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# THE INSTITUTION OF HONORARY CONSULS OF ICELAND: ROLES AND FEATURES

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# ABSTRACT

Elena Gorbachuk: The Institution of Honorary Consuls of Iceland: Roles and Features

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The thesis investigates the features of the Institution of Honorary Consuls of Iceland. The theoretical framework is based on Role theory, both regarding the behavioral patterns and professional role conceptions of Honorary Consuls of Iceland and regarding national roles conceptions of Iceland among Honorary Consuls. Fourteen in-depth interviews with Icelandic Honorary consuls were conducted in order to reveal role performance and role conceptions of Honorary Consuls. The data obtained was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. As a result, the thesis sheds light on consular practices in Iceland, and provides some insights about the role of Honorary Consuls in Iceland's foreign policy, the professional roles of Honorary Consuls, and attitudes towards the national role of Iceland as transmitted by Honorary Consuls of Iceland.

**Keywords:** Iceland, Small States, Institution of Honorary Consuls, Honorary Consuls, Role theory

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## Introduction

The diplomatic missions, such as embassies and consulates, play an important role in states' representation abroad. International trade, business, and investment — all of those contribute greatly to the rise of consular affairs. According to the 1963 Vienna Convention, there are two distinct kinds of consuls, namely career consular officers and honorary consular officers. While providing a broad juridical framework, there is no definition of what the honorary consul (HC) is, since countries decide the role of honorary consuls according to their diplomatic traditions. Honorary consuls are usually unpaid, they may not have citizenship of the sending country, and usually, they combine their consular post with other occupations. They can represent the sending country in cities, along with ordinary consulates and embassies, or be the only foreign mission.

The practice of appointing and assigning honorary consuls with consular duties varies from country to country. Usually, states do not charge honorary consuls with diplomatic and political functions. Honorary consuls usually have a good position, reputation, and a network of contacts, which enables them to exercise consular functions effectively. For instance, according to Article 37 of the Consular Charter of the Russian Federation (1998), an honorary consul can be either a citizen of the Russian Federation or a citizen of a foreign state, in any case they're picked from a number of candidates, all of whom occupy a certain social position in the host state and possess personal qualities deemed necessary for the proper execution of the consular functions. In Russia, when considering somebody for the post of the honorary consul, common practice is to make a choice in favor of a person with close ties between the two countries, preferably those in the fields of science, culture, or business. Despite the fact that Russia has a wide representation abroad, the website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Russia "mid.ru" provides scarce information regarding honorary consuls, except for news about the appointment or retirement of Russian honorary consuls. Considering the practice in Russia, one may get the impression that the institution of honorary consuls is secondary to career diplomats. However, there are examples of countries that actively use honorary consuls in foreign representation practice and have developed unique strategies of interaction between the ministries for foreign affairs and honorary consuls. To compare, according to the last publication dedicated to the institution of honorary consuls, in 2009 Russia had 92 honorary consuls (Intervyu direktora Konsulskogo departamenta MID Rossii, 2009). In 2010 Iceland had around 240 honorary consuls in over 90

countries (An Executive Summary of the Report of Össur Skarphéðinsson to Alþingi, 2010). According to the last 2020 report, Iceland has 216 honorary consuls around the world. The Consular Liaison office, a division for consular affairs, was established under the Protocol Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Iceland in order to foster communications with Iceland's honorary consuls. During the last decade, all the reports of Ministers for Foreign Affairs to Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament, emphasize the role of honorary consuls for the protection of Iceland's interests all over the world. Given the great development of the honorary consuls' institution in Iceland, it is interesting to explore how Iceland strategically uses honorary consuls to extend its limited diplomatic representation given constrained resources. Simply put, I was interested, why Iceland has such a huge number of honorary consuls around the world, even in countries Iceland has limited relations with, and how this expansive institution works in practice.

**The theoretical framework** I use in this thesis is based on Role theory, both regarding the behavioral patterns and professional role conceptions of honorary consuls of Iceland and regarding Iceland's role conceptions. Role theory in international relations (IR) studies can be "via media" between agent and structure, which can take into account structural constraints of Iceland, the environment and their perception by the agent, and the agent's perception of self and generalized others. I emphasize the ability of Iceland not only to react but also to act as a full-fledged actor forming the role and the attitudes to the international context. Following the assumptions that roles provide "reasons for action" in social interaction, and that role conceptions are inherently contested by the structural environment of roles (Stryker, 2006, p. 227), I am interested how the honorary consuls' institution relates to Iceland's roles. Firstly, the institution's development is a part of the role enactment because the strategy is consistent with this role. Secondly, honorary consuls, being both internal and external actors in relation to Iceland's foreign policy, have their own perceptions about their professional roles and the role of Iceland. My assumption is that a small state role, enacted by Iceland, has transformed. Small state no longer has to be a hostage to the international context and its own limitations. It's, however, an active actor capable of determining its place within the structure and having an influence on it. The emerging and perceived need to expand liaisons with a large number of countries in the world, combined with the limitations associated with Iceland's small size and the opportunities provided by numerous Icelandic emigrants around the world, has led the Institution of honorary consuls to developing a huge network of citizens performing consular duties and implementing – or challenging? – Iceland's foreign policy goals.

Accordingly, **the purpose of my thesis** is to investigate the professional roles of honorary consuls of Iceland and their perceptions of Iceland's role regarding the formulation of these roles by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. To achieve it, I will stick to the following **steps**:

1. To introduce a conceptual framework for the research by examining the theoretical framework offered by role theory in both social studies and IR studies;
2. To explore naturally occurring data and to conduct qualitative interviews with several honorary consuls of Iceland. While doing this, I will focus on:
  - Role conceptions that exist among honorary consuls (professional, institutional and Iceland-related);
  - Consular functions and duties, the routine of honorary consuls, their plans for future as parts of role enactment;
  - A model of interaction between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and the honorary consuls of Iceland, to find out the place of the MFA among the sources of role conceptions.
3. To conduct a qualitative content analysis of the interviews and interpret the results.

The method of manual qualitative content analysis with elements of quantitative content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate for qualitative interviews and in accordance with the epistemological basis and purposes of the study.

The results should be not only valuable from the point of view of investigating the institution of honorary consuls as one of the strategies of role performance of Iceland, and role features within the institution. But also, considering that the information is received from the direct participants, this will be the first study to shed light on the functioning of the institution of honorary consuls of Iceland, from the appointment of honorary consuls to the coordination of their work by the MFA.

**Previous research** of honorary consuls' institution is rather limited. While some papers are dedicated to the legal framework (Khachatryan, 2014; Ivanenko, 2002; Dela, 2014; Grasis, 2019; Zelmenis, 2018 and many others) and history (Margaryan, 2011) of honorary consuls' institutions, few authors within foreign affairs studies can be found exploring honorary consuls. One of the most significant scholars actively publishing papers dedicated to the institution of honorary consuls is Kevin D. Stringer. In his 2011 paper, the author analyzes Liechtenstein's approach to the institution of honorary consuls from a neoliberal perspective. The author concludes that Liechtenstein's honorary consuls have diplomatic activities beyond the classical

consular functions of visas and citizen services. He also analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of this model. He focuses mainly on the case of Liechtenstein's honorary consuls in the United States and Germany and compares their function with other states' honorary consuls' missions. The research reveals that Liechtenstein embedded them within an overall public diplomacy and branding strategy (Stringer, 2011a). Liechtenstein's case is also explored in the article of M. V. Trofimenko (2016). Another work of Kevin D. Stringer provides some insights into the global rise of honorary consuls' institution (Stringer, 2011b). He argues that the intensification of international diplomacy in the globalized economy leads to a transformation of classical diplomacy: "low politics" (such as commerce, trade, and tourism) and the local level of contacts becomes crucial. Honorary consuls, who are usually responsible for these matters, bring nations a great benefit in three directions: Extending the representation network in a cost-effective manner; linking the state interest with local context; developing business, tourism, and investments. Besides, the author emphasizes the role of honorary consuls in micro-states and examines several cases of nations that actively use honorary consuls. For this study, the most interesting thing is that the author considers the case of Iceland. He notices that Iceland "heavily uses honorary consuls for business, trade and investment promotion in local regions" (Stringer, 2011b, p. 79). Although he exaggerates a little the number of Icelandic honorary consuls, he rightly notices that Iceland is among several states whose honorary consuls outnumber career consuls. Besides, he emphasizes the special importance of the honorary consuls of Iceland for Iceland's international trade, investments, and tourism. I greatly acknowledge this work of Kevin D. Stringer as most convincingly justifying the newly increasing importance of the institution of honorary consuls.

The 2019 article of Zhivko Gruevski resounds significantly with Stringer's ideas arguing that honorary consuls' institution development can be an innovative and creative strategy for trade, investment, cultural and scientific promotion abroad. The author focuses on the process of identifying the need for opening an office of the honorary consul, selection criteria, role, and responsibilities and provides a S.W.O.T. analysis of the institution on a global scale. He argues that honorary consuls' institution has high potentials and unique cost-effectiveness, especially for small states (Gruevski, 2019). A similar idea can be traced in the works of diplomats. Kishan S. Rana in his essay (2013) describes honorary consuls institution development as a booming trade due to the extending international tourism and the rise of new trade roots. Euripides L. Evriviades in his 2005 address to the National Association of Foreign Consuls in the United States,



presents a review of the vital role of honorary consuls in the contemporary world from the point of view of an experienced diplomat.

An unusual perspective on honorary consuls is presented by Giles Scott-Smith (2017). In his 2017 article, the author explores the relevance of the honorary consuls' positions through the analysis of their representations in modern literature and the arts. The author focuses on public/private opposition that is less stable in diplomacy than it is usually presented and the hybridity of the position of honorary consul within this divide.

The article of Pavelieva E. A. and Sidorova T. Y. (2015) analyzes the nature of the use of the institution of honorary consuls in integration processes and examines the features of their functions, their role in the development of international relations, and the new trends in the institution's development.

As for other state-specific case studies, for instance, Olga Łozińska in her 2019 study investigates the role of Italian honorary consuls in cultural diplomacy through interviewing the Italian honorary consul in Szczecin (Łozińska, 2019). Kerli Veski and Tanel Kerikmäe investigate in their 2014 article competences of honorary consuls as an administrative body in Estonia and conclude that despite the fact that honorary consuls follow strict regulations, their eventual activities are performed independently and the method of functional delegation prevails (Veski & Kerikmäe, 2014). The Estonian case is also examined in the 2017 paper by Kadastu. Zalessky B. L. has two publications (2017 and 2018) about the honorary consul's institution in the Republic of Belarus and its specific orientation on expanding the representation abroad to search for new opportunities for economic growth.

I now proceed to the introduction of the theoretical framework.

## 1. Role theory

In order to study the Institution of Honorary Consuls of Iceland from the role theory perspective, I will use two major facets of role theory. Firstly, the honorary consuls of Iceland should be considered in terms of their professional role identity. Secondly, using the role theory in relation to states, I will consider what role of Iceland as a state is transmitted by honorary consuls and how this relates to Iceland's role taking and role enactment. Therefore, both individual level and collective level of understanding roles are in the focus of this thesis.

## 1.1. Role theory in human behavior studies

The roots of role theory in Foreign Policy Analysis and IR studies lay in social science and behavioral psychology. Among the scholars that formulated the main theoretical assumptions of role theory are George Herbert Mead and John Dewey. Mead's approach to roles is based on the assumption that individual behavior derives from the dialogue from society and "I" and "Me" parts, where "I" represents the creative part of self, and "Me" is self-reflective (Harnisch et al., 2011, p. 39). This situation-specific process induces behavior that is shaped by societal norms, expectations, and structures, where "self" and generalized "alter" are distinguished. John Dewey differentiates the parts of behavior deriving from psychological needs and from the need to be consistent with social expectations (Holsti, 1970, p. 237).

Although my main focus as an IR student is on the roles of states, in this study, I am also interested in the professional roles of honorary consuls of Iceland. The consular service itself, on the one hand, is framed by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and diplomatic traditions. On the other hand, the honorary consuls of Iceland and the MFA have their own ideas about the role and functions of honorary consuls, which is also interesting to explore in this research. So, I will begin this chapter with the main theoretical concepts of role theory in social science and social psychology to have a conceptual basis for studying the role of honorary consuls of Iceland. As B. J. Biddle puts it, role theory deals with one of the most important attributes of social behavior – "the fact that people behave differently and predictably depending on their social identity and situation" (Biddle, 1986, p.68). I will follow Biddle's article investigating the development of role theory in social science in defining three main concepts common for role theorists: Role, social position, and expectation.

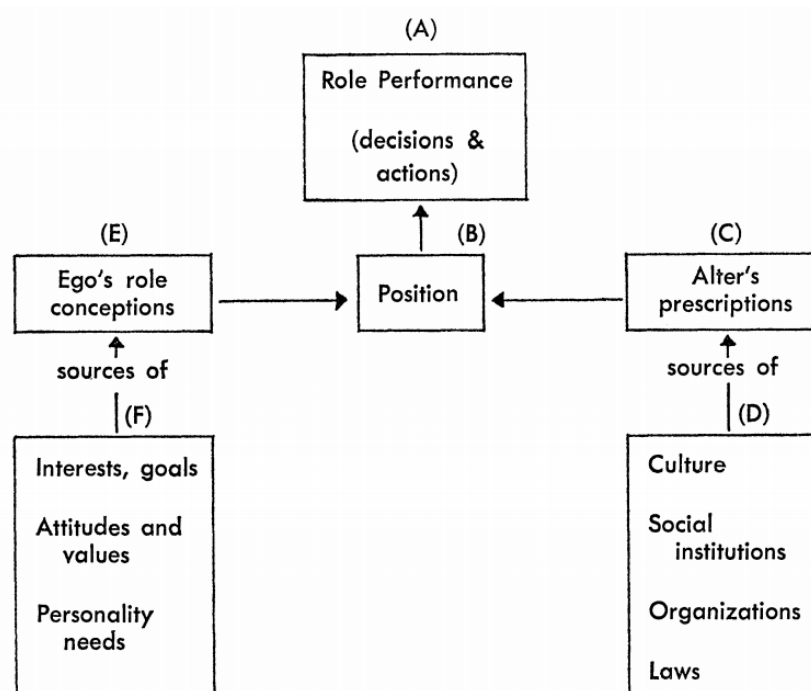
Role, according to Conway is "a collection of concepts and a variety of hypothetical formulations that predict how actors will perform in a given role or under what circumstances certain types of behaviors can be expected" (Conway, 1988).

