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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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The Norwegian Merchant Fleet – The Small State’s Multitool for Future Crisis

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**AUTHOR:**

Major Ole-Christian Tenden

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Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member:

ERIC Y. SHIBUYA, PHD

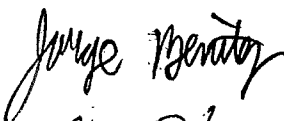
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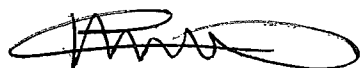
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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Norwegian Merchant Fleet - The Small State's Multitool for Future Crisis.

**Author:** Major Ole-Christian Tenden, Norwegian Army.

**Thesis:** In a complex world with humanitarian crises, natural disasters, migration, terrorism, and piracy, Norway has an obligation to protect and assist both its own citizens and international partners all over the globe within its limited means. Norway's merchant fleet forward presence, the unique legal framework between the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Shipowners Association, and the international networks of maritime clusters can enable rapid logistical support for an expeditionary force in a hasty crisis response or limited contingency operation.

**Discussion:** The Kingdom of Norway has long-held seafarer traditions and has managed one of the world's most substantial commercial fleets for centuries. In the world wars, Norway had the world's third biggest commercial fleet. When invaded by Germany, the Norwegian Government requisitioned all Norwegian ships and established the Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission. The world wars led to a close cooperation between the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Shipowners, which continues today. The merchant ships play a significant role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Article V logistical plans or support of the "Out of Area" concept. Shipping is and will continue to be one of the most effective ways to move cargo around the world. As of 2017, Norway has the 5th largest and the most modern commercial fleet in the world. The complex security environment will need flexible maritime resources. Eighty-two percent of the world's population will be settled close to the sea in the future - a future of increased natural disasters, violent extremist organizations, terrorism, piracy, population growth, and food shortage. The Norwegian foreign policy has longstanding traditions to render assistance in crises. The forward postured Norwegian merchant ships and the shipowners' close cooperation with the Norwegian Government generates a possibility to rapidly support rapidly evolving crises. The Norwegian crisis management system must incorporate the Norwegian Shipping Association in plans, training, and exercises. A crisis may be resolved unilaterally, bilaterally, or as part of a coalition. The commercial ships and their networks can be an asset to support in an operation, whether military or non-military, such as humanitarian crises. Norway needs to prepare today to be ready for the next crisis connected to the sea or coastal areas.

**Conclusion:** This paper proposes the Norwegian Government to prepare for the future security environment by including the Norwegian Shipowners Association in the crisis management organizations in training and operations to utilize the forward postured ships in rapid, evolving crises. The forward postured ships bring speed, maneuverability, flexibility, and sustainability to Norwegian international efforts and crisis response. Norwegian politicians and decision-makers need to prioritize the merchant fleet and incorporate the unique relationship among the Norwegian Government, the Norwegian Shipowners Association, and insurance into planning exercises and training to set the national crisis organization up for future success.

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### *Preface*

This paper aims to describe how the Norwegian merchant fleet has evolved and how the liberal democracy built a reciprocal relationship among the shipowners and the Norwegian Government to be major contributors to the Allied victory in World War II and to the NATO alliance. The reciprocal relationship between the State and the shipowner's association lasts until this day. Norway needs to be prepared for the future where its niche capability of merchant ships supports a wide range of crises short of war, so the paper recommends for more cooperation and integration in planning, training, and exercises to prepare for future crises.

I have been privileged to serve in a joint environment for several years and participate in a wide variety of operations and exercises trying to understand the future battlefield and the nation's needs. After attending the United States Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare School, I learned about the Marine Corps' Maritime Prepositioning Force and how logistics drive operations. When I got the chance to write this paper I wanted to explore Norway's options to do expeditionary operations and explore the strengths of my country. After writing this paper and attending the Command and Staff College, I am even more convinced that the Norwegian merchant fleet will be a key component for the nation. The future security environment in the coastal areas makes forward operating ships even more important as they bring flexibility and sustainability to Norwegian crisis response and foreign policy.

