

Universities in small scale societies: The last bastions of nationalism in academic circles?

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NUSCT - 62N



First NUSCT conference held in the Faroe Islands in June 2025: "The Role of Universities in Small Scale Societies"

The University of the Faroe Islands would like to welcome you to the *NUSCT History Conference* which will be held on 2-3 June 2025 at the Faculty of History and Social Sciences, J. Broncksgøta 25, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands.

The universities in the NUSCT co-operation are all part of small-scale societies, and the theme of the conference is which role universities have in such societies.

Universities in small scale societies have a different role to play in their communities, whether it is local or national, compared to universities in large countries. Many universities in these societies are established with a certain purpose, e.g. to stop out-migration or to preserve local culture and language. Universities can also play a vital role in modernising local communities, and in this effort, universities often have a close connection to political institutions. These purposes can give universities in small scale societies certain challenges. A consequence can be, that there is more focus on education and applied science than in universities in larger societies.

In line with this theme, we welcome presentations on the following topics:

The role of the university in democracy and political institutions

The prioritisation of research fields in small scale societies – e.g. society, culture, language, health, basic research or applied research

Demographic challenges – societal role of universities in terms of migration and gender

Universities as identity bearers – local, national, and regional

Transformation of societies – and the universities role in it



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WELCOME TO NUSCT

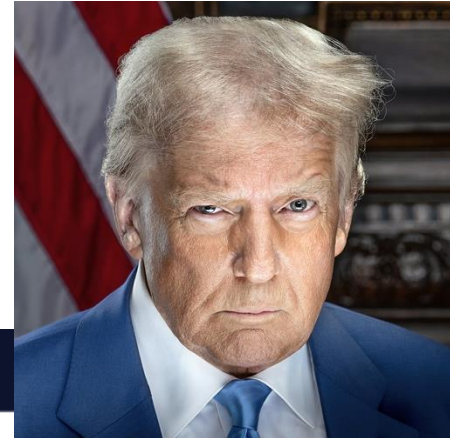
On March 2, 2018, representatives from the University of Malta, the University of Greenland, the University of Liechtenstein, the University of San Marino, the University of Gibraltar and the Universitat d'Andorra met in the Principality of Andorra to formalise the creation of the Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories, NUSCT.

In the words of NUSCT former President and rector of the Universitat d'Andorra, Dr. Miquel Nicolau, "...the Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories was born of a shared need to address issues that are specific to higher education institutions that operate in socio-political and economic contexts of small countries and territories, but that are marginally dealt with by existing international higher education associations".

Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History – The White House

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

The WHITE HOUSE



It is the policy of my Administration to restore Federal sites dedicated to history, including parks and museums, to solemn and uplifting public monuments that remind Americans of our extraordinary heritage, consistent progress toward becoming a more perfect Union, and unmatched record of advancing liberty, prosperity, and human flourishing. Museums in our Nation's capital should be places where individuals go to learn — not to be subjected to ideological indoctrination or divisive narratives that distort our shared history.

To advance this policy, we will restore the Smithsonian Institution to its rightful place as a symbol of inspiration and American greatness -- igniting the imagination of young minds, honoring the richness of American history and innovation, and instilling pride in the hearts of all Americans.

In Victory Day Speech, Putin Rails Against 'Distortion' of History - The Moscow Times

In Victory Day Speech, Putin Rails Against 'Distortion' of History

May 9, 2024



Vladimir Putin attends the Victory Day parade at Red Square on Thursday.

Vyacheslav Prokofyev / TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a defiant speech Thursday slamming Ukraine and its Western allies over their alleged attempts to “distort” history and stoke regional conflicts as he attended a military parade on Red Square to mark Victory Day.