As for social position, this concept is crucial for the functional role approach, formalized by Parsons and Shils (Parsons & Shils, 1951). The focus of this approach is on "the characteristic behaviors of persons who occupy social positions within a stable social system". The functionalist approach is not applicable for honorary consuls' institution study since one can hardly consider a professional community, that is scattered around the world and is connected only by events held by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to be a stable social system. Instead, I will stick to the

situation-specific professional position of honorary consuls and explore its characteristic behavior.

Expectations refer to Alter's prescriptions, which are expected functions, norms and values of honorary consuls that shape their role perceptions. To research role perceptions of Icelandic honorary consuls within this framework, it is necessary to obtain a description of behaviors, and expected functions, norms, and values of honorary consuls. As Biddle observes, among role theorists, there are different modalities of understanding expectations. Some theorists define expectations as norms, which nature is prescriptive. Other researchers assume that expectations are beliefs and attitudes, which refers to the subjective probability of expectations (Biddle, 1986). Both approaches are possible in different role systems, so after exploring role-induced behavior among honorary consuls, I will try to estimate the modality of expectations that shape honorary consuls' roles and main sources of role expectations. In this case the main Alter, or significant other, that provides an external source of expectations, is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland (but we also should bear in mind public perceptions of honorary consuls' role in each particular environment). However, when studying the professional roles of honorary consuls, the instructions and prescriptions of the MFA prove to be equally important as their interpretation by the honorary consuls themselves. To illustrate the main approaches, I will use the figure that one of the pioneers of role theory in IR studies K. J. Holsti created when summarizing the complexity of role theory in social studies:

Picture 1. Role Theory and the Sources of Human Behavior, from Holsti, K. J, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy" (1970, p. 240).



On the one hand, the role performance can have roots in pre-existing conceptions of honorary consuls (E) deriving from personal experience, background, interests, and goals (F). On the other hand, it can derive from socialization of honorary consuls within the institution, and the formulation of role expectations by the MFA (D). This division does not seem to be mutually exclusive. From interviews with honorary consuls, MFA actors, and official documents, I intend to find out what kind of sources (related to Ego's role conceptions or Alter's prescriptions) of expectations dominate among honorary consuls. This theoretical framework will also prove useful when applied to studying the honorary consuls' perception of the role of Iceland, which will be discussed in the next section.

## 1.2. Role theory in IR studies

In international relations studies, role theory came with the fourth great debate and is used widely in Foreign Policy Analysis and other IR studies. Role theory has its interpretations in neoclassical realism, neoliberalism, and social constructivism. Holsti was the pioneer of role theory among IR scholars to investigate behavioral patterns of states in their relationships. He adopted four concepts from behavior studies to analyze foreign policy: "(1) role performance, which encompasses the attitudes, decisions, and actions governments take to implement (2) their self-defined national role conceptions or (3) the role prescriptions emanating, under varying circumstances, from the alter or external environment (which are, in different interpretations, expectations). Action always takes place within (4) a position, that is, a system of role prescription" (Holsti, 1970, p. 240). Holsti proposed a theoretical framework for exploring national role performance, role conceptions, and sources of it. Foreign policy decisions and actions within this framework serve for role enactment, and, in turn, for showing the motives of foreign policy decision-makers. Besides, Holsti defines the international system as "a particular distribution of various national role conceptions at any given time" (Holsti, 1970, p. 247). In his 1970 paper, the author analyses previous literature on IR and distinguishes common role types, their functions, and sources. He identifies nine role types of nations, common for IR scholars: Revolutionary leader, Bloc leader, Balancer, Bloc member, Mediator, Non-aligned, Buffer, Isolate, and Protectee. In addition, he studies foreign policy documents to distinguish 17 role conceptions among policymakers: Bastion of revolution-liberator, Regional leader, Regional protector, Active independent, Liberation supporter, Antiimperialist agent, Defender of the faith, Mediator-integrator, Regional-subsystem collaborator, Developer, Bridge, Faithful ally, Independent, Example, Internal development, Isolate, Protectee (Holsti, 1970).

Neoliberal institutionalism scholars apply the insights of role theory and cognitive psychology in their way to understand international actor's behavior. For instance, Keohane and Goldstein explore how ideas and beliefs shape actors' goals and means to exercise road maps for foreign policy (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993).

As for social constructivism and role theory, Cameron G. Thies argues that Alexander Wendt's "Social Theory of International Politics" (1999) "draws heavily on role theory" (Thies, 2009, p. 22). Identity theory is, in turn, a merger of symbolic interactionism and structural role theory. Wendt's insights provide three roles for states: Enemy, Rival, and Friend, that can induce the production of three cultures of anarchy: Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian. Wendt's roles are appropriated by actors as a result of social interaction. Other constructivist authors, such as Aggestam (2004), Trondl (2001), and Tewes (1998), use role theory ideas in their works.

As for more recent developments of role theory, Harnisch, Frank and Maull (2011) in their comprehensive work about role theory in IR present a role change perspective that occurs through different types: Role adaptation, role transformation, and role learning (Harnisch et al., 2011). Besides, they review the evolution of role theory. Role theory in IR studies seems applicable for this research because of its flexibility regarding approaches and the ability to maintain a balance between the agent and the structure in studying and theorizing international politics. Firstly, both positivist and constructionist approaches are possible: While American role scholars emphasize actor's material or cognitive traits as determining factors for role taking, European theorists mostly emphasize identity, language, and social interaction (Harnisch et al. 2011, p. 7). Secondly, role theory can be "via media", which can take into account both structural changes in the system of international relations, their perception by the agent, and the agent's perception of himself, the ability not only to react but also to act as a full-fledged actor, forming his role and his attitude to the international context.

According to American role theorists, cognitive or institutional structures cause nations to take certain roles (role taking), with an emphasis on actor's material and cognitive traits as determining factors (plus recognition through society) (Harnisch et al. 2011, p.7). When analyzing Iceland's role and the place of the Institution of honorary consuls in this role enactment, it is necessary to take into account such factors as the size of the country, its geographical location, economic characteristics, and historical external relations. However, focusing only on these parameters when talking about the role of Iceland would limit the explanatory potential of my research. As in Wendt, 1999, there are both tangible and intangible parts of an actor's identity.

Roles are socially recognized positions “that are constituted by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group” enacted through language and action (Thies, 2010, p. 6336). Analyzing the statements of the honorary consuls of Iceland and their perception of both their own activities and the goals of Iceland abroad, I hope to understand what place consular relations occupy in Iceland’s role conception and enactment.

Following the assumptions that roles provide “reasons for action” in social interaction, and that role conceptions are inherently contested by the structural environment of roles (Stryker 2006, 227), I am interested how honorary consuls’ institution passes through changes in Iceland’s roles and could its development be a part of role adaptation as a change in strategies when performing a role. I assume that a combination of external and internal factors, as well as Iceland’s conceptions, led to a change in the role of Iceland at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. At this time, the era of Iceland's political shelter provided by the United States was coming to an end (the closure of the U.S. military base in Keflavík serves as evidence of this), and the concepts of a powerful small state and a smart small state began to develop. A small state role enacted by Iceland then transformed since the idea that a small state could be not only a hostage to the international context and its own characteristics but also an active actor capable of determining its place within the structure and influencing it. The emerging and perceived need to expand liaisons with a large number of countries in the world, combined with the limitations associated with Iceland's small size and the opportunities provided by numerous Icelandic emigrants around the world, has led to the Institution of honorary consuls to developing a huge network of citizens performing consular duties and implementing – or challenging? – Iceland's foreign policy goals.

I will use the insights and framework of role theory to investigate what professional role conception dominates among honorary consuls of Iceland and what are the sources of it. Then, I will explore what role of Iceland is transmitted by honorary consuls. Then, I am interested in the relationship between Iceland’s changing role and the development of the Institution of honorary consuls, were there any changes in role perceptions among direct participants of consular relations. Furthermore, I hope to find out the features of the Institution of honorary consuls of Iceland and the role of honorary consuls in Icelandic diplomacy.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Data collection

The data collected for analysis is likely to be heterogeneous: Naturally occurring data, i.e. data that exists without the researcher's intervention, and researcher generated data, i.e. interviews with honorary consuls of Iceland.

#### 2.1.1. Naturally occurring data

I have managed to find several documents concerning Iceland's honorary consuls' mission:

- 2010 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi;
- 2017-2018 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi;
- 2018-2019 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi;
- 2019-2020 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi;
- An inquiry from Smári McCarthy about Iceland's honorary consuls;
- Articles in Icelandic newspaper about conferences of honorary consuls of Iceland, which are held every four to five years;
- Website of the Protocol Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland;

and others.

All of them are open sources and their sections relate to the goals of the mission of honorary consuls of Iceland, information about the number of honorary consuls, and which people can become honorary consuls, and also the duties of the Consular Liaison office established at the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs under the Protocol Department.

#### 2.1.2 Interview methods

##### 2.1.2.1. Finding Respondents

Using a theoretical sampling strategy, the interviewer seeks out respondents who seem likely to epitomize the analytic criteria (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In my case, there may be two kinds of respondents: functionaries from the division for consular affairs at the MFA (Consular Liaison attaché at the protocol department) and honorary consuls. The difference in conducting interviews for these two types lies in specific questions about those aspects of the institution of honorary consuls where the answers of the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be

more appropriate. For example, respondents from MFA may be aware at which point there was a need to create a special division for consular affairs, how and when the number of honorary consuls has increased, how the communication with honorary consuls occurs, what changes were included in the new manual for honorary consuls in 2019, and what aspects conferences of honorary consuls cover. Accordingly, before approaching interviews I prepared two interview guides with different questions. However, as a result of a direct search for respondents affiliated with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, it was not possible to interview this category of respondents in the course of this study.

Both minimizing or maximizing differences among respondents are possible. In my case, maximizing differences may be more fruitful to explore the consular liaison of Iceland in different regions. The intensity of Iceland's economic and cultural cooperation differs from state to state where honorary consuls of Iceland perform their functions. Consequently, the consular functions, for example, in Kazakhstan and Finland may differ, which should be considered in the research.

The search for honorary consuls to interview and their contacts was carried out using the section of the website of the Government of Iceland dedicated to the representation of Iceland abroad (Diplomatic Missions, n.d.).

Starting from the second half of December 2020 and ending in the second half of January 2021, I sent 54 invitation e-mails to the Honorary Consuls of Iceland from different parts of the world, and two e-mails to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Consular Liaison Department. All e-mails contained brief outlines of the topic and emphasized the interest in studying the honorary consuls' activities. The number of sent e-mails is due to the response rate: I received only 22 responses to 54 requests, including 14 consents. The number of responses increased with the beginning of the interviewing as one of my respondents left a positive review in the consular Facebook group about participating in my research.

I decided to expand the number of samples needed (compared to the initially planned 7-8), as I could not reach the Consular Liaison Department at the MFA. My invitation e-mail to the representative of the Department went unanswered. I was later contacted by the Department to confirm my studies at the University at the request of one of the consuls. My further request to put me in touch with someone from the Department who might be able to participate in the study was ignored.

Three of the potential respondents requested the list of questions in advance, however, in the end, the interviews scheduled with them did not take place for various reasons.



Eventually, I gathered 14 oral interviews from different honorary consuls of Iceland, from 20 minutes to an hour in duration, which were fully transcribed for further analysis.

#### 2.1.2.2. Qualitative interview

Based on Carol A. B. Warren “Qualitative Interviewing” (2011, p.83):

*“Qualitative interviewing is a kind of guided conversation (Kvale 1996; Rubin and Rubin 1995) in which the researcher carefully listens “so as to hear the meaning” of what is being conveyed (Rubin and Rubin 1995:7)”;*

*“The epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructionist than positivist. Interview participants are more likely to be viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers (Holstein and Gubrium 1995)”.*

There are many ways to conduct a qualitative interview, and I chose the approaches that are usually recommended for elite political interviews: A semi-structured and open-ended individual interview, and the approach will be rather constructionist. Understanding the specifics of conducting interviews with elites, as in Keller, 1963, honorary consuls can be attributed to strategic elites since they have diplomatic functions and they are important for societies they belong to and Icelandic diplomacy as a whole (p. 20). Yet, I am able to avoid many of the challenges described, for instance, in the recommendations for preparing elite interviews by Odendahl and Shaw (2001) since the system of Icelandic honorary consuls is rather transparent, and I can easily contact all honorary consuls. Thus, locating and contacting respondents is not a very complex task to tackle. The issue of power relations and privileges that are often crucial in elite research, in this case, is rather insignificant since hegemony and power structures are not the focus of the study. Still, there are some constraints mostly related to the formulation of questions that should be considered.

Firstly, the time of elite interviews may be limited due to respondents' busy schedules. It is worth keeping this in mind and asking thoughtful questions in order to fit in less than an hour of conversation and get all the necessary data for further analysis. As a result, the average interview with the consuls lasted 35-40 minutes, although most of the respondents had a free hour for interviews.

Another obstacle is the relation between the respondent and the institution they represent. According to Odendahl and Shaw, 2001, “respondents within institutions are likely to present the kinds of statements or promote the kinds of company images developed in

conjunction with the organizations public relations advisers, press departments, and, in some instances, speechwriters” (p. 313). One possible solution is the personalization of questions and engaging discussion to separate the individual and the organization (Thomas, 1995; Odendahl and Shaw, 2001). Respondents’ anonymity is also useful to avoid pre-formulated formal answers.

If possible, a qualitative in-depth interview should start with personal questions, which in my case reveals the background of honorary consuls, how they entered the service, and what their main occupation is. This is also indicated in Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman, 1975: “It is essential to discover what the broad and interesting patterns are before specifying precise questions” (p. 4).

The most important task in planning an interview with honorary consuls is then to build the conversation itself and prepare questions.

As for the organization of an interview, there are several options regarding the structure of the interview, interview style, the format of the question, the epistemological approach, and the medium to conduct an interview.

### 1. Structure of an interview

Unlike a fully structured interview, in a semi-structured interview, the protocol or guide with questions is rather an outline with main topics to cover, designed to direct the flow of the conversation. It is flexible since it is possible to change the planned order depending on the respondent’s speech. In addition, it allows the researcher to ask additional clarifying questions and refer to ideas and words already used by the respondent, which could help to get the most detailed view of the respondent (Roulston, 2010). This approach is the most appropriate for elite qualitative interview and political interview, as many scholars describe it (Odendahl and Shaw, 2001; Pierce, 2008; Leech, 2002; Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman, 1975). Besides, since the role of honorary consuls’ institution is not readily apparent and there are not many expectations about the situation, less constraining interview instruments oriented toward flexibility are more convenient (Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman, 1975).