## Introduction

The massive expansion of trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was central to the rise of the British Empire and Western civilization. Norway, a small nation in the North Atlantic Ocean, capitalized on this expansion by developing increased shipping capabilities. By the start of the twentieth century Norway established itself as one of the world's greatest shipping states. The Norwegian commercial fleet became Norway's greatest support to the united effort in both world wars, providing necessary supplies.<sup>1</sup> Even with heavy losses during the wars, Norway managed to maintain a large merchant fleet where, at one point in the sixties, Norway controlled 10 % of the world's fleet.<sup>2</sup> In 2017, Norway had the most modern and fifth most valuable merchant fleet in the world.<sup>3</sup>

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the foundation of Norwegian security, and thus Norway has a legal framework to utilize the merchant fleet in support of both national and NATO operations. The legal framework and a close relationship facilitate Norway's ability to utilize the fleet's forward presence in support of global crisis response operations. The merchant ships may either operate as a single entity or as part of a joint operation with Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) or supporting alliances and partners.

Norway is a democratic country and depends on international law for stability and peace. Small states are best served in multilateral state interactions by a common set of rules. Norway's population is only 5.3 million people, but it has the 7<sup>th</sup> largest land and sea area in the world.<sup>4</sup> Although Norway ranks as the 24<sup>th</sup> largest in Global Domestic Product (GDP) and the governmental "Pension-fund" now is worth over one trillion dollars (USD), owning an average of one percent of the world's stocks, Norway has not chosen to spend its wealth on maintaining a large military.<sup>5</sup> NAF is mainly organized and

equipped for national defense as a part of NATO, and has limited capability to conduct global crisis response operations.

Nonetheless, in a complex world with humanitarian crises, natural disasters, migration, terrorism, and piracy, Norway has an obligation to protect and assist both its own citizens and international partners all over the globe within its limited means. Norway's merchant fleet forward presence, the unique legal framework between the Norwegian Shipowners Association (NSA) and the Norwegian Government (NG), and the international networks of maritime clusters can enable rapid logistical support for an expeditionary force in a hasty crisis response or limited contingency operation.

Going forward, this paper will first describe the history and development of Norway's shipping. Second, the paper will analyze Norwegian foreign policy, the effect of a rapidly evolving crisis on Norwegian citizens and interests, and the Norwegian crisis management system. Third, this paper will study how a forward presence Norwegian merchant ship rapidly rendered assistance to a humanitarian crisis, showing flexibility, risk taking, and dedication from Norwegian shipowners in Yemen. Finally, the paper will present a conclusion and recommendations for how the forward present merchant fleet can support Norwegian interests and those of its partners.

### **Norwegian Shipping**

Norwegians have always been expeditionary over the sea. Mountainous terrain and long fjords made boats and ships primary means of transportation. With easy access to the sea, the Norwegians established lucrative trade through shipbuilding, dried fish, and timber. Additionally, the country's geographical location far north with harsh weather conditions demanded extreme seafaring skills to survive.

The repeal of the British Navigation Act in 1849 propelled Norwegians to expand their voyages outside Northern Europe and into international trade. In combination with the construction boom during the industrial revolution, this led to an increased number of Norwegian ships "tramping" for bulk cargo operations all around the world in addition to scheduled liner sailings. In 1875, Norway had 60,000 sailors<sup>6</sup> and maintained the third largest merchant fleet in the world, following the United Kingdom and the United States (US).<sup>7</sup> Norway's advantages in this competition were experienced sailors, cheap Norwegian labor, and flexible shipowners who adapted all types of ships to the needs of brokers and agents.<sup>8</sup> The Norwegian fleet exceeded domestic needs, so most Norwegian ships specialized towards the international market. The increase and technological advances in Norwegian shipping solidified its dominance internationally as well as its role in the national economy and employment of Norwegians.<sup>9</sup> The legacy of proud seafarers and global shipping is still valid in today's merchant fleet.

In 1909, the Norwegian Shipowners founded the NSA as a national interest organization, electing former Norwegian Prime Minister Christian Michelsen as the organization's first President.<sup>10</sup> Initially, the NSA's interests fell between different departments in the State administration. As recognition of the NSA's impact in the government and role in Norwegian society, the NG established a shipping department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1913.<sup>11</sup> Under this new structure, the shipping industry generated two-thirds of the country's new labor needs and twenty six percent of the investments.<sup>12</sup> The NSA and the NG's relationship developed into a long-term important relationship for national maritime capability.

