and ended in Iceland's joining NATO in 1949. The value of NATO and the Keflavik air base to Iceland became an issue in every subsequent general election.¹⁶

Five political parties contested the 1971 election for the sixty seats in the Icelandic Althing. The Independence Party, the largest, represents fishing, industrial, commercial, and certain farm groups. The second largest party is the Progressives, primarily an agricultural party but also supported by teachers. The Social Democrats, the second oldest party, came into existence in 1916 and represents labor. The People's Alliance was established in 1968. Formerly the Labor Alliance, it represents the Communist viewpoint. The fifth party, known as the Alliance of Liberals and Leftists, split from the People's Alliance in 1969.¹⁷

With the June, 1971, election, the coalition of conservatives and socialists that had held power for twelve years found its seats reduced from thirty-two to twenty-eight. A swing to the left in voting resulted in a new three-party coalition of the Progressives,

¹⁵ James R. Coull: *The Fisheries of Europe: An Economic Geography* (G. Bell and Sons Ltd., London, 1972), p. 227. See also C. C. Hodd: *British Fishing and the Icelandic Saga*, *Polit. Quart.*, Vol. 44, 1973, pp. 349-352.

¹⁶ Donald E. Nuechterlein: *Iceland, Reluctant Ally* (Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1961), p. xii.

¹⁷ "Handy Facts on Iceland, 1972-73" (*Atlantica and Iceland Review*, 1973), p. 1.

People's Alliance, and Alliance of Liberals and Leftists. Prime Minister Johannesson came from the Progressive Party, whereas the fisheries minister, Ludvik Josefsson, was from the People's Alliance. Josefsson's party held ten of the thirty-two coalition government seats as well as another seat in the seven-member cabinet.

The impact of this government structure arose from the attitudes of two of the political parties involved. The Communists had opposed the Keflavik air base agreement with the United States in 1946, the NATO agreement of 1949, and a subsequent defense agreement with the United States in 1951. The People's Alliance Party maintained during the Cod War that they supported Iceland's withdrawal from NATO and the immediate departure of American servicemen from Keflavik.¹⁸ The People's Alliance had support in these views from the leader of the third party in the coalition. Hannibal Valdimarssen, a sixty-nine-year-old veteran politician, was committed to making the Americans leave Keflavik.

Given these attitudes, it is clear that NATO and the fishing limits were intricately connected. Two of the three parties in the coalition government had an opportunity to strengthen the Icelandic economy and to withdraw the country from NATO. Josefsson, fisheries minister during the 1958-1961 Cod War and an experienced politician, argued strongly for his goals. Although it undoubtedly is an oversimplification to suggest that domestic political objectives were the only motivation for Icelandic actions, it is hard to dispute that they had at least some role in influencing behavior.

The Keflavik air base also offered many advantages, however. It provided employment for Icelanders and thereby represented a major source of foreign exchange that could not easily be dismissed. When the Helgafell volcano erupted in January, 1973, American ships and aircraft played a significant role in evacuating residents from the community of Heimaey. These were tangible benefits, whereas the possibility that American culture might usurp that of Iceland was reduced through an agreement which in essence confined American servicemen and their families to the air base.

Consequently, the decision to have the Americans withdraw was not easy, even given the hope that Icelandic personnel would take over operation of the base. If this were accomplished, Iceland would allow American and NATO planes to land at Keflavik but would not permit permanent stationing of army personnel in Iceland. On March 25, 1974, five months after settlement of the Cod War, Prime Minister Johannesson stated that it was Icelandic policy to have the Americans withdraw from Keflavik by the middle of 1976.¹⁹ Thus the demand to have Keflavik closed as a military base was more than a strategic move by the Icelanders. This subsequent behavior indicates that the objective was a genuine one which happened to become enmeshed with the fishery extension issue. In May, 1974, however, Johannesson dissolved the Althing and called for an election on June 30, 1974. The result was a new coalition government with a new prime minister. The fate of Keflavik is thus unresolved.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PROPAGANDA

After an incident in which both Great Britain and Iceland argued that their vessels had been rammed and endangered, one newspaper reported that the incidents at sea,

¹⁸ "Cod War Only the First-Warning," *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, May 23, 1973, p. 1.