### 2. Interview style

For my rather exploratory research, an open-ended interview seems the most effective strategy in terms of obtaining information. Interview in a quasi-conversational style usually

provides thoughtful and complex answers, which allows us to cover not just the major manifest content of a response but also latent information about the reasoning and premises underlying it. According to Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman, 1975, “the open-ended, quasi-conversational technique maximizes the interviewer's ability to clarify, illuminate, or probe more deeply into the responses of the subject” (p. 3), which is important for elite interviewing.

### 3. Questions format

Two kinds of questions that are routinely used in interviews are closed and open questions. Open questions are more likely to be used in qualitative interviews, as closed questions may encourage respondents to answer shortly or even in one word, and they entail an explanation only in the case of a negative answer (Roulston, 2010). Open questions do not restrict respondents and allow them to develop their thoughts. Thus, I tried to avoid closed questions and use them only to structure the flow of the conversation a bit or to clarify the specific facts.

### 4. The epistemological approach

I believe that both the interviewer and the respondents form meanings during the conversation since the researcher is part of the reality being studied. Besides, it is probably impossible and even not necessary to conduct an interview fully objectively, since the words themselves carry the sets of meanings and values and affect respondents' reactions. A constructionist approach, which is common in qualitative interviewing, seems to be appropriate since I study the perceptions of the respondents in the first place.

### 5. The medium used for an interview

It is only possible to conduct interviews with honorary consuls in different countries remotely. It is important for me to create a live conversation, maintaining eye contact, and being able to hear and detect intonation as much as possible, so I conducted most of the interviews in the format of an online videoconference (using Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, and MS Teams software).

Still, these methodological choices have their limitations. Open-ended, semi-structural techniques carry limitations on the formal interview procedure and further content analysis since the questions are not asked always in exactly the same way (Dexter, 1970, p. 132-133), and the amount of data can be almost unlimited. This is especially crucial since the epistemology of a

qualitative interview is rather constructionist. To tackle this, the interview analysis required especially careful coding to minimize information loss.

### 2.1.2.3. Informed Consent, what has to be covered?

The researcher is first of all responsible for ethical and respectful attitude towards respondents, obtained data, and its analysis. An important step was to obtain the informed consent of the respondents, who should receive the following information about the researcher and her study:

- The identity of the researcher;
- The institution where the research is conducted;
- Research purpose, preliminary themes that are to be covered in the interview;
- Interview format convenient for the interviewee and the researcher;
- Policy concerning the use of the interviewee's name:

In my thesis, I do not reveal names, personal traits, or organizational affiliations that could be used to identify respondents. To maintain respondents' anonymity, files with interview records were assigned numbers, and during the analysis, all data containing vulnerable information was excluded.

- Information about recording the interview to minimize information loss;
- Information about storing records;
- Citations use policy:

I cite the respondents without revealing their personalities.

- Availability of the research;
- Research ethics:

I base my research ethics on TENK recommendations, which promote the responsible conduct of research (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, n.d.).

## 2.2. Data analysis

The qualitative content analysis focuses not only on manifest meaning, but also on latent meanings, context, the personality of the author producing the content, the recipient, and other details that open up more opportunities for interpretation (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Besides, researchers argue that the three main features of content analysis in social sciences are

the reduction of data volume, the systematic nature of the analysis, and its flexibility (Schreier, 2014, p. 171). The flexibility of content analysis allows me to use elements of both qualitative and quantitative content analysis in international research. For instance, Arash Heidarian Pashakhanlou reviews the use of hybrid approaches to content analysis in international research since the 1940s, starting with Morgenthau, and, according to his conclusions, quantitative content analysis prevails in them, but in the second wave of research, the limitations of the quantitative method are overcome by integrating it with the qualitative one (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.5).

After collecting data, I gradually created a coding framework by encoding data units and assigning them to the categories. Summing up the process of building the coding framework, the collected data units are assigned to codes, categories, and themes, a higher level of abstraction. The interpretation and description of data samples go through the transferring of the meanings contained in the collected material to a higher level of abstraction through its categorization. This reduces the volume of data through this systematic processing since the abstract categories are applied to a number of data samples. This has two consequences: while abstracting leads to the loss of specific information given in the samples of content created by users, it also allows us to compare and analyze the data collected on a more abstract level. Categories are usually developed based on repeated types of information in the collected data units and on comparisons of encoded data units. The flexibility of qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to combine both concept-driven and data-driven categories to make the coding framework matched to the collected data (Schreier, 2014). In the results of the analysis section, I do not provide a complete coding table, due, firstly, to the exceptional volume of the data obtained and the size of the resulting table, and secondly, to avoid possible identification of respondents.

In my case, when encoding data, I focus both on concepts that exist in the chosen theoretical framework and on concepts appearing in the process. In addition to using pre-existing conceptual categories, I also use a more inductive approach, in which categories are identified based on the data obtained. The final step is to use the coding process and its results for interpretation, in my case dedicated to the specifics of the institution of honorary consuls in Iceland's foreign affairs and honorary consuls' perception of their role and Iceland's role. This can be compared with statements from naturally occurring data (reports of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland).

### 3. Results of the analysis and interpretation

All the interviews taken seem to be very valuable for analysis. Yet, as I stick with the open-ended semi-structured interview strategy, in some cases it was difficult to get full answers to all questions. In some cases, it was necessary to adapt to the respondent's situation and the course of the conversation and to rephrase or skip some questions, as well as to ask additional ones. As Aberbach, Chesney, and Rockman put it: "in open-ended elite interviewing one frequently must ask the questions when they can be asked" (1975, p.12). As a result, the rate of response to some questions is fluctuating.

As for quantitative indicators that I will also mention when describing the results of the analysis: Their qualitative component is that in some cases the categories were named not by the researcher, but by the respondents themselves/they were drawn from the answers, as in Table 2. I tried not to lead the respondents to specific thoughts and not to expect the respondents to agree with them or refute them.

As a result of the steps of the analysis, the following list of themes and categories was formed (Table 1, in two parts):

Table 1, part 1

Themes	Situation	Respondent's background	Role performance	Role sources
Categories	Icelandic representation in the respondent's country	Field of employment	The nature of the mission as understood by the HC	Participation of the MFA and Consular Liaison office in the activities of HC
	Year of appointment	Connection to Iceland prior to the appointment	Regular consular duties and activities	Other institutions with Icelandic involvement mentioned
	Occasion of the appointment		Exceptional consular duties and activities	Consular Liaison: assessment
	Initiator(s) of the appointment		Future plans	First contact in case of questions or problems
			Main achievement	Independence of Honorary Consuls
				Network with other HC

Table 1, part 2

Themes	Involvement in the political life of Iceland	Iceland's role conceptions	Professional role conceptions
Categories	Awareness of the political situation	Challenges of Iceland	Reasons for the development of the HC institution
	Major events mentioned	Goals of Iceland	Evolution of the HC institution
		Attitude to Iceland's goals	Evaluation of the HC institution effectiveness
		Role of Iceland	Feedback/How other people perceive the HC position
		Evolution of this role/changes in Iceland's policies	Motivation for HC activities
		How others perceive Iceland	
		Icelandic Identity	

### 3.1. Situation, Background and Appointment

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland Guðlaug Þór Þórðarson stated in his answer to a Member of Alþingi for “Píratar” party Smári McCarthy, the backgrounds of honorary consuls of Iceland are very diverse, they are usually citizens of the host country, but in some cases Icelandic citizens or third-country nationals (Svar utanríkisráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Smára McCarthy, 2018). This description is quite applicable to the backgrounds of the honorary consuls I interviewed. Most of them are entrepreneurs, which is not surprising since the work of honorary consuls is not paid and one of the criteria for appointment to the post is financial independence. Still, their main areas of activities vary from the law, PR, tourism and transportation to fisheries and chemistry. Except when many respondents mentioned that they use their field of expertise and office staff and facilities in their consular activities, their field of employment does not significantly affect the set of consular duties they face. Only in one case did the respondent note

a significant influence of the field of employment on their consular activity, which I will discuss in more detail in the “Consular duties and activities” part.

Among the criteria for candidates, according to Guðlaug Þór Þórðarson, are: Being well-regarded, financially independent, well acquainted with the situation in the host country and having good relations there. Then, English-speaking and Icelandic skills are an advantage (Svar utanríkisráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Smára McCarthy, 2018). In practice, several honorary consuls interviewed mention that they do not speak Icelandic, and one of the respondents does not speak English. As expected, candidates should be interested in Iceland and/or connected to the country and Icelandic business life. In reality, 7 of 14 of the interviewed honorary consuls had no connection with or interest in Iceland prior to the appointment. However, most of them noted that after the appointment, they became actively involved. Also, based on the analysis of their interviews, the absence of connections with Iceland does not affect their engagement and activity in the consular post.

So, the circumstances of the appointment of the interviewed honorary consuls, their professional background, age, and connection to Iceland before their appointment vary a lot. However, I have not found any significant correlations or interdependences: The set of duties of a consul appointed in the early nineties and a consul who has just taken a position may not differ in any way, and an honorary consul who had no connection to Iceland and was not interested in this country before taking over the position may be as actively involved in consular activities as a consul with Icelandic roots. However, I will briefly describe the background and circumstances of the appointment of the consuls interviewed.

The years of appointment of the consuls interviewed range from 1993 to 2019: four respondents took over the position of an honorary consul of Iceland between 1993 and 1997, seven respondents – between 2002 and 2007, three – after 2014. It is difficult to say whether this distribution corresponds to the general picture of the appointment of honorary consuls in Iceland as a whole since the public sources can only be used to estimate the approximate number of honorary consuls appointed in the most recent period. However, having a sufficient number of respondents conducting their consular activities in different periods seems to be an advantage for the analysis.

As for the reasons for the appointment, the respondents described several types of situations that led to them becoming honorary consuls of Iceland:



- In four cases, there was no immediate reason for the appointment of a new honorary consul, or the respondents were not made aware of it.
- In one case, there was no diplomatic representation of Iceland in the respondent's country, and an Icelandic businessman and fishing vessels in this country needed assistance.
- In four cases, the previous honorary consuls left their posts or were preparing to leave them for some reason. Specifically, in two out of the four cases, the retiring honorary consuls themselves sought a replacement for their position, and in one case, the honorary consul volunteered to continue the work of the predecessor. In these three cases, I could see a continuum that has developed in several countries or regions where Iceland is represented by honorary consuls.
- In three cases there was no special reason for the appointment, but the respondents had business ties with Icelandic companies and were recommended for appointment due to the business opportunities provided by them.
- Finally, in two cases, honorary consuls were appointed in connection with the upcoming official visit of the President of Iceland to their countries.

Thus, excluding cases where the respondents could not name a reason for their appointment, I faced four typical situations: The retirement of the previous honorary consul, the need to help the Islanders in the absence of an embassy, the preparation of an official visit of Iceland, and the direct business opportunities and services to the Icelandic business provided by the respondents.

As for the appointment process, it was described in detail in the same answer from Guðlaug Þór Þórðarson to Smári McCarthy: Usually, it is the embassies that assess the need for consulates in consultation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and search for qualified individuals. When looking for candidates, embassies use their connections in the host country (such as with Nordic embassies and local chambers of commerce, as well as the Icelandic community and companies). Once the embassy has found candidates that it deems appropriate for the job, it sends a proposal to the ministry outlining the reasons for the proposal. Furthermore, a completed questionnaire and a letter of recommendation are sent to the Ministry. If the embassy's proposal is approved, the embassy is instructed to request approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the host country concerned. Once the host country has given its consent, the Ministry is notified and a letter of appointment is prepared, which the embassy sends to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the host country requesting an operating license/approval. When it is received, a notification of

the appointment is sent for publication in *Lögbirtingablaðið* – an official public resource/electronic newspaper of The Icelandic Ministry of Justice (*Svar utanríkisráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Smára McCarthy, 2018*). Generally this corresponds to respondents' memories of their appointment process, given they can even recall it. In addition, when the respondents described the process of their appointment, one of them also mentioned additional interviews with Icelandic diplomats. Another respondent mentioned participation in the competition for the position with other candidates. The recommendation for four respondents to be considered for the position of honorary consul was initiated by their business partners from Iceland. Besides, in two cases these were the predecessors of the respondents who recommended them for the position of Honorary Consul, and in two cases the initiative came from the respondent. Thus, in practice, in addition to embassies, business circles and other honorary consuls are involved in the process of selecting candidates and appointing honorary consuls.

Regarding the situation in the respondents' country, five respondents are the only missions of Iceland to their countries, three of them have at least two more Icelandic honorary consuls in their countries, three of them are carrying out their responsibility along with 4-7 honorary consuls and embassies, and three others are neighbors to 9-22 more honorary consuls, consulate generals, and embassies.

## 3.2. Role performance

### 3.2.1. Consular functions

According to the 2018-2019 report from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi, "honorary consuls, who do not receive a salary for their work, are important outposts of the Foreign Service, and their contribution is invaluable, not least in the field of civil service and business services of various kinds" (*Skýrsla utanríkisráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2019, p. 34*). In the next report, the importance of honorary consuls' work is stated again. The report says: "They work unselfishly to promote Iceland and pave the way for Icelandic export companies, but at the same time they provide Icelanders who have problems abroad with invaluable assistance in the field of civil services, incl. due to death, imprisonment or accident" (2019-2020 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi, 2020, p. 49). This is also stated in the answer of Guðlaug Þór Þórðarson to a question from Smári McCarthy: "Efforts are being made to have consuls in cities and areas where Iceland has interests to protect, such as business interests, and where it is considered necessary to provide assistance to Icelanders" (*Svar utanríkisráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Smára McCarthy, 2018*). In practice, the duties of

honorary consuls are far from being limited to those listed in official documents, but they all serve for fulfilling these main missions: Civil service, business services, promoting Iceland and Icelandic companies.