### **The Norwegian merchant fleet supporting the world wars**

Entering the war period, Norway had one of the largest fleets in the world and experienced seafarers. Even though Norway took a neutral stance in the First World War, circumstances led to a massive effort by the Norwegian merchant fleet supporting the UK. This effort was very costly in lives and ships. Germany's submarine warfare in 1917 affected shipping and threatened the UK's supply chain to sustain fighting operations.<sup>13</sup> To mitigate this threat, the UK requested tonnage from Norwegian ships. As Norway was officially neutral in the war, the negotiation was conducted in secrecy with the Norwegian Government represented by the NSA. The negotiations led to an agreement for the UK to access Norwegian surplus tonnage and secure the Norwegians' economic interests.<sup>14</sup> The NSA had the responsibility to monitor the agreement. All Norwegian ships implied in agreement got status as requisitioned, to ensure direct tasking from the shipowner or creditors.<sup>15</sup> Norway formally retained neutrality, but the war led to severe loss of men and ships; the small nation lost over 2,000 seafarers and more than 500 ships – half the merchant fleet – during the war.<sup>16</sup>

The German invasion of Poland in 1939 forced Norway to prepare for a new war while officially remaining neutral. At the time, Norway had the world's fourth largest fleet.<sup>17</sup> In the fall of 1939, the UK and Norwegian governments signed the "scheme-deal," which gave the UK access to 150 Norwegian ships.<sup>18</sup> The NSA navigated the governments through the agreement, taking six months of negotiations to complete. The countries made a reciprocal agreement on sea transport to deliver natural resources to the UK and coal to Norway. Internally, the NG and NSA improved control procedures of the Norwegian Merchant fleet from the previous war, thus streamlining cooperation for the escalating crisis.<sup>19</sup>

On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Norway. Not only was the fleet in danger of seizure by the Axis superpower, but it also faced the possibility of absorption into the UK fleet. Confronted with this less-than-favorable situation, the Norwegian King and NG decided to fight the invasion and regain control of all Norwegian ships to secure supplies and efficient war operations in Norway.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence of officially joining the war, the Norwegian support to the UK was no longer a secret.

On April 22, 1940, the NG made a remarkable and far-reaching decision by *requisitioning* all Norwegian ships and establishing the Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission (NORTRASHIP). NORTRASHIP became a state-controlled shipowner in command of all Norwegian commercial ships from the headquarters in London and later also in New York.<sup>21</sup> From London, NORTRASHIP employed over 1,000 vessels and 30,000 sailors. NORTRASHIP's administration consisted of shipowners and subject matter experts from Norwegian shipping. The effective administration made the British realize that the Norwegian fleet was more efficient for a united effort under Norwegian national control than split up under the British flag.<sup>22</sup> Winston Churchill appraised the NG and seafarers' efforts in operating and coordinating the merchant fleet "equal in importance to an army of one million men on the battlefield in Europe."<sup>23</sup>

The severe losses of NORTRASHIP compelled the NG to request additional ships from the US to employ Norwegian sailors stuck in New York. The request reached President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and American cargo ships were transferred into the Norwegian fleet to be sailed and managed by Norwegian seafarers. In 1942, the fleet had lost over 300 Norwegian ships and 1,600 Norwegian sailors.<sup>24</sup> A US Diplomatic Memorandum from September 22, 1942 states, "in order to show the extent of the contribution of Norwegian shipping to the Allied cause it may be recalled that in 1941

about 40% of all oil and gasoline and about 30% of the food stuffs from the Western Hemisphere to Great Britain were carried in Norwegian ships.”<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the war, the whole of the NORTRASHIP organization showed professionalism and supported the allies and primarily the UK, with administration, shipping, ships, and sailors. During World War II, NORTRASHIP lost half of its 1,081 ships<sup>26</sup> and nearly 3,600 sailors.<sup>27</sup> Despite the high cost, the Norwegian merchant fleet ensured the small state maintained its economic independence, and its sacrifices contributed to a strong and reliable reputation for Norway on the international stage.<sup>28</sup>

### **Norwegian merchant fleet in NATO<sup>1</sup>**

Norway was one of the founding nations of NATO, and the merchant fleet became one of the key contributions to the alliance. NATO was a defensive organization; an attack on one was to be considered an attack on all. The foundation of the alliance was reciprocal support. The organization relied on reinforcements and supplies across the Atlantic Ocean from the US to Europe.<sup>29</sup> This demanded each member country to make applicable requisition laws to gain control over its merchant ships. Norway continuously provided a policy that recognized the merchant fleet as the most valuable asset for NATO.<sup>30</sup>

In 1992, NATO initiated an expansion for mission sets to include “Out of Area Operations,” a concept that was easily adaptable for the flexible Norwegian merchant fleet. NATO’s new ambitions and strategic concept needed quicker reactions, more flexibility, and more sea transport.<sup>31</sup> In case of war, NATO’s Defense Shipping Authority

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<sup>1</sup> In “The Tanker War” in the Iran – Iraq conflict from 1980-1988, Norwegian shipowners took high risk sailing in the Persian Gulf transporting natural resources out into the international market whilst being targeted, as evident in the tanker “Havglim” being attacked by gunboats and rocket-propelled grenades.