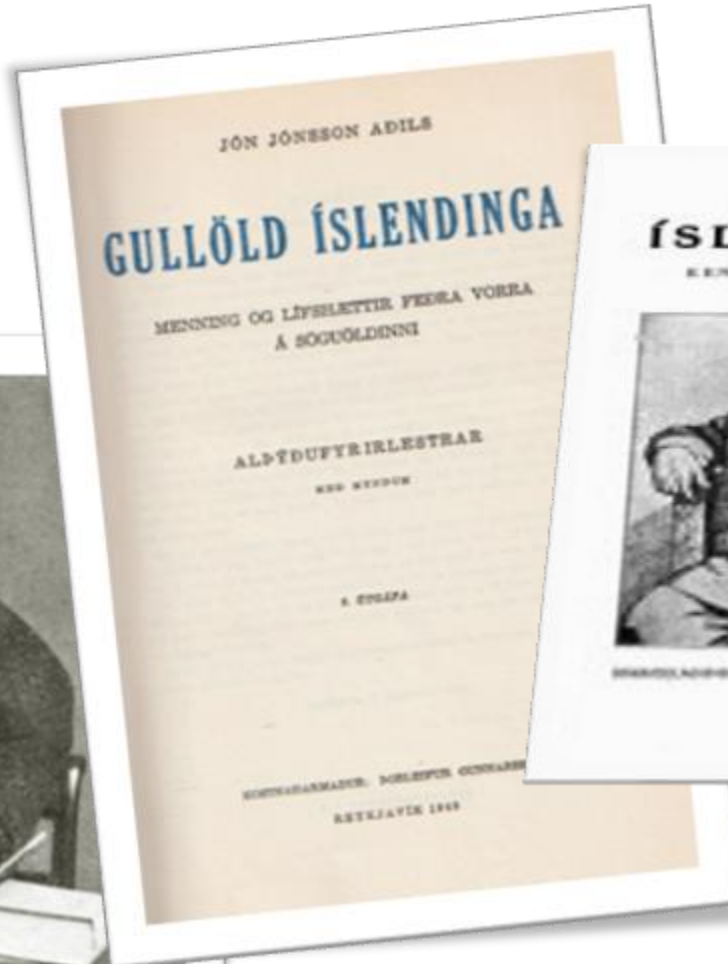
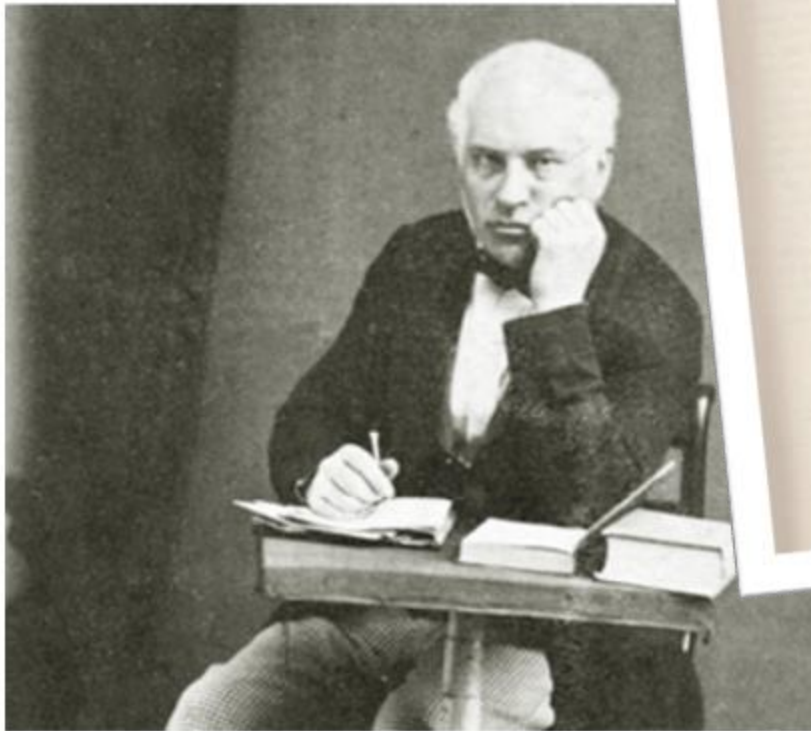
“Today we see how they’re trying to distort the truth about WWII. It interferes with those who are used to building their essentially colonial policy based on hypocrisy and lies,” Putin told assembled guests and servicemen.