However, judging by the data, collected from the respondents, most of the time, each honorary consul determines specific duties for himself or herself, based on the situation in the country and region, his or her own skills, means, and interests. Several honorary consuls, speaking about the consular routine, characterized it as “not a busy job” or “there is no routine really”, or “I don't get a lot of assignments per se”, and the daily duty of an honorary consul is to be always on the phone, available to help. Half of the respondents mentioned “being available” as a separate duty to bear. For the rest – it is up to each honorary consul depending on the context in which they find themselves. One of the respondents succinctly expressed the situation with consular responsibilities: “I make a lot of my work in this capacity”, using the words “the best way **I have found** to serve Iceland”. In this section, I will describe consular responsibilities and all the diverse ways the respondents have found to serve Iceland, from most mentioned to least mentioned activities, which refer to professional role performance of the honorary consuls interviewed.

Table 2. Most frequently mentioned activities of Honorary consuls

Activity	Number of respondents mentioning
Icelandic nationals services and assistance	13
Attending and organizing events	11
Providing information about Iceland	9
Attending consular conferences in Iceland	9
Being available for help	7
Providing business opportunities	7
Providing information to the MFA	6
Support of state/formal visits	6
Being part of the local consular community	6
Promoting Icelandic business and culture	5
Assisting tourism	4
Business assistance	3
Working with local Icelandic community	3

Running a consulate of Iceland Facebook page	2
Support of social programs	1
Financing events	1

In the 2010 executive summary of the report of Össur Skarphéðinsson to Alþingi, service to Icelandic nationals abroad is one of the most important missions of the Icelandic Foreign Service, which is largely provided by honorary consuls (An executive summary, 2010). Indeed, services and assistance to Icelandic nationals is the category most frequently mentioned by respondents when referring to consular routine, duties, and functions (See Table 2). For the most part, it concerns regular consular duties and activities. Professional role, designated as Assistant to Icelandic Citizens abroad, can be attributed to those respondents whose work is focused first and foremost on civil service. Among the examples mentioned by the respondents are certifying documents, issuing emergency passports, organizing elections for Icelanders voting from abroad, giving assistance to Icelandic nationals that have difficulties in respondents' countries. Such difficulties can be an arrest or a situation where an Icelandic citizen cannot leave the country or get into it, especially during the COVID-19 times. In many cases, similar situations where Icelandic citizens needed help in unusual circumstances, not excluding, e.g., death, were often mentioned by respondents when they talked about exceptional consular duties and activities. The presence of the Icelandic community in the country and the tourist flow from Iceland dictates how often honorary consuls face such responsibilities depends on. In one case, the respondent does not provide services to Icelanders at all, since they do not live in the respondent's region. Another respondent mentioned assistance to Icelanders only as an exceptional case. In both cases, these are countries where there are several other honorary consuls and embassies, which solve most of these issues.

The next important activity named by the majority of the respondents is attending and organizing events. These may include the national day's festivals and receptions, local celebrations, competitions and contests, cultural and film festivals, international fairs, sometimes Nordic countries festivals, meeting of delegations, in which Iceland participates or to which diplomats from different countries are invited. Examples would be the Nordic films festival, international exhibition of artificial fly fishing. Referring to the missions of the Icelandic honorary consuls abroad mentioned in the official documents, this can be attributed to the promotion of Iceland.

More than half of the respondents mentions providing information about Iceland in various forms. For the most part, this is about questions from local citizens and the press. Respondents described questions they usually receive from the press, local citizens, and people from all over the world who, for various reasons, turn to them to get information on Iceland: Travel information, questions of Visa, COVID-19 legislation, translation, questions about moving to Iceland or applying to Icelandic universities, investing in Icelandic companies or opening a company in Iceland. In many cases, the honorary consuls have enough information, in others – they can refer those people to the appropriate agencies. Several respondents considered providing information about Iceland to be one of their main activities as honorary consuls. Many of them also noted that the number of questions about Iceland has been increasing recently, after 2016-2018. Two respondents mentioned having an honorary consulate Facebook page with regular updates on Iceland, consulate and events, related to Iceland.

Another activity mentioned by 64% of the respondents is attending consular conferences in Iceland. Consular conferences are held in Reykjavik every 4-5 years, all honorary consuls are invited to participate in informational events and get to know their colleagues. More about consular conferences as one of the practices that have developed in the consular tradition of Iceland will be in the further part of the analysis. The respondents' assessment of consular conferences will also be discussed in the sub-chapter “Perception of the Institution of Honorary Consuls”.

The next group of activities that occupies an essential place in the work of many honorary consuls is about various work related to business. In this regard, there is a special emphasis on international business in all the reports and data concerning the consular conferences. Among them are: Business assistance, providing business opportunities, providing information about business opportunities, participating in investment projects. This area of activities is emphasized by the reports of the Icelandic MFA, too. In general, some of the MFA reports contain special chapters dedicated to honorary consuls and Icelandic business and exports. For instance, according to 2019-2020 report to Alþingi, during the last consular conference, a great emphasis was placed on business and economic issues, as consulates can support the expansion of Icelandic companies in their market and attract attention to Iceland as a viable investment option and destination for tourists (Skýrsla utanríkis- og þróunarsamvinnuráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2020). In addition, the Icelandic international business agency, Íslandsstofa, also participates in consular conferences and is often mentioned in the MFA reports of various years. Among other things, during the last consular conference, the new long-term policy formulation

of the government and the business community for Icelandic exports was discussed, including changes in the work of Íslandsstofa. According to the same report, efforts are now being made to increase and strengthen the provision of information to Iceland's honorary consuls for trade, not least in distant markets, so that they have easy access to good information material that they can use in their work for Iceland (Skýrsla utanríkis- og þróunarsamvinnuráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2020). That is also confirmed by some of the respondents since they mention that the MFA provides them with updates on business life in Iceland: “Certainly, we are <receiving> regularly reports on economy, on investment, on the business...”. Apparently, this practice is intended to simplify the work of honorary consuls in providing information about business opportunities related to Iceland. It seems from the analysis that those honorary consuls who have been or are engaged in entrepreneurship themselves are particularly active in this area. However, to be fair, the absolute majority of respondents are involved in entrepreneurship in various fields in one way or another.

Cultural and Business Attaché professional role of honorary consuls can be attributed in this case. As for the role performance, i.e., specific activities, they start with direct business proposals from both sides, sometimes in cooperation with the Trade Council of Iceland or the international Chambers of Commerce. One of the respondents describes, for instance, how the Trade Council of Iceland reached the honorary consul out to know about opportunities for Icelandic seafood so they would exchange ideas. This respondent also describes providing business opportunities as one of his main activities as an honorary consul. One of the respondents calls business development between the two countries the main goal and talks about Icelandic business interested in cooperation reaching him to ask about opportunities in his country. Some honorary consuls interviewed hope to have more trade relations between their countries and Iceland and look for export opportunities or opportunities for importing goods or knowledge from Iceland. In general, seven respondents name providing business opportunities or information about them as one of their activities: “Promoting, developing, making contacts mainly for business and for culture” or giving speeches in business clubs and associations to explain opportunities in Iceland, for instance. One of them also mentioned, that most of the honorary consuls are related to business so if there is any business opportunity, they can make use of it by themselves or notify the businessmen they are acquainted with. Creating business opportunities is not limited by one of the respondents’ companies creating business opportunities and providing proposals to the responsible embassy. Two respondents expect that if it is possible to conclude a large-scale deal between the companies of the two countries,

medium and small businesses will also join in, which will give scope for commercial relations between the countries. In addition, some of the respondents provide business assistance: Supporting existing projects between the two countries, providing information and administrative support, proposing assistance in the promotion of Icelandic goods if Icelandic companies look for opportunities in national markets abroad.

This also concerns assisting tourism, from providing information about traveling to Iceland and promoting Iceland as a destination for tourism to organizing tours to Iceland.

The next duty mentioned by 6 out of 14 respondents is providing information to embassies and to the MFA about the local situation and honorary consuls' work. First of all, this is about annual reports. Only two honorary consuls interviewed mentioned this, and apparently, annual reports concern honorary consul's working activities, e.g. how many cases they got with Icelandic citizens abroad. Another duty is reporting the economic situation to the MFA. It is unclear whether honorary consuls are asked to do this regularly or on request, but reporting the economic situation or legislation changes as a separate duty was mentioned at least twice. Three honorary consuls mentioned providing information to the embassy or the MFA in case of unusual situations in their countries. One case is reporting about a tragedy that happened in the region of the honorary consul to the embassy so it could make a report about it to Iceland. Another one is sharing information about a natural disaster with other honorary consuls and the MFA in the consular WhatsApp group to seek assistance. The next one is about the complicated political situation in the respondent's country with Icelandic citizens being stuck on its territory and the MFA and their relatives being worried about how safe it was to be there.

Six respondents also mention support of state and formal visits to their countries. Many of them describe it as one of the most extraordinary or remarkable things they faced.

In addition to being members of the consular community of Iceland, many honorary consuls have mentioned being part of the national consular community along with honorary consuls for other countries. Several of them say that in recent years there have been more honorary consuls as such, and the consular community allows them to share information and facilitate their contacts with the government of the country where they are located.

Three honorary consuls interviewed told me about working with the local Icelandic community: where there are not so many Icelanders, they try to create it or bring them together, for instance, one of the respondents arranged dinner parties for them; where the community is already quite active and big – helping them with their requests.

Finally, two respondents mentioned support for social programs in their countries, in which Iceland participates. One of the interviewed honorary consuls told me about taking over financial support for events dedicated to Iceland.

What was barely mentioned is the political function. Several respondents even emphasized that their role is not political. This could be an issue for further research since it seems to me that many respondents have an uncertain or narrow idea of what is political or refers to diplomacy. Following the logic of Kevin D. Stringer, who studied the institutions of honorary consuls in many countries, classical diplomacy and international politics are transforming and have various forms of so-called “low politics”. Such activities as commerce, trade, tourism and raising awareness mentioned by all of the respondents can be attributed to these forms of politics. It is important, however, that according to the views of many respondents, their activity is not political, which means that their idea of a professional role does not include the role of a political or diplomatic actor (in many cases).

Several respondents define their professional role as a Link between the countries. This is typical for those cases when the honorary consul performs several groups of activities at once, sometimes including working with the local Icelandic community, especially in countries where there is no Icelandic embassy to represent the interests of Iceland. Another professional role formulated by a respondent is an Advocate for Iceland / Socio-political representative. The role performance attributed to this role consists primarily in providing information and attending events, in addition to helping Icelandic citizens.

Thus, based on the activities of the interviewed honorary consuls, which is a role performance, it is possible to formulate several professional roles. Honorary consul's professional role conceptions vary, along with their role performance. These roles can be a Link between the countries, an Advocate for Iceland / Socio-political representative, a Cultural and Business Attaché, an Assistant to Icelandic Citizens abroad. These roles are not mutually exclusive, they may overlap. Still, the activities and self-representation of the interviewed honorary consuls are built around these roles.

### 3.2.2. Future plans

As for future plans of honorary consuls, the answers vary widely from just continuing the regular work of helping citizens to remarkable plans. Most of the honorary consuls intend to intensify commercial and cultural relations between their country and Iceland. Among other goals is the transfer of knowledge, developing training programs with Iceland, creating a big size



investment with Icelandic companies, convincing a local University to create a course of the Icelandic language, and having the opportunity to translate the books directly from Icelandic, to prepare a good file about Iceland, the improvement and reform, to be presented to the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to give the best picture of Iceland to the local people and to the MFA and to assure the transfer of the post. There are also two respondents wishing for more tasks, roles, and space for more activities.

### 3.3. Role sources

In this subchapter I will discuss the Role of the MFA and institutional involvement as the main external sources of honorary consuls' role expectations. According to the MFA of Iceland web page on "stjornarradid.is", a special office for Consular Affairs (Consular Liaison office) was established at the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs under the Protocol Department. The Consular Liaison office was first mentioned in the report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to Alþingi in 2019 in connection with its formation under the Protocol Department: "A new constituency department now operates under a protocol office and oversees Icelandic consuls abroad" (Skýrsla utanríkisráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2019, p. 34). However, according to information received from the interviewed honorary consuls, it existed long before that. Most likely, in 2018-2019, the Consular Liaison office was transferred to the Protocol Department, but it has been carrying out its consular relations activities for much longer. It operates in order to strengthen and consolidate relations with Honorary consuls of Iceland. The goal of the changes is to develop an even more solid and closer relationship between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and honorary consuls with improved communication, clearer procedures, and increased dissemination of information about Iceland and Icelandic issues. Plus, the intention is to better establish processes for processing cases and to consolidate a network of consuls where additional is most needed, such as in South America, Asia, and Africa (Skýrsla utanríkisráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2019). Emphasis is placed on efficiency and clear rules to apply to the areas of work of consuls and the nature of the work, including the selection of consuls, appointment, maximum age and retirement (Prótokoll, n.d.).

Along with the Consular Liaison at the MFA, the Civil Service, the Commercial Office (viðskiptaskrifstofa) and Icelandic Embassies oversee the work of consuls and provide them with information and guidance (Svar utanríkisráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Smára McCarthy, 2018). According to the 2020 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi, the Protocol department (Consular Liaison office) oversees communication with Icelandic honorary consuls,

and the Civil Service, in turn, is in charge of the matters related to assistance to Icelanders abroad. Commercial Office deals with business and cultural affairs (Skýrsla utanríkis- og þróunarsamvinnuráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2020, p. 49). Besides, according to the 2019 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi, efforts will be made with “Íslandstofa”, the Iceland Chamber of Commerce, and other parties to disseminate information in English on the emphasis of Icelandic companies in advancing the market and disseminate it to consuls (Skýrsla utanríkisráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2019).

Among other means to coordinate the work of honorary consuls, according to naturally occurring data, are the Manual (Handbook) for Honorary Consuls of Iceland, consular conferences, and a special website tailored to the needs of consuls.

The Handbook for Honorary consuls is a sizable folio designed and released in 1979 by Pétur J. Thorsteinsson. It was supposed to be updated for the 2019 consular conference (Prótokoll, n.d.). Unfortunately, I was unable to access the contents of the Handbook and find out how many honorary consuls consult its provisions.