(DSA) was responsible for coordination and requisition of civilian ships, but in peace operations requisition was not preferable due to negative economic consequences. The DSA was abandoned after the Cold War, leaving all countries responsible for their own transport and coordination with the shipping market to subcontract ships.<sup>32</sup> The United States is the only country in NATO with dedicated military transport ships in its maritime prepositioning force. However, this fleet is obsolete and not suitable for the dynamic needs of the modern environment.<sup>33</sup> Today 90% of all transport in NATO is handled by agreements on the commercial market.<sup>34</sup> The geopolitical changes and NATO's "Out of Area Operations" make the modern Norwegian merchant fleet even more valuable in transporting military assets.<sup>35</sup> The Norwegian fleet can continue sailing in international trade without economic consequences or constraints to a region or area, other than the assumption of increased risk of being targeted as a military support ship. Following the market system demands planning, but the advantages are flexibility of access to different ships in different areas of the sea. One of the most prominent players for Norway's ships is the Contingency department at the NSA. The department effectively coordinates all requests for support to military operations.<sup>36</sup> The department even has a dedicated liaison officer from the Norwegian Defense Staff working fulltime on these issues in the NSA. The merchant fleet is interoperable with the alliance, and the alliance network supports the merchant fleets with situational awareness at sea.

In the Allied Maritime Command, NATO Shipping Center (NSC) provides Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) to support military operations, but it will also safeguard passage for merchant shipping. Both the NSC and NCAGS benefit NATO and the merchant fleet in terms of security and reporting for situational awareness at sea.<sup>37</sup> The NSC is a crucial coordinating element to utilize civilian maritime assets in

peace, crisis, and war. The NATO alliance coordinates and sets standards that facilitate interoperability between each nation. The NATO membership and cooperation allows the fleet flexibility to support the alliance or one nation upon request of support.

### **Access to ships**

The 1952 Act to Requisition Ships is the judicial basis for the NG to utilize the merchant fleet when necessary. The law was established to make sure that Norway could continue to exploit these assets, based on lessons learned from the world wars. However, parts of this law must be considered outdated and should be updated as the commercial realities and international law of today are quite different. Today the law will only apply to the 797 Norwegian flagged ships.<sup>38</sup> However, the system today is not based on the old laws. When NORTRASHIP was restructured in 2004, the tasking process of the companies should have been based on standard model commercial contracts. By doing this the number of potential Norwegian controlled ships increases to between 1,800 and 2,640 depending on the definition of what is “Norwegian controlled.”<sup>39</sup> Another strength is that this construction ensures that the companies do what they do best, which is to run highly efficient logistic operations. Today NORTRASHIP is a strategic entity, advising the NG and coordinating how to utilize the fleet effectively, while the shipping companies are responsible for day-to-day operations.

### **The merchant fleet and the government**

The foundation of Norwegian shipping was built on free trade and few regulations oriented towards the international market. The NSA stimulates the merchant fleet to meet demands from both the government and NATO, on issues like competence and nationalities of crews.<sup>40</sup> To keep up high quality and safety in the fleet, the NSA engages

in education both in Norway and globally. Shipping is by nature international, with industry driven by economic growth, making the shipowners seek the best location for their fleet to be successful. For Norway to keep its fleet under national control, the conditions must be competitive with the rest of the world. The NSA is a key stakeholder for development and coordination for the maritime industry to be owned and led from Norway. The NSA is collocated with the shipowner's own war risk insurance association, which enables quick clarification of insurance policies in extraordinary cases.

World War I triggered the need for dedicated insurance for ships to cover against risks of war. The Norwegian Shipowners' Mutual War Risk Insurance Association (*Den Norske Krigsforsikring for Skib - DNK*) was established for WWI, but terminated afterwards. The uncertainty in the interwar period made the General Assembly of the Norwegian Shipowners reestablish DNK to protect all Norwegian ships against war risk on October 30, 1935. The statutes and coverage are still the same as they were during the interwar period. Today the DNK has approximately 470 members and insurance for 3,425 ships.<sup>41</sup> The membership is open for the Norwegian shipping community and covers war, piracy, terrorism, and cyber. All Norwegian vessels are insured by the DNK. The teamwork between the NSA and DNK, located in the same building, facilitates immediate response and decisions when entering waters of high risk. The DNK reduces the risk for economic loss for the shipowner and is the largest maritime war risk insurer in the world, covering \$224 billion.<sup>42</sup> Civilian merchant ships in normal duty are less expensive than specialized military ships, and the DNK provides the required coverage to the shipowner, flexibility of location, and type of ships, thus increasing the willingness to operate under conditions when others have to decline.