“Revanchism, abuse of history, and an attempt to justify the current Nazi followers is part of an overall policy of the Western elites to stoke new regional conflicts,” he said, seeming to refer to the authorities in Kyiv, whom Russian officials including Putin regularly accuse of holding neo-Nazi views.

The Kremlin has traditionally used Victory Day for bombastic events that promote patriotic unity and showcase the country’s military might.

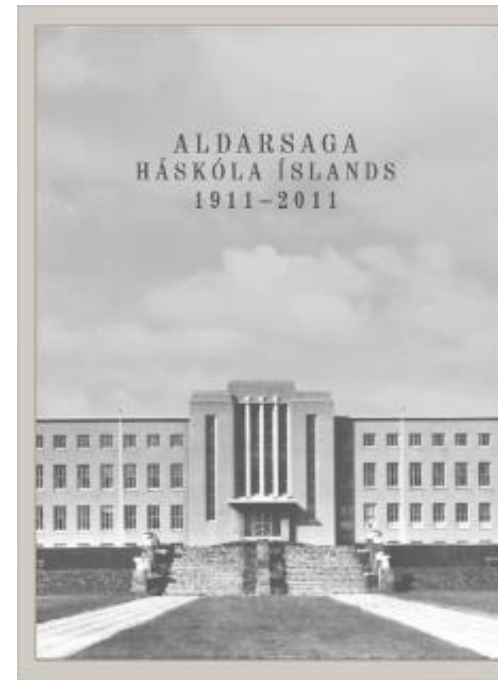
The Golden Age (of historians?)

Jón Sigurðsson (1811-1879),
scholar and leader of
Iceland's independence
movement



Aldarsaga Háskóla Íslands

- “Clear emphasis that the foundation of the University was intrinsically tied to the struggle for an independent nation-state” (p. 20)
- “The new university should counteract parochialism and chauvinism, features which Björn [Ólsen, first rector] felt were clearly apparent in Iceland” (p. 21)



Prófessorsstaða tengd nafni Jóns Sigurðssonar forseta | Þingtíðindi | Alþingi

“In our time, there is a tendency to flatten history, to diminish the value of achievements, and to claim that everything was mostly the result of the circumstances of the time. But the value of the Icelandic struggle for independence cannot be diminished. ... Long live the memory of Jón Sigurðsson.” (Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, 15 June 2011, Prime Minister of Iceland, 2013-2016)

Prófessorsstaða tengd nafni Jóns Sigurðssonar forseta, fyrri umr. | Þingtíðindi | Alþingi