As for consular conferences, there are two types of conferences and meetings of honorary consuls. On the one hand, there is an international consular conference in Iceland, which takes place every 4-5 years. And, on the other hand, there are regional meetings organized by Icelandic embassies (Svar utanríkisráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Smára McCarthy, 2018). Consular conferences in Iceland are held by the MFA. The purpose of consular conferences is to inform honorary consuls of Iceland from all over the world about the position and prospects of Iceland in the field of politics and economics, and at the same time to introduce them to the latest developments in the field of Icelandic business, culture, and tourism. According to stjornarradid.is, “consular conferences have long proved their worth and are considered ideal for creating and strengthening connections, improving the work ethics and making Iceland's honorary consuls even better at serving Icelandic interests in individual countries” (Prótokoll page, stjornarradid.is). The eighth consular conference took place in Reykjavík in September 2019 and gathered 130 of the 213 honorary consuls. By the 2019 report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland to Alþingi, the goals of the last consular conference were to mobilize cooperation with honorary consuls of Iceland and to increase exports and investments (Skýrsla utanríkisráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2019).

In the next 2020 report, it is stated that the MFA puts great emphasis on strengthening and relations with Iceland's honorary consuls abroad and informing them of Iceland's interests,

politics, economic affairs, and more. To this end, the MFA regularly holds special consular conferences held in Iceland every five years, and during the last conference, marketing, and promotional work, culture, equality, the Icelandic government's actions in the field of energy and green energy, agricultural products, Icelandic food traditions, and innovative companies, civil service were among the highlights of the conference. Besides, a great emphasis was put on business and economic issues, as honorary consuls can support the expansion of Icelandic companies in their market and attract attention to Iceland as a viable investment option and destination for tourists. In addition, the conference served as a platform for discussion of a new long-term policy formulation of the government and the business community for Icelandic exports, and changes in the work of Íslandsstofa. Efforts are being made to increase and strengthen the provision of information to Icelandic honorary consuls for trade, not least in distant markets, so that they have easy access to good information material that they can use in their work for Iceland (Skýrsla utanríkis- og þróunarsamvinnuráðherra um utanríkis- og alþjóðamál, 2020, pp. 49, 72). To educate honorary consuls, various speakers were invited, such as “Íslandsstofa, Icelandair, Landsvirkjun and the Árni Magnússon Institute, as well as companies in the field of innovation, such as the Icelandic Ocean Cluster, Kerecis, Nox Medical, Icelandic Startups and Crowberry Capital” (Tveggja daga kjöræðismannaráðstefnu lauk í dag, 2019). As for the respondents’ descriptions of what is usually going on during consular conferences, one interviewee says: “...During these conferences, the information provided to the honorary consuls has been absolutely excellent, absolute first class. <...> I have been very happy with this arrangement and with the information provided on these occasions. <...> It's a kind of training period”.

As for the regional meetings organized by Icelandic embassies, the most obvious example is the organization of consular meetings in the United States, since there are more than 20 honorary consuls of Iceland and the Embassy of Iceland in Washington regularly holds conferences for the honorary consuls in the United States. In 2020, for instance, the Embassy of Iceland in Washington hosted an online consular conference. Along with the honorary consuls, the Embassy staff, the Consulate General, and the team from the MFA of Iceland participated at this meeting. “The main purpose of the consular conference was to update our Honorary Consuls on current consular work, upcoming elections, priorities, and daily work of the Embassy, as well as giving an update on the economic and political situation in Iceland. This year emphasis was on the current situation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving updates on the situation in Iceland, the testing and tracing strategy and the opening up of the Icelandic borders” – says the

article dedicated to this consular conference on [stjornarradid.is](http://stjornarradid.is) (Consular Conference in the United States, 2020). One of the respondents described a similar regional consular conference: “The ambassador and his or her spouse would entertain us on a Thursday evening for reception. We would have business sessions on Friday and part of Saturday. There would be a cultural component. There would be a foreign policy component. There would be economic development and business exchange opportunity...”.

### 3.3.1. Participation of the MFA and Consular Liaison office in the activities of honorary consuls

This sub-chapter examines the place of honorary consuls’ interaction with the Ministry and its departments in the activities of honorary consuls of Iceland. Role conceptions are formed during interactions with sources of role expectations. In turn, the degree of independence of honorary consuls indicates what the modality of these expectations is.

In general, all of the respondents were aware of the work Consular Liaison office at the MFA. During the conversations, most of the respondents did not distinguish the Consular Liaison, the Civil Service, the Commercial Office as different departments working with different matters, as it was done in the reports, and basically called all these services “the Ministry”. Among other institutions with Icelandic involvement mentioned were local international humanitarian missions with the participation of Iceland, Trade Council, and Chambers of Commerce. However, there were only three respondents mentioning any of these.

For the most part, providing information and sending informational newsletters were named as one regular function of the Consular Liaison office. The same information function includes the mention of the issue of guidelines and organizing webinars. The Ministry sends all Honorary consuls daily updates on what is happening in Iceland, business and economic, cultural and political news, COVID-19 information updates. As one of the respondents says, “Those are good sources of what is happening in Iceland in terms of government and politics. They tend to be very unbiased and very factually based. There's frequently abbreviated versions of news stories rather than governmental commentary”. All in all, nine respondents refer to one or several informational activities of the MFA and Consular Liaison office. Seven respondents also describe it as a “contact if necessary” or “always first contact” and “emergency contact” or “first contact for the urgent or passport issues” and refer to assistance in some cases as one of the functions of the MFA and Consular Liaison. Connection on a regular basis and coordination channel is the next group of functions named by six respondents. Then, organizing consular conferences is mentioned by three respondents. One honorary consul interviewed describes the

Ministry as political issues and protocol issues channel, and another one emphasizes the communicative function of the MFA and Consular Liaison. However, three consuls do not describe any specific function of the ministry when interacting with honorary consuls and say that there is “not much contact” between them. I also asked the respondents who do they usually contact if there was a problem or question regarding their consular activities. The first contact for 8 out of 11 interviewed honorary consuls is the embassy responsible, for 2 out of these 8 it’s Consular Liaison office in addition to the embassy. For the rest – it is Consular Liaison right away and, in some cases, local authorities.

As for the autonomy of Iceland’s honorary consuls in their consular activities from the MFA and the embassies, the situations and opinions of the respondents were more divergent, with the following scale from independence to being advised by the MFA and/or Embassies:

Table 3. Independence of the interviewed Honorary Consuls

Quite independently	Both. Independently, but with guidelines	HC are advised by the ministry
Mostly independently	Both. Mostly independently, but with guidelines from the MFA and the Embassy	HC are advised by the ministry. It is very straightforward what HCs are able to do on their own and what they should consult
Mostly independently	Both. Independently, aside from a periodic new guidance or formality	The HC is acting according to guidelines from the MFA and the Embassy
	Both. Quite independently, aside from guidelines	The HC is coordinated by the Embassy
		Mostly advised. The HC coordinates their activities with the Embassy
		The HC is acting according to guidelines

In all cases, the consuls spoke of the indisputable duty to coordinate the issue of emergency passports. In some cases, there are specific activities to coordinate with the MFA or the embassy responsible. For instance, one of the honorary consuls always transfers the information on upcoming trade opportunities and asylum requests to the embassy responsible.

I would also like to highlight an interesting detail about the honorary consuls' assessment of their interaction with the Consular Liaison office, although this is out of the theoretical framework of the study. All the respondents who described their experience with the Consular Liaison office or other divisions of the MFA gave a positive assessment of it. I never asked the respondents directly or indirectly about it, but half of the honorary consuls interviewed mentioned their experience. Among their observations were that the MFA's work is "excellent", they are "easily accessible", "very responsive". One of the opinions is: "Normally, they can help with any issue". The staff is "experienced", "very effective" and "not prone to bureaucracy". Newsletters they send are "very unbiased and factually based" and "very thorough and very effective", "absolutely excellent". Another comment about the experience of communicating with the MFA is: "They are aware that we are doing this job for them, and so they're very nice and polite and quick, and they solve the issue without too much bureaucracy".

Summarizing the data presented in subchapters 3.2 and 3.3.1, I can say that despite the high degree of interaction with the Ministry and the high degree of control in some areas of the role performance of honorary consuls (this is most noticeable in the case of providing services to Icelanders abroad), honorary consuls have autonomy in determining other directions of their professional activities. The background, the immediate situation in the country of the residence of honorary consuls are also important sources of role conceptions. Thus, the modality of role expectations in the case of honorary consuls of Iceland is rather subjective than normative, as in Biddle, 1986. In addition, among the sources of ideas about professional roles may be the socialization of honorary consuls, that is, interaction with the community of honorary consuls of Iceland, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

### 3.3.2. Network with other Honorary Consuls

I asked all of the respondents if they know about the work of other honorary consuls of Iceland in order to find out how the communication between the honorary consuls flows. Most of the respondents mentioned in this regard their experience of meeting other honorary consuls of Iceland at international or regional conferences since they enable the honorary consuls to meet each other from different parts of the world and create relationships between them, as some of the respondents says. Some of the respondents say that they discussed their work with honorary consuls from other countries during these conferences and compared their situations and experience. One of the respondents finds the last consular conference in Reykjavik that gathered about 130 honorary consuls "a big achievement for Iceland". When talking about consular conferences, another respondent remembered meeting the President of Iceland and

emphasized the opportunity “for these consuls to discuss with each other and learn practices from other countries from other parts of the world”.

Besides, six honorary consuls interviewed mentioned social media as a way to bring honorary consuls together and share information: a Facebook group, a WhatsApp group, and an email group, created by the MFA.

In addition, several respondents when asked if they know about the work of other honorary consuls talked about communication within the local consular community or awareness about the work of other honorary consuls in respondents’ countries. One of them described the local consular community as “active” and said that there were “many opportunities to engage on a national scale”. One of the respondents mentioned shared that since most of the honorary consuls are engaged in business, direct links with other honorary consuls can be used to exercise business opportunities.

Still, despite there are obviously many ways for honorary consuls to cooperate and be linked with each other, five of the respondents (that is about a third) observe that direct communication between honorary consuls does not happen that often. One of them explains it positively: “Because there is not many issues arising”. Another respondent said that they cooperate on business opportunities if they arise.

In this case, the place of interaction with other honorary consuls among the role expectations is not obvious. This is complicated by the fact that some respondents are well informed about the activities of other honorary consuls and interact with them, while other honorary consuls practically do not interact with each other. However, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is interested in the socialization of honorary consuls, organizing consular conferences and social networks groups. Thus, there is no general and unambiguous trend towards the significance of this source of role expectations, its degree varies on the individual level.

### 3.4. Involvement in the political life of Iceland

#### 3.4.1. Awareness of the political situation

To estimate the honorary consuls' awareness of the political situation of Iceland, I asked each of them how closely did they follow the political situation in Iceland. Also, for this purpose, and to understand the interviewers' views on the most important milestones in the history and modernity of Iceland, I asked many people about the most important events that happened to Iceland that they would remember. This is necessary in order to estimate the ground on which

the ideas about Iceland's role are based. It is impressive that 9 out of 14 respondents describe the extent to which they follow the political life of Iceland as: "on a daily basis", "on a weekly basis", "regularly" or "very close". For the rest, it still is "once in a while", "on a monthly basis", "to some extent" and "to a sufficient extent to inform the public". The majority of respondents describe the news updates sent out by the MFA as a reliable source of information, which they actively use. Several respondents also mention other media in addition to informational correspondence, as well as news from acquaintances as a source of information. In one case, the desire to understand the position of Iceland prompted the interviewed honorary consul to receive additional education in the field of international politics after taking up the post.

### 3.4.2. Major events

As for the most important events, in most cases, the respondents themselves mentioned significant events during the conversation, sometimes even more than after a direct question. In three cases the respondents found it hard to answer it, but they still mentioned many events in the political and international life of Iceland when talking about other questions, so at some point during the interview collection, I gave up directly asking about it. In two cases, neither the question was posed nor the respondents themselves mentioned any events. For the rest, I gathered the following examples (Table 4), moreover, the respondents in most cases were inclined to mix events in domestic and foreign policy. No correlations with other categories or answers were found.

Table 4. Major events mentioned by the respondents

Event	Number of respondents mentioning
The 2008 financial crisis	7
The reform of the banking system after 2008 financial crisis	1
Referendum on Icesave after 2008 financial crisis	1
2018 FIFA World Cup / 2016 UEFA Euro	4
COVID-19	2
Eyjafjallajökull eruption	2
Brexit	1
Closing of the US military base in Keflavik	1
Independence from Denmark	1



Iceland's achievements in UN woman/achievements in terms of gender equality	3
Election of an Icelandic comedian Jón Gnarr as a Mayor of Reykjavik	1
Fish disputes with the UK back in the history	1
The efforts of the former Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson	1
Refusal to join the EU	2
Cultural achievements of Iceland in the region of the HC, visits of an Icelander who lost his hands and underwent surgery in the country of the HC	1

In general, most of the respondents were aware of high-profile events related to Iceland, and those events that directly affected their consular activities. For example, after the 2018 FIFA World Cup / 2016 UEFA Euro, according to respondents, the number of requests with questions about Iceland from foreigners and the recognition of Iceland increased. The 2008 crisis and its aftermath, in addition to being one of the most important events in the recent history of Iceland, also affected the work of several honorary consuls interviewed. Four of them told me about the postponement of the consular conference, the termination of festivals, as well as some cases and stories related to the financial crisis during the consular events. Only a few mentioned more special events, such as refusal to join the EU, closing of the US military base in Keflavik, or Referendum on Icesave after the 2008 financial crisis, despite general awareness of the political context of Iceland and following updates on it. It is possible, however, that during the interview, many respondents might find it irrelevant to go into details about the events in Iceland. After all, as will be seen in the following parts of the analysis, this does not prevent honorary consuls from having a strong opinion on Iceland's political life and being aware of Iceland's current challenges and opportunities.

### 3.5. Perception of Iceland's interests and role

#### 3.5.1. Challenges of Iceland

When asked about challenges concerning Iceland, all of the consuls interviewed, safe for one, were to be deeply aware of Iceland's problems (Table 5). The majority of the respondents say that rapid economic growth and tourism development were or could be a problem for Iceland, as they entail infrastructure imbalances and other problems. International problems are mentioned ten times, starting with the American military base issue and the issue of joining the European Union to more general challenges, like image issues or difficulty of being perceived as a partner. Geographical and economic features and the 2008 financial crisis-related problems were mentioned seven times each. Domestic politics is the least mentioned category: there are only three problems, and all of them were mentioned by a single respondent.