### **Today's merchant fleet**

In the 1960s, the exploration of oil and gas demanded new ships for the maritime industry. The Norwegian maritime industry expanded its portfolio and started a new era of oil and gas extraction in the rough sea outside the west coast of Norway, demanding investments in the fleet and new types of ships. The offshore industry fueled the maritime industry through the 1970s. In 2012, the Norwegian offshore fleet was approximately 600 ships, half of which operated outside Norway. The Norwegian expertise and specialized equipment for deep sea exploration and exploitation expands their area of operation globally.<sup>43</sup> The offshore industry does surveys, exploration, field development, production, transport, and shutdown. The industry's modern vessels are highly useful in operations, due to their technology, different sensors, and flexibility, in the time of crisis.

The ships in the modern Norwegian fleet have different capabilities, but all ships can host personnel and equipment as an afloat staging base or transport personnel and goods. The fleet consists of ships in the segment of 658 dry bulk ships, 492 tank ships, 600 offshore service ships, and 37 mobile offshore installations. Additionally, there are 64 new ships in the ship yards being built.<sup>44</sup> As seaborne trade carries a wide assortment of products, the variety of different cargoes requires a wide range of ships. The ships fall under four clusters: special bulk vessels, combined carriers, general-purpose bulk carriers, and tankers. The Norwegian ships follow the world's "main lane" container routes. The largest trade route is the Transpacific, followed by the Far East to Europe, and the Transatlantic. Sub-continent trade routes are the East-West passage supplying the Indian Sub-Continent and the Middle East. Another trade route is North-South connecting the Northern hemisphere with South America, Africa, and Oceania.<sup>45</sup> The sea-lanes provides Norwegian presence across the world. The cargo ships can be used as a platform to

support other operations. The cargo ships are normally larger than and not as flexible as smaller offshore service ships.

The offshore service ships are built for harsh North Atlantic sea conditions operating close to offshore oilrigs, making them maneuverable and precise, but flexible all over the world. The highly technological service ships are specialized ships like the Offshore Construction Vessel (OCV), Construction Support Vessel (CSV), Anchor Handlers Tug Supply Vessel (AHTS), and Platform Supply Vessel (PSV). The OCV and CSV vessels are equipped with powerful cranes and winches specializing in subsea operations and seismic operations. The AHTS vessels are powerful, built to winch and tow mobile offshore installations. The PSV vessels are specialized supply ships for equipment and personnel to offshore installations. These ships can insert and extract personnel from shore, facilitate transfer to smaller boats, be a platform for a temporary medical facility, or provide emergency electrical power or fresh water production.

In addition to the wide range of highly accessible vessels around the globe, the uniqueness of the Norwegian merchant fleet is its international networks of capabilities can support in times of crisis. The fleet has large on-shore networks in maritime clusters that encompass a variety of nations. For example, the Wilhelmsen Group has operations in 2200 port locations in 125 countries.<sup>46</sup> These networks can be utilized when the government has established the necessary bilateral agreements to support logistics and sustainability in times of crisis.

Norway has a wide range of different type of ships and networks around the world that can support in a crisis. The merchant fleet is ready to serve with ships already in line shipping, tramping, or on specific missions. The different ships have different qualifications; however, situations requiring small to medium ships will serve as flexible

platforms to operations as afloat staging bases, or logistical transport together with their maritime cluster networks ashore.

### **Norwegian Interests**

Norway has a unique capability in its merchant fleet, which has supported global crisis management for over a century. The future security environment will increase in complexity from an increased number of natural disasters,<sup>47</sup> population growth and food shortage,<sup>48</sup> and an increase in non-state extremist organizations. Terror from violent extremists, organized crime, and piracy are the biggest threats against international peace and security.<sup>49</sup> Eighty-two percent of the population currently lives within 50 miles of the coast,<sup>50</sup> making the sea even more relevant for the future. The forward presence merchant fleet is an important means to support crises in an uncertain future.