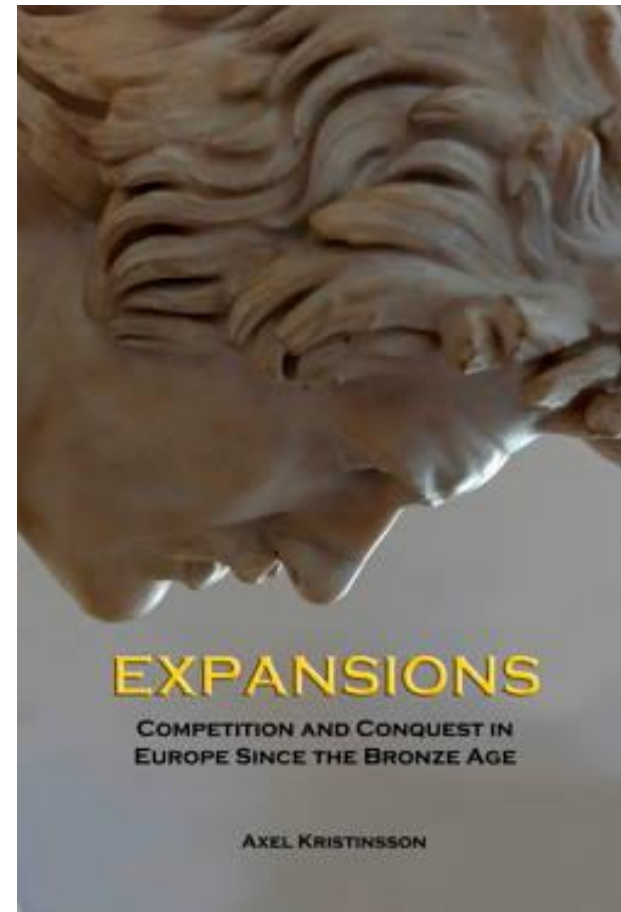


"I believe it is a fundamental principle that the university is an independent institution. Frankly, I find it both old-fashioned and poor practice for the Icelandic Parliament to interfere in how the university organizes its affairs.

Therefore, Mme President, no matter how respectable, noble, and admirable this may be, I am afraid I cannot give it my vote." (Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, Social Democrat MP, 11 June 2011)

Axel Kristinsson, *Expansions*

"I had entered the University of Iceland wanting to study the history of mankind but all I got was the history of Iceland. it was a small national university burdened with the patriotic sentiments of a newly independent nation. Everyone, professors and students alike, concentrated on Icelandic history, at most seeing world history as a sort of background." (p. vii)





"Tíu spurningar. Hugleiðingar um þorskastríðin" (2002) | Guðni Th Jóhannesson

Guðni Th. Jóhannesson

Tíu spurningar. Hugleiðingar um þorskastríðin

Inngangur

Frá lýðveldisstofnun til endaloka kalla stríðsins snerist utanríkis saga Íslands einkum um tvo þætti; varnarmál og landhelgismál, einkum þorskastríðin. Þessi grein er um seinna efnið. Þótt margir hafi skrifað um það er margt enn ósagt og kannski hefur ekki verið tinnabaert að líta á atburðarsheldur að vekja athygli á spurningum sem má spyrja í sambandi við þorskastríðin og kenningum sem unnt er að nota við leit að svörum. Þær spurningar, sem hér verður minnst á, eru þessar:

- 1 Hvað voru þorskastríðin mörg?
- 2 Er orðið þorskastríð heppilegt hugtak?
- 3 Á hvaða heimildum þarf að byggja sögu þorskastríðanna?
- 4 Hverjir eiga að skrifa sögu þorskastríðanna?
- 5 Voru þorskastríðin óhjákvæmileg?
- 6 Var rétturinn alltaf Íslands megin í þorskastríðunum?
- 7 Var þjóðareining í þorskastríðunum?
- 8 Hvað réð úrslitum um lýktir þorskastríðanna?
- 9 Hvað réð ákvörðunum ráðamanna í þorskastríðunum?
- 10 Er þorskastríðunum lokið?

¹ Eina fræðiritið á íslensku um öll þorskastríðin er Blönn Þorsteinsson, *Tíu þorskastríð 1415–1976* (Reykjavík, 1976).

Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, *Tíu spurningar. Hugleiðingar um þorskastríðin*

Sjálfstæðisbarátta til sjávar. Er þorskastríðunum lokið?

Menn segja gjarnan að þorskastríðin hafi verið framhald sjálfstæðisbaráttunnar.³⁹ Því má spyrja hvort þeim sé lokið. Í fyrsta lagi má segja að fyrst þorskastríðin snerust um yfirráð yfir Íslandsmiðum geti Íslendingar glatað þeim sigrum sem þeir unnu á seinni hluta síðustu aldar með því að hleypha erlendum þjóðum aftur inn í auðlindina. Þessi rök eru til dæmis rök í huga þeirra sem berjast gegn aðild Íslands að Evrópusambandinu og þegar Davíð Oddsson forsætisráðherra beitti þeim í erindi í sendiráði Íslands í London árið 2001 var við hæfi að á veggnum fyrir aftan hann héngu fjölmargar skopteikningar frá átökunum við Breta.⁴⁰ Að þessu leyti má því segja að þorskastríðunum ljúki aldrei. Á sama hátt má segja að þorskastríðunum sé ekki endilega lokið því Íslendingar stefna að auknum réttindum utan 200 mílna lögsögunnar.