Table 5. Challenges of Iceland

Field	Challenge	Number of mentions	
The 2008 financial crisis-related	The 2008 financial crisis and its consequences	4	7
	A massive and fast financial growth leading to the 2008 financial crisis	2	
	Switching from the fishing industry to the financial services was too fast	1	
Geographical and economic features	Small population	3	7
	Isolation of the island (can be an opportunity)	1	
	Focus on fishing	1	
	History of severe circumstances and tough environment	2	
	A massive and fast financial growth	2	15

Fast economic growth and other economic challenges	Switching from the fishing industry to the financial services was too fast	1	
	Economic challenges, including related to COVID-19	3	
	Dependence on tourism, and COVID-19 consequences for it, explosive growth of tourism and infrastructure imbalance	6	
	Immigration and employment issues	1	
	Explosive growth of energy industry	1	
	Balance of economic growth and environment protection in the future	1	
Political issues	Iceland is young independent democracy	1	3
	Not much planning and amorphous mindset	1	
	Pendulum swing in politics, lack of long-term vision, especially in the 90s	1	
International relations problems	The American military base	1	10
	The issue of joining the European Union	2	
	Image problems, e.g., whaling	2	

	Image issues due to Icesave. Relations with the UK and the Netherlands as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, Icesave and the referendum	2	
	Fish disputes with the UK back in the history	1	
	It is difficult for them to have their voice in the world. Small country that needs to make an effort to be perceived as a partner	2	
No challenges at all nowadays		1	

It can be noted that awareness of internal problems, or an assessment of their importance, prevails over foreign policy issues. It is also interesting that consuls with an Icelandic background know more about domestic political problems that are not related to the economy, which is generally understandable. This focus on internal problems refers to one of Holsti's examples of role conceptions: Internal Development, in which case the emphasis is put on the efforts directed towards internal development problems (Holsti, 1970, p.269). According to Holsti's description of this role conception, the focus on internal problems does not exclude the desire for cooperation, especially in the economic and cultural spheres.

As for foreign policy problems, the honorary consuls' answers refer to the relations with Iceland's closest (in all senses) neighbors: the European Union and the United States, as well as problems of image and perception by the world community. Firstly, it limits the role of Iceland to the regional level, and secondly, refers to the Example role conception in the interpretation of Holsti (Holsti, 1970).

However, this role conception is not the only one or even the dominant one among the honorary consuls, as we will see when turning to the perception of Iceland's goals and interests in the following subchapters.

### 3.5.2. Goals of Iceland

The honorary consuls I interviewed have a clear understanding of Iceland's goals in the world and within the country: only in one case did the respondent's answer not match the question. In 12 out of 13 cases, respondents named more than one goal, so it can be concluded that, in the eyes of the honorary consuls, Iceland wants to develop in a variety of ways. I identified 7 groups of goals that the respondents told me about:

- Image promotion;
- Equality development and promotion;
- Maintaining peace;
- Effective and sustainable economic growth;
- Preserving environment;
- Maintaining independence and international cooperation;
- Keeping in touch with Icelandic diasporas.

It is worth considering the content of each of these goals.

Five respondents mentioned promoting a good image as one of the international goals of Iceland. The statements of the honorary consuls ranged from wide “Having a very good image around the world, especially in Europe”, “Promotion of Iceland's values and goods”, “Restoring the image and economy after the 2008 crisis” to more specific “To get the rest of Europe to acknowledge their export industry”, “Iceland wants to be seen as a leader in energy technologies”, “To push forward all these laws and their image as a gender equality place”, “To be known at the international level to attract economic partners, investors” and to get tourists back, “To be known thanks to progress in many areas” (e.g. “efficient and responsible waste-free fish processing”), “This image corresponds to the needs of people in terms of ecology, tourism, literature”. The same category of goals includes such statements of goals as “To have its voice in the room”, “To be a respected and responsible voice on certain matters”. Thus, one of Iceland's goals transmitted by honorary consuls of Iceland is not only to be known by the rest of the world and to speak up on certain matters but also to be known **for** something and **to be heard**. By something, they mean gender equality, sustainable technologies, export, investment and tourism potential, and culture. It should be noted that these areas are traditionally classified as “soft”. Again, this group of goals generally corresponds to the Example role conception in Holsti's categorization (Holsti, 1970).

The next group of goals is related to equality development and promotion. Here equality is understood in a broad sense as equality between people and fair global distribution of power. The first part is about gender equality (here I can clarify that out of 14 consuls interviewed, 6 were women, and both men and women mentioned gender equality equally). Five respondents named “women empowerment/gender equality” as one of the areas Iceland wants to develop, on a domestic and international level, and be a leader again, e.g. “To push forward all these laws and their image as a gender equality place”, “To spread ideas about equality: Gender equality and a lot of equality issues”, “Iceland has taken a stand to lead or try to speak up for equality, women's rights and democracy”. Economic equality and social justice were also mentioned, for instance, among the goals were “Social programs development”, “Poverty elimination”. As for global responsibility, humanitarian assistance to countries was named as a goal by three respondents. According to one of them, Iceland’s goal is “To be involved and to make the world a better place: they do a lot of help to the underdeveloped countries”. Human rights, in general, are also among the priorities of Iceland and were mentioned by several respondents. This group of goals is specific to the Example and Developer role conception. Developer role, according to Holsti, 1970, is about “special duty or obligation to assist underdeveloped countries” (p. 266). Given that the author wrote in the 1970s, I will take the liberty to expand the Developer role conception. Today, I assume that the goals of a Developer also relate to the dissemination and support of the fair distribution of power in much more diverse and universal areas, such as gender equality.

As for maintaining peace, there are such statements as “Iceland is generally neutral”, keeps “good relationships with every country”, wants “to build very constructive communication with all the countries”, “Peace at home – peace of the world”. Non-aggression and maintaining peace are also among the priorities Iceland speaks up for, according to several respondents. In addition, one of the respondents argues, that “When it comes to conflict, they try not to take sides”, however, this respondent also said: “I recall <...> a fairly strong condemnation of President <X> that was issued by the Foreign Ministry. That was a very aggressive stepping out by the Foreign Ministry”. Although, the perception of what counts as aggressive may vary between cultural and political backgrounds, as my supervisor Pami Aalto rightly pointed out. In this case, I interpret “aggressive stepping out” rather as a bold statement. So, considering national role conceptions, Active Independent is the most suitable here. In Holsti, 1970, Active Independent means affirmation of an independent foreign policy, free of military commitments, and efforts to cultivate relations with as many states as possible. Besides, Holsti emphasizes “self-

determination, possible mediation functions, and active programs to extend diplomatic and commercial relations to diverse areas of the world” (Holsti, 1970, p. 262).

The next group of goals concerns effective and sustainable economic growth in different areas. Among the respondents’ statements about Iceland’s goals are: “To push in the things that they can do well: controlling the pandemic, deCODE genetics...”, “The well-being of its citizens and its economy”, “Taking advantage of the geothermic capacity in Iceland”, development of fishing industry and tourism development. Here I can recall Internal Development role conception.

Seven respondents stated that Iceland aims for a leading position when it comes to preserving environment and climate change issues: “To become carbon neutral”, “clean energy”, “sustainable fishing and energy efficiency and renewable energy”, “to be a part of that preventative solution”. And even such a peculiar thing as global warming refugees’ issue was mentioned. It refers again to the Example role conception.

Both goal and role in one of the respondents’ answers are stated: “Iceland could be an example of an independent, but cooperative country”. Again, “to have its voice in the room, to be a respected and responsible voice on certain matters” could be included in this group of goals. “Iceland-EU mutual respect and fruitful relations” was mentioned by one of the respondents.

Keeping in touch with the Icelandic diaspora in the respondent's country was mentioned by only one honorary consul interviewed, thus, this goal is rather local than global.

In almost each of the categories, the goals are directed not only to the internal development of the individual but also to the external, so the honorary consuls see Iceland as able to change the world, to influence it. Thus, the Internal Development role conception is not sufficient.

As for the attitude to Iceland’s goals, all the respondents I asked about sharing these goals answered positively. Sometimes they explained that they share Icelandic values and that these values correspond to their personal way of understanding things.

### 3.5.3. Role of Iceland

This part of the analysis gets directly to the research questions: what role of Iceland is transmitted by honorary consuls of Iceland? In one case the question was not asked, in another two the respondents found the question about Iceland’s role inappropriate. For the rest of the respondents, the answers can be divided into three categories: Supporting role (Mediator-

Integrator in Holsti's interpretation), Role model (Example), and Important role (something between Active Independent, Developer and Example). In some cases, the respondents combine several roles of Iceland. The respondents were almost equally divided: five people spoke about the Supporting role; four people spoke about the Role model and four – about the Important role. Since this part of the analysis is crucial for the research, I will use more citations in this section to convey many features verbatim.

As for the Supporting role, the respondents draw a line between Iceland and “massive powers” or “great countries”. Still, most of the answers in this category also included such characteristics as “independent”, or “responsible voice”. For instance, in one case, the respondent emphasizes Iceland's independent position in the world, especially during the Cold War. Another honorary consul defines Iceland as “A small country, not a major player on the global diplomatic stage”. The respondent explains it not by external circumstances or structural constraints, but by self-determination: “...and Iceland does not want to be <a major player>. It wants to choose its involvement carefully and wisely”. Besides, the respondent argues about areas Iceland plays a role in: “Iceland plays a supporting role on the on the humanitarian stage. Iceland is seen as a responsible voice on important human rights issues <...>, on issues of global health and global environment”. One of the respondents defines Iceland as an Arbitrator: “A neutral country to decide on political issues, neutrally. An arbitrator” and also draws a line between Iceland and powerful countries that, unlike Iceland, usually participate in conflicts. A similar idea is expressed by another respondent: “Although that Iceland is apparently not a very big country, but it's playing always a kind of balancing role. And always looking humanitarian for assisting the refugees. And it's trying to bridge the gaps between the countries”. There were also ideas about Iceland as “the meeting place for the top leaders of great countries”.

This point of view is consistent with the example of quite typical treatment of small states based on the polar model of the world. As Holsti puts it, “the small states are analyzed primarily as objects of rivalry between the great powers” within this system of thinking (Holsti, 1970, p. 234). One of the role conceptions often attributed to small states is mediation and peace-keeping services, since they are considered impartial to international conflicts. In addition, it is believed that small states benefit from stable and peaceful international relations above all.



However, the honorary consuls' interpretation of the role of Iceland is not limited to Supporting, or Mediator-Integrator role conception. The Role model (Example) is about being a leader in some areas, sometimes despite Iceland's smallness. For instance, there are such statements as "A good example of what you can do, particularly regarding health and climate", "A role model in decreasing their use of fossil fuel", "A little earth paradise in terms of culture, nature, gender equality". In one case, the respondent says that Iceland plays a "very small but a special role". This special role is explained by achievements in different areas, where unique progressive technologies are born, and by Icelanders' mentality:

*"There is a lot of work being done with fish and fish products of many kinds, and there's a lot of people in Iceland... We're Vikings, you know. We have inflated self-esteem so we think we can do anything. So, a lot of people are doing a lot of things that other people might have thought were crazy. And I think that has helped a lot of people come up with great ideas. So, there are a couple of companies that have something unique to offer. And there's some sleep monitoring technology, if you have amputees, they have artificial limbs. There is a company that creates production lines for fishing industry, and meat poultry, and other meat industries. There's a wound care company that is working with fish skin to craft it to chronic wounds. That is doing great things. And yeah, on top of all the financial... and tourism in Iceland. So, I think we're with definitely a few unique areas. But they are tiny companies compared to international firms that they're competing with sometimes"*

Another honorary consul expresses practically the same idea about Iceland being a laboratory of ideas, cultural and economic achievements of which "can become a model":

*"An idea which is coming from a group of people that are arriving, developing can become reality much quicker than in other countries. So, I like this very much, their involvement in in the world. The role of this 360,000 people in the world is amazing. It's an example of efficiency"*

The next group of statements containing such expressions as "important", "relevant", "active" (something between Active Independent, Developer and Example). For instance, one of the respondents says: "In my opinion, one of the roles is in terms of peace <...>So, Iceland is playing a very relevant role in this area, trying to keep peace. And the second one is in terms of environment; they prioritize the environment. And the government tries to preserve the environment for the benefit of all the world. These are the two areas that I see: peace and

environment. Iceland plays and can continue playing important role in the future”. Another honorary consul repeats this idea: “I think that they have an important role. The fact that they're not thinking only at themselves, only at the economical side of their work. It's very important, their participation in all sorts of international organizations can be seen. They are active, and they're fighting for causes. Some idealistic, but it's very well, all the people should be like this. And have a point of view and express it”. This last statement about having a point of view is shared by another respondent: “Iceland is speaking up much more and is being listened to. And they're unafraid now to criticize other countries if they don't like what's happening”. Three other respondents emphasize Iceland's regional importance: In their relations with the European Union and as an Arctic country.

Both Example and Developer role conceptions in Holsti's interpretation may occur in small states, as there is a perception that small states have special skills or advantages for undertaking such roles. Interestingly, two typical national role conceptions often attributed to small states – Protectee and Faithful Ally – are not mentioned by the interviewed honorary consuls at all. These conceptions are linked with economic and security insufficient capabilities when a country is considered simply too small to protect itself by its own means. Apparently, it is not perceived as something inherent of Iceland, since the interviewed honorary consuls do not mention any external security challenges or need for a shelter from “major powers”.

#### 3.5.4. Observed changes

In addition to determining the role of Iceland, I was also interested in whether the honorary consuls observed a change in these roles or Iceland's goals over time. It was not always possible to ask specifically about the role change, in two cases, the respondents were not aware, in many cases, the respondents talked about a variety of changes. Therefore, in this part, I will talk about the observations of the honorary consuls about any important changes related to the policy of Iceland or its perception.

One respondent does not see any major changes in terms of policy and says that it is more or less consistent, except for limiting assistance to developing countries because of the financial constraint.

Three respondents mention economic changes, like quick economic development after gaining independence and the 2nd World War and changes caused by the 2008 financial crisis. There is also an opinion that Iceland is pushing ahead faster because the world is under pressure. One of the respondents also observes changes related to COVID-19: “They focus on health”.

One observation about changes is about Iceland's place in international relations: "I think that Iceland has requested more and more independent position from the United States. That's why they also closed the Air Force base couple of years ago". After a clarifying question, the respondent said that at least this closure was welcomed by Iceland.