The Norwegian Government intends to become adaptable to changes in a security environment to safeguard Norwegian interests. Norway is well known for its long-term continuity in foreign policy; however, even when changing its policy, the NG will continue to promote democratic values, human rights, and respect for international law.<sup>51</sup> Norway also intends to take responsibility in the international arena. It currently has the General Secretary of NATO, it will seek to hold Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe chairmanship in 2020, and it will pursue membership in the UN Security Council from 2021 to 2022.<sup>52</sup> Norway intends to take more responsibility to promote and reform international institutions. These initiatives as an international role model may require the country to contribute more for the common good. More international contributions from Norway will increase the risk of willing or unwilling

involvement in crisis. The merchant fleet's forward presence will enable a Norwegian crisis response option.

### **Norwegian Foreign Policy**

Two of Norway's primary focuses include the Arctic, "for national environment, economy, industry, and security,"<sup>53</sup> and the belt area from Africa to Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup> Norway's contributions to humanitarian efforts have increased in Syria, Yemen, and South-Sudan, in addition to other nations in a state of emergency.<sup>55</sup> Norway also contributes to peace diplomacy in a wide range of countries, and officially it has participated in negotiations in the Philippines, Syria, Mozambique, Somalia, and Sri Lanka.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the economy drives Norwegian industry of energy, oil, and gas exploitation to the Gulf of Guinea and countries like Tanzania, Albania, and Angola, among others.<sup>57</sup> The forward presence ships can render assistance when a crisis occurs either at sea or by supporting with its facilities from their maritime network onshore.

Norway has longstanding traditions in international security operations. The country will continue to strengthen security by prioritizing troop contributions to international operations. The operations will be through NATO or in collaboration among key allies,<sup>58</sup> but also in support of the UN's peace operations.<sup>59</sup> Today NAF deploys personnel to nine different missions, committed to NATO Response Force, and committed to Standing NATO Maritime Group 1.<sup>60</sup> All operations have emergency plans; however, Norway has obligations and responsibilities for its citizens serving its policy when a crisis occurs.

Intensifying engagement in conflict and fragile states is difficult. Operations in high-risk areas will increase risk to Foreign Service employees and partners. They are

willing to assume risk out of a desire to prevent conflicts by putting efforts into stabilization and conflict prevention.<sup>61</sup> The role of peace diplomacy in stabilization and prevention of conflicts cannot be underestimated. The high ambitions of the government expose governmental officials and military personnel to more dangerous situations; the government should always have actionable contingency plans to render assistance if a crisis occurs in a weak or a failed state, as doing nothing can lead to a much larger conflict.

Norwegian humanitarian contributions have increased and will be given through the UN or non-governmental organizations (NGO). The main Norwegian humanitarian NGO is *Norsk Folkehjelp* (NF), which is currently engaged in more than thirty countries. NF focuses on long-term development through local governments and is one of the world's leading organizations on mine clearance. NF will continue to be exposed to areas of ongoing or previous armed conflict.<sup>62</sup> Another Norwegian NGO, *Flyktningehjelpen*, is active in more than twenty countries and specializes in protection of internationally displaced persons and helping refugees on the run. *Kirkens nødhjelp* works in the whole spectrum of conflicts. The organization gives aid in disasters but with long-term perspective, trying to change the fundamentals of poverty.<sup>63</sup> *Redd Barna* is a Norwegian subordinate of Save the Children, which is located in 120 countries.<sup>64</sup> Threats and attacks on aid workers have increased, and the NG intends to increase the protection for aid workers and their health.<sup>65</sup> The forward presence merchant ships may be tasked by the NG to render assistance to aid workers close to the coastline or establish an afloat staging base for an expeditionary force.

### **Future crisis**

There are two significant crises that recently threatened Norwegian citizens and Norwegian interests on land: a kidnapped journalist in Afghanistan in 2009 and a terror attack on a Norwegian oil installation in Algeria in 2013. These crises show the importance of decisions from the NG and continued relevance of Norwegian forward presence ships for a wide spectrum of crises in the future.

In 2009, the journalist Pål Refsdal was held hostage by the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Norwegian Embassy in Kabul led the release operation, supported by Norwegian police and military officers already deployed to the country. The MFA was the lead department and intended to solve the hostage situation quickly by negotiation without paying ransom. In parallel to negotiations, the MFA worked for a military solution. The NAF prepared a response from Norway, while allied forces already deployed in Afghanistan were ready to do a hostage rescue operation. In this crisis, the NG expressed a great need for political control of the situation, which made it hard to hand the responsibility for any rescue operation to allies. Refsdal was eventually released through negotiations.<sup>66</sup>

In 2013, the worst attack on the country's interests and citizens outside Norway since World War II occurred when the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria was attacked by an Al Qaida-affiliated group. A total of 800 people were held captive. One hundred and thirty of them were foreign workers from thirty nations, all held for three days. Five of the Norwegian workers were killed.<sup>67</sup> In this incident, the NG showed willingness to act by alerting and quickly forward deploying NAF expeditionary capabilities to support the Algerian Government.<sup>68</sup> In the described cases the NG has expressed the need for political control and the will to act by forward deploying forces to render assistance. The

NG response to the examples, combined with its increased international ambitions, makes the forward presence ships even more relevant. Preparations for the unexpected will enhance coordination and response when crises occur.<sup>69</sup> The NG needs to prepare for future scenarios by involving the NSA in future planning of possible crises.