Önnur leið til að nálgast spurninguna um lok þorskastríðanna liggur hins vegar í viðmóti Íslendinga til átakanna, aldarfjórðungi eftir endalok þeirra. Hefur það langur tími liðið frá lokum þorskastríðanna að Íslendingar geti vegið þau og metið á sama hátt og menn hafa til dæmis verið að endurskoða sjálfstæðisbaráttuna? „[B]aráttunni fyrir sjálfstæði Íslands er lokið“, sagði Guðmundur Háldanarson sagnfræðiprófessor til dæmis um miðjan síðasta áratug.⁴¹ Hetjulljóminn, sem einkenndi sjálfstæðissöguna, á ekki lengur við, enda má líka vitna í þau orð Guðmundar að frekari skrif um sjálfstæðisbaráttuna á næstu árum muni „að öllum líkindum reka síðasta naglann í líkkistu einingarsögunnar“. ⁴² Saga þorskastríðanna þarf á svipaðri endurskoðun að halda. Þetta greinarkorn er að því leyti einn litill nagl í líkkistuna fyrir einingar- og hetjusögu þeirra. Þorskastríðunum er lokið.

³⁹ Sveinn Semundsson, *Guðmundur skilfærna Klemastad II* (Reykjavík, 1985), bls. 115.
⁴⁰ – Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, bls. 2 og 347.
⁴¹ Erindi Davíðs var á vegum Íslands-Íslensku vísindarnefndarinnar (*British Icelandic Chamber of Commerce*), og var haldið 6. nóvember 2001.

⁴² „Saga og samtíminn. Ráðstefna um sögu Íslendinga“, *Saga XXXIII* (1995), bls. 67.

⁴³ Guðmundur Háldanarson, *Íslenska fjórhúð – upprind og endilínd* (Reykjavík, 2001), bls. 41–42, 185.



UNIVERSITY
OF ICELAND

*The Cod Wars
are over!*



**NATIONALISM IN TURBULENT TIMES:
LESSONS FOR SMALL NATIONS
IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC**

**Lecture
by
President of Iceland
Guðni Th. Jóhannesson
at
The University of the Faroe Islands
10 May 2022**

And while I ask you not to forget what I have just outlined about the potential benefits of positive patriotism, I want to emphasize that for a frank appraisal of our past we have to add caveats and clarifications. We have to add an international context and we have to admit to faults – we have to face up to the darker side of our nationalism.



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Similarly, I strongly believe that we should only praise the virtues of nationalism if we are at the same time ready and willing to admit to its potential dangers, so visible in our past and present. We must never forget the evils of excessive nationalism, the danger of xenophobia, racism and intolerance based on the alleged need to defend the purity, honour and integrity of the nation.

NATIONALISM IN TURBULENT TIMES: LESSONS FOR SMALL NATIONS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC



“In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly in Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love.” (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 141)

University of Iceland | Strategy 2021-2026

- The University of Iceland was founded 110 years ago and has since remained an integral part of Icelandic society.
- The University fosters an open and diverse environment for learning and research, maintains strong relationships with key institutions of society and partners with universities and other knowledge centres around the world.



Guðni Th. Jóhannesson appointed Jón Sigurdsson professor | University of Iceland



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University of Iceland | HÍ | 13 March 2025

Guðni Th. Jóhannesson appointed Jón Sigurdsson professor

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Það sem helst hann varast vann, það varð að koma yfir hann

That which he most sought to avoid was what ultimately befell him.





Handball History Made: 3,000 Fans Witness Faroe Islands' Thrilling Draw Against Netherlands in New National Arena | Handball Planet

Faroeese fairytale written in Basel with point on EHF EURO debut



Conclusions

- Universities in small societies do play a special role in advancing and strengthening culture, language, heritage and other unique features.
- Academic freedom and principles must trump political and nationalistic considerations
- Positive patriotism and academic research can go hand in hand
- That's why this conference is so important, timely, and brilliant

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