Most of the respondents who mentioned any changes noticed that Iceland has become more well-known in the world and among the citizens of the respondents' countries, and has become more heard. There were such expressions: "Iceland has been more put on the map in Europe a lot more now than earlier", "Iceland became popular after the World Cup". In general, six respondents noticed the increasing popularity of Iceland since 2016-2018 or recently. For example, one respondent says that since the football championship Euro 2016 it's been a big boom, Icelanders now are well known in the resident's country, and the championship has increased the brand image of Iceland. Besides, there are observations from honorary consuls, that "Iceland's voice is louder than in the 90s on issues beyond whaling", "Iceland is speaking up much more and is being listened to. And they're unafraid now to criticize other countries if they don't like what's happening. And I can tell like in <X> I see a lot more reporting of Iceland when they speak up than it used to be". The last respondent also notices that there used to be very little reporting of Iceland in local media, but the situation changed: "The only time we ever heard about Iceland was negative when they were doing whaling. But now it's a lot more reporting and almost 100% positive". Another honorary consul sees these changes, too:

*"Maybe that rather than the goals changing, I think the voice to articulate those goals has been louder and more concise, more clear. I think there was a time where perspective on most global issues was little more than an asterisk. Or, you know, an afterthought, but I think that countries and global media now expect in some way to hear Iceland's voice on these matters rather than maybe be surprised by Iceland's voice on these matters. I think that's, to me, that began to change in the late 1990s, early 2000s. I can't tell you about the 1980s. I can guess that very much, although Icelanders may have different, because they're very proud people, understandably, they may have different opinion, but I would probably tell you that that they were a blip on the radar. The Icelandic global, the foreign policy opinion, was probably a blip on the radar in the 1980s. Now I think it really has a much stronger opportunity for it to matter"*

This leads me to a question I asked some of the honorary consuls how other people perceive Iceland, from the point of view of honorary consuls. One of the respondents observes that the image of Iceland is beginning to become clearer and important in people's minds.

Another respondent says that it's becoming one of the first attractive opportunities for investors. Five respondents mention great interest for Iceland from local citizens. Among the reasons for the attention are Iceland's achievements in gender equality and clean environment, tourist attraction, Icelandic products, musical bands, achievements in international sports like football.

### 3.5.5. Icelandic Identity

When explaining their opinions about Icelandic politics or the peculiarities of Iceland, many respondents mention a special Icelandic identity among the arguments. I did not ask any questions about it, but it seems to me that the opinion of the honorary consuls about this is relevant. Two respondents explained Iceland recovering from financial crisis partly by the fact that Icelanders are used to setbacks: "They're used to live under severe circumstances and tough environment. And they overcome disasters quite easily"; "Even if they hit bottom, they will come up". Another honorary consul believes that Icelanders always think that they can do better and their progress, even little things are important to them, which explains Iceland's fast transformations. The citation about Vikings' mentality was also about the mindset that encourages great achievements. Another opinion is that Icelanders are much more demanding than others and they have conscious about what they deserve. One respondent explains their huge consular corps by such traits as keeping very close to each other, especially in other parts of the world. Icelanders also are characterized as proud, straightforward, and very kind people. According to another honorary consul, in Icelandic society, modesty is welcomed and that's why social care is important. As for more controversial traits, one respondent, who is very familiar with life in Iceland, mentions "it will work out somehow" mindset and amorphous people in Iceland.

## 3.6. Perception of the Institution of Honorary Consuls

### 3.6.1. Reasons for the development of the Institution of Honorary Consuls

The respondents' answers to the question of why Iceland has so many honorary consuls and/or an honorary consul in the respondent's country can be divided into two main categories: Objective Reasons and Iceland's Political Purposes and Features (Table 6).

Table 6. Reasons for the development of the Institution of Honorary Consuls

Objective Reasons	Iceland's Political Purposes and Features
Because of the closure of embassies in the region.	The strategy and the policy of Icelandic government has been always to have very few

	embassies around the world and have as much HCs <as possible> to deal with their affairs.
Because it's a small country, so the budget is limited and HC work for free. They don't put pressure on the budget in Iceland.	Because they have a vision to expand. Even though they are so small, they know they can do a lot of things. They think they can bring the good things from their country to all these other places and also probably learn from them also.
The border is so big and there has to be lots of representation abroad.	They try to look for opportunity where others don't. Because they want to make more relations with countries that probably other people don't even think about.
Because Icelanders did travel almost everywhere. It's just a way to protect their people while they're traveling.	Worldwide, it's for making Iceland well known to people all over the world.
Because there's many Icelandic people living in the respondent's country it's good having all those HC there.	The government of Iceland, maybe with the encouragement of the business community, decided that it needed to have more legs on the ground.
It's a small country with a limited budget, limited population base, and HC cost them anything	Icelanders prefer to keep in touch with other Icelanders abroad and they have this bond between them.
If they choose responsible people then they get meaningful economic or civic or social or foreign policy value out of it at little or no cost.	Icelanders are eager and excited to serve, to help their fellow Icelanders.
Because Icelanders live all around the world.	They thus create an official, legal network of influence and contacts
Iceland is a small country that does not have embassies around the world and HC is a voluntary workforce.	If honorary consuls are correctly selected, you can have a lot of good information about the country.

Because they don't have embassies all over the world.	This is connected also a little bit with their idealism, so they want to be present there, in those countries and they are.
The HC of Iceland are high-quality, and it's much cheaper, HC are working without being paid.	The HC of Iceland can work as Watch Dogs, this is a very efficient and very cost-effective way to keep the foreign relations in good shape.
Keeping an embassy for 10-20 Icelanders is not reasonable.	Iceland wants to maintain and develop as many relations as possible with as many countries as possible.
It doesn't cost Iceland anything. Large countries can afford full-time consulates. Even if not all honorary consuls are effective, there are more pluses than minuses.	Above all, we represent the image.
It costs less. It's well organized. And Iceland is a small country. They cannot afford to send so many diplomats.	
They are saving money. It's keeping contact with the world in a very cheap and efficient manner.	
It's a very expensive organization to have embassies in many countries.	
There are regions where there are many Icelanders or Icelandic descendants.	

Among the objective reasons named by the respondents the dominating opinion is that it is cheaper to have a corps of honorary consuls (who do not receive a salary) than consulates and embassies. Nine respondents mention this explanation in their answers. Besides, honorary consuls often explain that Iceland does not have the means to maintain a large number of diplomats.

Five respondents believe that honorary consuls are needed because Icelanders live abroad or travel around the world, or reside in the respondent's country of residence. Indeed, there are many expats and tourists from Iceland all over the world, as one of the honorary consuls says:

“You will be hard-pressed to find a country in the world where there's no Icelanders living”. As it is an important reason for Iceland to be presented in such a large number of countries, I will briefly review the situation with Icelandic migrants. The tradition of emigration has deep roots in Iceland. As Dr. Adriënnë Heijnen puts it, “In present day Iceland, specific migration periods are woven together through a powerful self-image supported by the metaphor of the travelling Viking” (2007, p.2). She traces the practice of business migration among Icelanders (global business voyage) called “utrás” and the practice of studying abroad. Dr. Adriënnë Heijnen links them with “the idea of the person who goes í viking to gain wealth and status abroad and thereby adulthood, like was done in Iceland’s early history” (2007, p.7). Among the traditional migration destinations, Canada and the United States stand out, where there is a strong Icelandic diaspora and such a phenomenon as Western-Icelanders. According to the estimations of Arnbjörg Jónsdóttir, about 15 000 Icelanders have emigrated to Canada and the USA in the period from 1870 to 1914 (2016, p.1). Due to the financial crisis of 2008 and following it decline of Icelandic krona and unemployment, many Icelanders emigrated to countries that were less affected by the crisis. For instance, the largest group of Icelanders moved to Norway (Guðbjört Guðjónsdóttir and Kristín Loftsdóttir, 2017, p.794). In general, at the time of 2014, Iceland was the sixth country by the percentage of the native-born population living abroad (12%), according to IceNews (G. Hauksdóttir, March 2, 2016). Iceland Review presents statistics showing that 46,572 Icelanders living abroad as of February 2018, with 61,8% living in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Which is the most important, Icelandic citizens were registered residents in 118 of the 193 member states of the United Nations (Ćirić, July 29, 2019). Indeed, it is necessary to have a huge number of representations for Icelanders around the world to have access to civil services and to have a connection with their homeland.

Another argument is that Iceland has a small population abroad, and there is no need for full-fledged embassies. Some of the honorary consuls interviewed told me they knew those few families or individuals from Iceland in the respondents’ countries.

Another category of answers is about having no embassies in the region, yet this reason sounds rather like a consequence of a small budget and population. The same with the argument that it is more rational to have honorary consulates instead of ordinary ones.

Some of the respondents find the institution of honorary consul an efficient strategy. One of the honorary consuls interviewed even shared that she wishes all countries had more honorary consuls abroad because of this.

As for Iceland's Political Purposes and Features explanations, there are fewer of them. Still, many respondents find that having many honorary consuls is a deliberate strategy since Iceland wants to be presented in as many countries as possible. Among arguments are Iceland having a vision to expand, looking for opportunities around the world, even in places that are not obvious for a small northern country. Seven respondents shared the same point about it. Some of them believe that Iceland wants to be well known and to have a network of influence, information, and contacts, which is important for business opportunities and foreign relations in general.

There is also a particular opinion that it is in the Icelandic mindset to be in touch with their compatriots and serve them (in cases where the honorary consuls themselves come from Iceland or relate to it).

### 3.6.2. Evolution of the Institution of Honorary Consuls

Eight respondents shared their thoughts and observations about changes or evolution of the situation with honorary consuls in their countries or in general within the institution. As for the number of honorary consuls, one respondent does not observe any changes since the early 2000s, there were already many honorary consuls at the time of the appointment and this is just a continuation of the policy that was in these days. Four respondents notice that there are more honorary consuls now, in comparison with their years of appointment, or there are more new people in this position. According to one honorary consul interviewed, between the time of the HC's appointment in the early 2000s until today, the number has been increased by 70-80%. It can be explained by the reasoning of another respondent: The upcoming of the airlines and cheap tickets means that Icelanders travel more to other places, which requires more consular posts. One respondent observed at the last consular conference that there were some very new honorary consuls.

As for the qualitative changes, the Handbook for Honorary Consuls of Iceland was updated recently, however, according to one respondent's opinion, not much has changed. For a group of countries in one region, dealing with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs shifted from embassies responsible directly to the Ministry. Another honorary consul observes that the communication between honorary consuls and the MFA is better now due to the development of online real-time connection through Internet: "Access and reliability of communication in real-time has really helped, facilitate, improved engagement". The same development of communication is observed by another honorary consul who says that during the last 28 years the network of honorary consuls improved, specifically with the arrangement of consular conferences in Iceland.



One respondent emphasizes the work of the current Ambassador responsible for connecting all the honorary consuls in the country. In one country Iceland recently appointed a second honorary consul. As the respondent from this country puts it, “we're definitely much more active in explaining Iceland's position than that it was before”.

### 3.6.3. Evaluation of the Institution effectiveness and Motivation

Despite the fact that I did not ask respondents to give any assessment of the Institution of Honorary Consuls or their experience in this position, many expressed their opinion about the effectiveness of the institution or some involved practices. They are valuable for the analysis in terms of feedback and critical assessment of the institution from the inside.

Most of the opinions were positive. One of the respondents stated, that when considering a national level, it's good — having all those honorary consuls there. Another opinion is that the honorary consuls in the respondent's country are very well informed and they are taking care of their work in a very effective way. Besides, the respondent mentions that “everybody seems to be very happy with the basis for the work”. Several respondents also speak positively about consular conferences in Iceland, for instance, one of them has been very happy with the arrangement of the consular conferences and with the information provided on these occasions. At the institutional level, one of the opinions about having many honorary consuls around the world is a wise strategy, and the respondent “wondered why more countries have not pursued that course”. One honorary consul interviewed believes that honorary consuls of Iceland play an important role: “For a small country that can't have embassies all over the world, the consuls do play an important role”. Another opinion is that honorary consuls of Iceland are competent: They “have really high quality all over the world, and they have really a good position”. Such characterizing definitions as “efficiency”, “competence”, “experience” prevailed in positive statements about the honorary consuls of Iceland, the interaction of consuls with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the institution as a whole. Regarding the institution, such synonyms as “mechanism”, “strategy”, and “policy” were often used, which indicates the level of coordination and efficacy of the work with honorary consuls.

There are also two neutral opinions that the effectiveness of honorary consuls depends on the Embassy responsible for coordinating the work of honorary consuls on a national or regional level, and on the individual proactiveness of honorary consuls.

Two respondents mention difficulties they face. For one honorary consul, the biggest inconvenience is that honorary consuls are not able to issue regular passports, while emergency

passports have limitations. It is crucial for Icelandic nationals in the respondent's country because the embassy responsible for issuing passports is substantially removed from their residence state. Another honorary consul regrets that they receive very little financial assistance in terms of local consular events and fairs and confesses that they gave up consular fairs a little since the honorary consul has nothing to present there.

When I asked honorary consuls, what motivates them to do this unpaid work, or the respondents themselves mentioned it, the most common answers were that it was a great honor to represent Iceland and it brings joy to help Icelanders in difficult situations. Besides, six respondents share that they sympathize with Iceland, the country, the people, and the values they associate with Iceland. One of them noted that he was very impressed in this regard by a visit to Iceland during one of the consular conferences. Four respondents emphasize that the job of an honorary consul of Iceland is interesting, it allows to meet interesting or influential people and to be a part of things that would not be possible otherwise. Three honorary consuls mention that the job is not very busy and it is not a burden for them to do this "good will" work. Among the unique responses about motivation and joy are: The possibility to open opportunities for local citizens to have access to scholarships or to attend events sponsored by Iceland; the possibility to contribute to the relations between the two countries; the emerging business opportunities related to Iceland. One respondent mentioned among advantages of the position that it is more socially oriented, not politically.

#### 3.6.4. Feedback/How other people perceive the Honorary Consuls' position

To know more about how honorary consuls are seen by other people, I asked the respondents what feedback do they receive. This does not fully reflect the perception of the honorary consuls of Iceland by those who interact with them, but it gives an idea of how well the institution of honorary consuls is known to citizens and what reaction the honorary consuls themselves face. The answers can be divided into several categories:

- The honorary consuls' work is appreciated by the local authorities and Icelandic government;
- There is no special attitude;
- People are usually satisfied with the work of an honorary consul;
- Many people do not know the difference between an honorary consul and a regular consul and are not aware of this job;

- People treat honorary consuls with respect and admiration; honorary consuls are perceived as the first-class person in terms of reputation, trust, and prestige;
- There is a curiosity and interest from citizens towards the job and Iceland in general;
- With more media coverage, people know a little more about what an honorary consul is.