¹⁹ "Iceland Will Ask U.S. to Leave NATO Base by Middle of 1976," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), Mar. 26, 1973, p. 2.

“although not terribly serious, indicate clearly that the propaganda war is just as important as any maritime engagement.”²⁰ Given this observation, it is appropriate to conclude the discussion of the political component by considering the role of public relations in the dispute.

The British government presented its side of the argument in several ways. The British Information Service generated a number of “Factel” and “BIS” mimeographed news bulletins in which the British viewpoint was portrayed. The London Press Service published a series of “Topical Commentary” news releases that were strongly sympathetic to the British side. Great Britain also attempted to strengthen its public relations staff by assigning additional personnel to Reykjavik. These moves were perceived by the British press as overt attempts to improve the quantity and quality of information supporting the British stance.²¹

The Icelandic government led its propaganda efforts with press releases and with three superbly prepared pamphlets that contained maps, charts, and pictures, as well as arguments as to why Iceland found it necessary to extend its fishery limits.²² These pamphlets were of high quality and made the mimeographed news bulletins of the British Information Services look amateurish. Iceland also provided condensed versions of its three publications in booklets oriented toward tourists. Six pages of one booklet, entitled “Handy Facts on Iceland,” covered the economic importance of the actions taken by Iceland, and the reasons for these decisions.²³ The other publication, dated 1971, discussed the 1952–1956 and 1958–1961 disputes and outlined the rationale for Iceland’s position.²⁴

Propaganda efforts were not limited to the press releases and pamphlets of the two governments. In the words of West,

The “cod war” with Iceland over the right to fish in her waters sounds like a public relations slogan. Indeed it is one. For no fewer than four firms of “public relations consultants” have used their ingenuity in the pay of the British Trawlers’ Federation.²⁵

During the first Cod War a consultant hired by the British Trawlers’ Federation arranged for more than a hundred journalists to cover the situation from Royal Navy vessels. In 1972, the federation hired Markpress of Switzerland, which had worked previously for Biafra during the Nigerian civil war. West observed that “from the start, critics complained that Markpress were trying to fight the “cod war” too much like the Biafran war. ‘They were still in the mentality of claiming dozens of planes shot down’, said one trade rival.”²⁶ As a consequence of this unhappiness, Markpress lost the account at the end of 1972 to the firm of Charles Barber City, specialists in financial public relations.

Iceland reacted by hiring a British public relations firm, Whitaker Hunt. This firm, associated with political and industrial accounts, concentrated on answering

²⁰ “Reykjavik Exploits Its Propaganda Chances,” *The Times* (London), June 2, 1973, p. 1.

²¹ See, for example, “Cod War: Britain Seeks Sympathy,” *Sunday Times* (London), May 27, 1973, p. 7; and “Iceland Throws Out Diplomat for Ship Movement ‘Leaks,’” *The Guardian* (Manchester), May 31, 1973, p. 24.

²² “Fisheries Jurisdiction in Iceland” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Reykjavik, 1972); “Iceland and the Law of the Sea” (Govt. of Iceland, Reykjavik, 1972); and “Iceland’s 50 Miles and the Reasons Why” (Govt. of Iceland, Reykjavik, 1973).

²³ Handy Facts [see footnote 17 above], pp. 50–55.

²⁴ “Iceland: A Country of Contrasts” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Reykjavik, 1971).

²⁵ Richard West: Cod Warriors, *New Statesman*, May 11, 1973, pp. 689–690, reference on p. 689.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 690.

charges made by the British Trawlers' Federation or its consultants. A series of exchanges through letters to the editor in the *Economist* demonstrates how Markpress and Whitaker Hunt thrusted and counterthrusted on behalf of their clients.²⁷ This behavior confirms that the public relations or propaganda aspects of the dispute were taken seriously by Britain and Iceland. The impact of such activity on British, Icelandic, and international opinion is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Iceland elicited and maintained considerable sympathy in Great Britain and in other countries around the world by skillful use of public relations.

IMPLICATIONS

In this study I have focused on political aspects of the Cod War in order to explore the manner in which the political component may influence the attitudes, motivations, and behavior of actors in the resource management process. I conclude that decisions will be understood only if political aspects—some obvious, some subtle—are identified and considered in resource management, for political considerations with little direct relationship to an issue often shape final decisions.