In 2004, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs drafted several possible crisis scenarios that might involve Norwegian citizens or Norwegian interests outside of Norway.<sup>70</sup> These scenarios are as follows:

- *Natural disasters in areas involving Norwegian residents or tourists*
- *Major accidents related to Norwegian activities or activities in which Norwegians are involved*
- *Terrorist attacks or hostages involving Norwegian interests or Norwegian citizens*
- *Threats or attacks against a Norwegian foreign service mission/embassy*
- *Hijacking of ships or aircraft*
- *Shipwreck*
- *Extensive criminal activity aimed at Norwegian interests or Norwegian citizens*
- *Nuclear events or threats of using chemical and biological weapons*
- *Epidemic in areas with Norwegian residents, tourists, or other presence*

In the scenarios described, merchant ships can be of major importance because of their forward presence. This forward presence will facilitate rapid response and sustainability for the operation, while their flexibility to navigate to restricted or uncertain areas will increase access to render assistance. The ships can work alone or as an afloat staging base in support of an operation as part of a response unit.

### **Crisis management**

Norwegian global interests have moved into a more insecure international environment, an environment that in the future will be even more connected to the sea. The chances for Norwegians to be involved in crises like political upheaval, natural disasters, terrorism, or violent conflicts abroad have increased. Even though each state

has responsibility for all people within its territory, the NG does its best to support when needed during times of crisis. The Norwegian political and crisis management is built on a system that gives each department head total authority for crisis response within its area of responsibility. Norway follows four principles at all levels in the public sector: responsibility, equality, closeness, and cooperation.<sup>71</sup> The principles will ensure involvement of the necessary stakeholders.

### **National stakeholders**

The NG has in previous crises shown its desire for national control of situations and will to act to render assistance for Norwegian citizens and national interests. The NG has the overall political responsibility to prepare for and manage an emerging crisis. The national plan and crisis management system (NBS) is nationally synchronized between the civilian and military sectors as a foundation for the total defense system. The NBS is built on the framework of NATO's Crisis Response System (NCRS), to ensure communications between Norway and NATO when needed.<sup>72</sup> The collaboration between Norway and NATO will support the national crisis management in a crisis situation abroad. The interoperability between NBS and NCRS, in addition to the close link between the NSA, the NCAGS, and the NCS, makes crisis communication easier. The key stakeholders in the NG in a crisis abroad involving the ocean will be the MFA, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Fisheries (MTCF), as well as a need to involve the NSA at all levels of governmental crisis management.

The MFA will, based on the principle of closeness, most likely be the lead department for international crisis management. Depending on the crisis, the MFA will be reinforced by relevant stakeholders. The MFA has a wide range of responsibilities, but

since the tsunami in South East Asia in 2004, has established its own crisis organization.<sup>73</sup> The crisis organization has functioned in a variety of conflicts, and its major crisis was the 2013 In Amenas incident described earlier.<sup>74</sup> The In Amenas crisis did not involve ships; however, some lessons from the MFA investigation are useful to increase speed in the decision-making process in Norway, allowing the NG to be able to utilize the ships even faster:

- Unclear roles and responsibility
- Information gaps among agencies and ministries
- Resource ineffectiveness
- Sharing of classified and unclassified information
- Different liaisons
- Hosting different meetings with different actors responsible for security abroad.<sup>75</sup>

To ensure cooperation and control in a complex crisis, the NG established *Krisestøtteenheten* (KSE) (Crisis support unit) to support the lead department. The KSE provides analysis, establishment of shared situational understanding, infrastructure, and technical solutions to crisis management.<sup>76</sup> Organizations such as the KSE, which intends to facilitate coordination as communication and cooperation, can mitigate some of the major shortfalls in crisis management.<sup>77</sup> Establishment of temporary crisis organizations will consist of different actors, and crisis management with different cultures requires understanding and communication. To increase speed, the entire organization needs a holistic understanding of the operational environment, a common purpose, and understanding of available capabilities.<sup>78</sup> The KSE needs to be aware of the NSA's capabilities to ensure its timely involvement in the crisis.