The answers are repeated but are divided roughly equally into each of the categories, so it can be concluded that the position of the honorary consul depends on the self-representation and environment, and there are no serious trends common to all honorary consuls of Iceland.

### 3.7. Conclusions

There are several preconditions, some main features that characterize the institution of honorary consuls of Iceland, as far the representation of the country is concerned:

- Iceland has a widely spread network of honorary consuls in all regions of the world;
- There is a difference in the functional positions of honorary consuls. There are honorary consuls in cities operating on a local level along with embassies and consulates and national-level honorary consuls;
- In areas of activity that are not related to civil services, honorary consuls may specialize depending on the field of their expertise, e.g. business assistance, tourism promotion, or promotion in media;
- The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and embassies play a very active role in informing and socializing honorary consuls;
- The effectiveness of the institution is suggested both by the documents of the MFA and by the honorary consuls;
- The functional orientation of the institution is on the granting assistance to a considerable number of Icelandic citizens abroad, providing information about Iceland, promotion of the image of Iceland, and international trade, business, and investment.

According to the conducted analysis, I can derive that honorary consul's professional role conceptions vary, along with their role performance. These roles can be a Link between the countries, an Advocate for Iceland / Socio-political representative, a Cultural and Business Attaché, Assistant to Icelandic Citizens abroad. Their conceptions about the institution as a whole are more homogenous, however, there is also a fluctuation between the attitude that honorary

consuls are simple functionaries working for the benefit of Icelandic citizens and the attitude that that being an honorary consul of Iceland brings honor, prestige, and importance in the sense of relations between the two countries. All of the respondents highly praise the way that the institution works, however, some of them sought more assignments and roles, financial support of events, and the ability to issue ordinary passports in particular situations. Such characterizing definitions as “efficiency”, “competence”, “experience” prevailed in positive statements about the honorary consuls of Iceland, the interaction of consuls with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the institution as a whole. Regarding the institution, such synonyms as “mechanism”, “strategy”, and “policy” were often used, which indicates the level of coordination and efficacy of the work with honorary consuls.

The role expectations inherent in the professional roles of honorary consuls combine two components at once: normative and subjective. On the one hand, the MFA, as one of the main sources of role expectations, formulate strict prescriptions for honorary consuls in terms of civil services for Icelandic citizens abroad. On the other hand, the MFA formulates the range of activities of honorary consuls, but the honorary consuls themselves determine their regular activities based on their own background, ideas about their role and the situation in the country. The background of honorary consuls, the process of their appointment, and the position of honorary consuls in relation to the MFA is crucial to the analysis of the sources of honorary consuls’ professional role conceptions. Besides, these features are important for determining the place of honorary consuls in understanding the role of Iceland.

The MFA is interested to form the corps of honorary consuls out of candidates connected to Iceland and Icelandic business life. In reality, seven out of fourteen of the interviewed honorary consuls had no connection with or interest in Iceland prior to the appointment. Apparently, the immediate need or motivation, such as the retirement of the previous honorary consul, the need to help the Icelanders in the absence of an embassy, the preparation of an official visit of Iceland, or the rising business opportunities are more important than connection to Iceland. However, most of the respondents note that after the appointment, they became actively involved. Also, based on the analysis of their interviews, the absence of connections with Iceland prior to the appointment does not affect their engagement and activity regarding the consular duties. I believe that the measures of the MFA aimed at training and socializing honorary consuls, along with personal qualities of candidates, who should be engaged and successful people before anything else, are effective enough to offset the importance of this factor. For instance, visiting Iceland, meeting other honorary consuls, and occurring training during regular consular

conferences seem to have a significant effect on honorary consuls' attitudes to their professional role and the role of Iceland they represent. The succession and continuity among honorary consuls, which contributes to role learning, is indicated by the cases when the retiring honorary consuls themselves sought a replacement for their position, or their relatives volunteered to continue the work of the predecessor.

As for the ways of coordination of honorary consuls by the MFA, first of all, the informational activities of the MFA and the Consular Liaison office, such as newsletters, occur on a daily basis. The majority of respondents describe the news updates sent out by the MFA as a reliable source of information, which they actively use. The Consular Liaison office is a coordination channel and the first contact for urgent or passport issues. All the respondents who described their experience with the Consular Liaison office or other divisions of the MFA gave a positive assessment of it. Regional consular conferences organized by the embassies and regular consular conferences in Iceland are a way of bringing honorary consuls together and training, which is an important tool of role conceptions shaping. Social media is another tool to bring honorary consuls together and share information: a Facebook group, a WhatsApp group, and an email group, created by the MFA. Besides those listed, there are obviously many ways for honorary consuls to cooperate and keep in touch with each other, five of the respondents (around a third) observe that direct communication between honorary consuls does not happen that often. To some extent, the effectiveness of honorary consuls depends on the Embassy responsible for coordinating the work of honorary consuls on a national or regional level, and even more so, on the individual proactiveness of honorary consuls.

Role performance is manifested in consular activities. To estimate the autonomy of honorary consuls in their role performance, consular activities of honorary consuls in practice are far from being limited to those listed in official documents, but they all serve the purpose of fulfilling the main missions stated by the MFA: Civil service, business services, promoting Iceland and Icelandic companies. However, most of the time, honorary consuls determine specific duties for themselves, based on the situation in the country and region, his or her own skills, means, and interests. In areas of activity that are not related to civil services, honorary consuls may specialize depending on the field of their expertise, e.g., business assistance, tourism promotion, or promotion in media. Apparently, there is a clear division in which cases it is necessary for honorary consuls to coordinate their actions with the Ministry (for instance, the issue of emergency passports), and in which they can act independently.

As for the feedback, honorary consuls provide information about the local situation and honorary consuls' work to the embassies and to the MFA.

Civil services are the matter of utmost importance for honorary consuls. Indeed, services and assistance to Icelandic nationals is the category most frequently mentioned by respondents when referring to consular routine, duties, and functions. The presence of the Icelandic community in the country and the tourist flow from Iceland dictates how often honorary consuls face such responsibilities. In one case, the respondent does not provide services to Icelanders at all, since they do not live in the respondent's region. Another respondent mentioned assistance to Icelanders only as an exceptional case. In both cases, these are countries where there are several other honorary consuls and embassies, which solve most of these issues.

As for the place of foreign trade, business, and investments in the role performance of honorary consuls, most of the honorary consuls interviewed are related to entrepreneurship or investment in one way or another. International business assistance and promotion are one of the most important activities of the majority of the respondents, along with supporting existing projects between the two countries, providing information and administrative support, proposing assistance in the promotion of Icelandic goods if Icelandic companies look for opportunities in national markets abroad. Besides, in some cases, in addition to the MFA and embassies, business circles are involved in the process of selecting candidates and appointing honorary consuls. During consular conferences, Icelandic companies participate in the training events. The official reports emphasize this facet of honorary consuls' role, and Íslandsstofa, the Business Iceland public-private partnership established to improve the competitiveness of Icelandic companies in foreign markets, makes use of honorary consuls as Icelandic outposts in foreign markets. Some of the common practices are intended to simplify the work of honorary consuls in providing information about business opportunities related to Iceland.

Providing information about Iceland in various forms and attending events is another common activity of honorary consuls. It concerns mostly travel information, questions around Visa, COVID-19 legislation, translation, questions about moving to Iceland or applying to Icelandic universities, investing in Icelandic companies, or opening a business in Iceland. In many cases, the honorary consuls have enough information, in others – they can refer to appropriate agencies and people. Several respondents considered providing information about Iceland to be one of their main activities as honorary consuls. As for the promotion of Icelandic image and values, this is mostly about Iceland's achievements in gender equality and clean environment, tourist attractions, Icelandic products, culture (musical bands, literature), achievements in international

sports like football. The honorary consuls' attitudes towards Icelandic values are positive, many of them have opinions about Icelanders' "Vikings" mindset.

Political functions were barely even mentioned. However, such activities as commerce, trade, tourism and raising awareness mentioned by all of the respondents can be a form of politics. It is important, however, that according to the views of many respondents, their activity is not political, which means, firstly, that their idea of what is political is quite narrow, and secondly, that their beliefs of a professional role do not include the role of a political or diplomatic actor (in many cases).

As for the reasons for the development of the institution of honorary consuls, dominating opinion is that it is cheaper and cost-effective to have a corps of honorary consuls. Besides, it is necessary to have a huge number of representations for Icelanders around the world to have access to civil services and to have a connection with their homeland. Some of the respondents find the institution of honorary consul an efficient strategy. Among arguments are Iceland having a vision to expand, looking for opportunities around the world, even in places that are not obvious for a small northern country. Some of them believe that Iceland wants to be well known and to have a network of influence, information, and contacts, which is important for business opportunities and foreign relations in general.

Awareness of the economic and political situation of honorary consuls provides some insights into the promotion of Icelandic image and values, and crucial for understanding Iceland's role conceptions among honorary consuls. First of all, honorary consuls have their beliefs and attitudes about Iceland's values. These are affected by interactions with Icelanders, consular conferences, news updates from the MFA, and the media. The background of those honorary consuls who had some ties with Iceland is crucial, too.

Despite the fact that the awareness of the major events in the recent history of Iceland is limited among honorary consuls, they mostly have strong opinions about the political context of Iceland and Iceland's current challenges and opportunities. The honorary consuls I interviewed have a clear understanding of Iceland's goals in the world and within the country. Most of the respondents named more than one goal, so it can be concluded that they see Iceland's intention to develop in a variety of ways. Besides, the goals are directed not only to the internal development of the individual but also to the external, so the honorary consuls see Iceland as able to change the world, to influence it. Those goals are image promotion, equality development and promotion, maintaining peace, effective and sustainable economic growth, preserving the

environment, maintaining independence and international cooperation, keeping in touch with Icelandic diasporas. I would emphasize that one of Iceland's goals transmitted by honorary consuls of Iceland is not only to be known by the rest of the world and to speak up on certain matters but also to be known for something and to be heard. By being known for something, honorary consuls mean gender equality, sustainable technologies, export, investment and tourism potential, and culture. This is crucial since honorary consuls are among those who ensure this goal.

The honorary consuls' beliefs concerning Iceland's role are concentrated around three roles: Supporting role, Role model, and Important role. These resound with the roles distinguished by Holsti (1970): Mediator-integrator, Example, and Active Independent / Developer, accordingly. The main feature of the Supporting role is a clear line between independent Iceland and "massive powers" or "great countries". The activities are mostly limited by humanitarian and environmental issues and mediation. It is mostly explained not by external circumstances or structural constraints, but by the self-determination of Iceland. The Role model is about being a leader in some areas, sometimes despite Iceland's smallness. This special role is explained by achievements in different areas, where unique progressive technologies are born, and by Icelanders' mentality. Mainly, these areas are innovative and sustainable technologies, e.g., in the fishing industry, medicine, energy, and leadership in terms of gender equality. The Important role is about being independent and active in several areas, like keeping the peace, promoting preserving the environment, promoting equality, participating in various international organizations, speaking up, and being listened to about global and regional issues.

As for the place of honorary consuls among the sources of Iceland's role conceptions, the concepts of Ego's conceptions vs. Alter's prescriptions are not very suitable for the institution of honorary consuls. On the one hand, honorary consuls represent Iceland, and it is from them in many regions and countries that one can learn how Iceland defines its role. On the other hand, their ideas about the role of Iceland have both internal and external sources (in relation to Iceland). Practices such as holding consular conferences and sending out news updates significantly shape the opinion of honorary consuls about the role of Iceland. However, the background of honorary consuls and their personal connections and experiences also influence these perceptions. Information about current objectives, events, and the political situation in Iceland is sent to the consuls on a weekly basis. However, according to many consuls, the information most often does not reflect any specific strategy or goals. Therefore, each consul interprets the information they receive from the news from Iceland in their own way. How deeply



the consuls are immersed in the political life of Iceland and perceive themselves as representatives of Icelandic interests abroad varies greatly depending on their location and personal motivations. I can conclude that the division into external and internal sources, in this case, is artificial, and the prescriptive nature of norms, created by the MFA, is limited.

## Discussion

The results of the analysis resound significantly with Stringer's findings about the changing role of the institution of honorary consuls, especially in small states (Stringer, 2011a, 2011b). For instance, Iceland's case in some ways is similar to Liechtenstein's honorary consul institution, e.g., Iceland embedded honorary consuls within an overall diplomacy and branding strategy. Besides, in areas like commerce, trade, and tourism and at the local level of contacts honorary consuls are especially active and efficient. Further study of the role of honorary consuls in small states might be useful and relevant to the trends of global development.

This study did not examine national role conceptions of Iceland as Icelandic policymakers put it. Yet, it provides the Icelandic honorary consuls' role conceptions attributed to Iceland. It may be useful in future research to compare how the honorary consuls' ideas of Iceland's role corresponds to Iceland's role identity and positioning in other areas of international relations. For instance, theoretical concepts such as Shelter Theory (Baldur Thorhallsson, 2019; 2009), Smart Small State (Wivel, 2010), and Powerful Small State (Jakob Thor Kristjansson & Cela, 2011), could provide some valuable insights about Iceland's role identity and the place of the honorary consuls' institution in the role enactment of Iceland.

The thesis provides an inquiry into the functions of the institution of honorary consuls and its common practices in Iceland, as well as honorary consuls' professional role conceptions and beliefs about the role of Iceland. However, it could be more complete if I could interview the Consular Liaison officers at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland or familiarize myself with the Handbook for Honorary Consuls of Iceland. Unfortunately, despite the prevailing opinion among the interviewed honorary consuls about the accessibility of the Ministry, I have not been able to get an answer regarding the interview from the MFA.

Overall, the thesis puts forward the main professional roles of honorary consuls (Link between the countries, an Advocate for Iceland / Socio-political representative, a Cultural and Business Attaché, Assistant to Icelandic Citizens abroad) and the role of Iceland in the beliefs of honorary consuls (Supporting role, Role model, and Important role). The volume and quality of

the data obtained through the interviews allowed me to conduct a thoughtful analysis, and the results may be of interest not only to researchers interested in Iceland's foreign policy or the institutions of honorary consuls, but also to consular officials.

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