The important point to recognize is that the decision in a resource management situation often trades off resource management criteria against, or is bounded by, other social, legal, and political concerns of the various actors at both the macro level and the micro level. What appears to be a "suboptimum" resource decision may reflect a concern with a larger set of issues extending well beyond the resource in question. To determine the adequacy or inadequacy of a resource management decision, it is useful to look beyond the disputed resources. As the British-Icelandic Cod War indicates, understanding of the decision process will be incomplete if the political component is not considered explicitly.

It is appropriate to conclude by emphasizing the existence and significance of the ecological, economic, and legal components of the Cod War, since they interact with the political component. Concerning the ecological component, disagreement arose over whether overfishing was a real or potential threat to the fisheries in Icelandic coastal waters. Both parties in the dispute had scientific experts testify in support of the claims of their particular group. Iceland produced evidence to show that overfishing was already occurring, whereas Great Britain had data to support an argument that the fishery was not being overexploited. This situation arose mainly from conflicting assumptions about the impact of changing technology on the efficiency of harvesting methods. Furthermore, some nations feared that diversion of fishing activity from Icelandic waters would place intolerable pressure on other fishing grounds, such as the waters adjacent to the Faeroe Islands. Thus resolution of an ecological problem in one area could generate new problems for the fisheries stocks and fishing fleets of another area. This aspect did not receive adequate consideration during the Cod War and requires further investigation.

The economic component raises several issues. One focuses on the conflicting marine management goals that confront a nation. Great Britain was anxious to maintain narrow fishing limits adjacent to Iceland in order to protect the interests of her distant-water fleet. In contrast, the British inshore fleet would best have been served by extended fisheries jurisdiction. Other marine considerations, such as offshore min-

²⁷ Letter to the editor from W. M. Bernhardt of Markpress, *The Economist* (London), Dec. 2, 1972, p. 6; and letter to the editor by D. F. Hunt of Wittaker Hunt Public Relations Ltd., *ibid.*, Jan. 6, 1973, p. 6.

eral exploitation or pollution control, add further pressure for extended jurisdiction by coastal states. On the other hand, military and commercial interests produce counterpressures for restricted limits. These conflicting marine objectives have been basic obstacles to reaching agreement at an international level in law of the sea deliberations and thus merit research.

The role of historic fishing rights also arose in the economic component. British vessels have been fishing Icelandic waters for five hundred years. Should this give Great Britain the right to continue harvesting cod in these waters as economic, technological, and social conditions change in both Iceland and Great Britain? At a global scale, the resolution of historic fishing rights versus the claims on marine fisheries by nations without a tradition of fishing is a critical issue.

Finally, several important points emerge in regard to the legal component. Iceland rejected the jurisdiction of both the International Court of Justice and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission in the dispute. Questions are thus raised about the structure and power of international organizations to enforce agreements such as that signed in 1961 between Iceland and Great Britain. If current international institutions cannot enforce agreements, considerable study is needed to determine what the nature of institutional arrangements should be. Agreements mean little if mechanisms for their enforcement do not exist.

A related point is that of ratification of agreements. During the dispute, Iceland was asked not to make a decision until after the Law of the Sea Conference scheduled for Caracas in 1974. But Iceland refused, arguing that such conferences in 1958 and 1960 had not reached agreements on territorial sea and fishing limits. Even for those aspects for which agreement had been reached, Iceland noted that it had taken up to six years for individual nations to ratify these agreements. Thus Iceland maintained that if overfishing were already present, it could not wait another five years for ratification. This valid concern suggests that treaty ratification, or lack of it, may well be one of the most important aspects of international resource management. As a result, the mechanisms for achieving ratification are a subject that deserves careful investigation.

The problems which arise from ecological, economic, and legal considerations thus indicate that although the political component requires scrutiny, comprehensive analyses cannot exclude the other components. In the longer term, therefore, understanding of the resource management process will require systematic study of all components as well as integration of individual component findings if we are to comprehend the nature of the trade-offs that occur. In this way the underlying processes associated with resource management should be revealed more clearly.