Any crisis is complex, but even more convoluted in the international environment. The NSA must be involved in crisis management planning, training, and cooperation to

meet Norway's foreign policy objectives. The NSA is also instrumental at the strategic and operational level as it provides expertise on the best utilization of ships and their maritime clusters that can support various situations and execute command and control. At the tactical level, the NSA can provide support by developing procedures on how to best collaborate during the operation. To utilize the forward presence merchant fleet, the NSA needs to be included in the Norwegian crisis management system to share knowledge of available resources and information from its global network.

### **Forward operating ship supports Yemen crisis**

In 2014, the NSA and the United Nations World Food Program (UNWFP) signed a letter of intent to cultivate a closer relationship between the organizations. As part of this agreement, the NSA identified ships to support the UN's WFP with rapid emergency response. The unique collaboration between the organizations has been of great value on several occasions, one of them in Yemen in 2015.<sup>79</sup> This type of collaboration in a high-risk mission harkens back to the world wars: a strategic shipping organization making agreements in line with the government's policy, the shipping association closely linked with the shipowners to be able to rapid render support.

The conflict in Yemen had its roots in the Arabic spring of 2011. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and prone to unrest. Leading up to the crisis in 2015, the authoritarian sitting President Ali Abdullah Saleh was forced out of power, and a handover of the presidency to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, was intended to bring stability to the country. The new president struggled to solve the wide range of problems, and many military leaders continued their support to Saleh through increased militant attacks, corruption, and food insecurity.<sup>80</sup>

In 2014, Houthi Shia Muslim rebels seized control of northern Saada province and the capital Sanaa. Then in 2015, a US, UK, and French-backed Saudi Arabian coalition of eight Sunni Arab states began air strikes to support Hadi's government. Saudi Arabia accused Iran of backing the rebels. A major humanitarian crisis ensued. The resulting economic crisis, combined with decreased access to humanitarian aid for the suffering, only worsened the range of the food crisis.<sup>81</sup> The air attacks escalated the conflict, resulting in the evacuation of more than 400 humanitarian aid workers from the UN and international NGOs.<sup>82</sup>

When the situation escalated on March 25, 2015, the UNWFP provided humanitarian aid to more than 2.8 million people and led logistical operations for the entire UN system, including evacuation. Because the situation had deteriorated so rapidly, the UN, NGOs, the World Bank, and diplomatic personnel required evacuation out of the country as the Saudi-led coalition bombed targets in Yemen. In this critical situation, the UNWFP reached out to the NSA to find assets that could get their people out immediately. The NSA managed to find four suitable Norwegian-controlled ships nearby and contacted all the owners. Within one hour after being alerted, all four ships and their companies were willing to conduct the evacuation from Yemen. Within the same hour, war risk insurance was guaranteed and the ship "*Hawk Explorer*" was selected.<sup>83</sup> In three additional hours, "*Hawk Explorer*" evacuated thirty two UN personnel from Aden to Djibouti and from Hudaydah to Suez. The captain and the crew defied the potential risk and showed proficiency and valor while transporting personnel out of the conflict zone.<sup>84</sup>

When the crisis occurred, the NSA immediately coordinated with all the relevant stakeholders. The aim in such a time sensitive operation is always to find solutions and

seek creative and possibly new methods in order to save human lives. Several governmental offices were involved such as the MTCF and the MFA. On the commercial side the shipowners, the vessel, and the DNK were key players.<sup>85</sup>

The cooperation between the NSA and the UNWFP showcases forward-leaning Norwegian shipowners and their willingness to support people in danger at a moment's notice. This mindset, flexibility, and willingness parallels that seen during the world wars. Norwegian commercial ships will continue to be available to render rapid assistance to a humanitarian organization responding to a crisis situation, the NG in pursuit of global interests, or support to an ally in need.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Norway is still among the largest shipping nations in the world, with a merchant fleet representing the country all over the world. The merchant fleet's professionalism and willingness to serve has since the world wars been one of Norway's main international efforts. In the last century, the small state has increased its international interests and its security, economic, and humanitarian efforts. The future security environment makes forward operating ships even more important as they bring maneuverability, flexibility, a global footprint, and sustainability to Norwegian international efforts and crisis response. Norwegian politicians and decision-makers need to prioritize the merchant fleet and incorporate the unique relationship among the NG, the NSA, and war risk insurance into planning exercises and training to streamline coordination and set the national crisis organization up for future success.

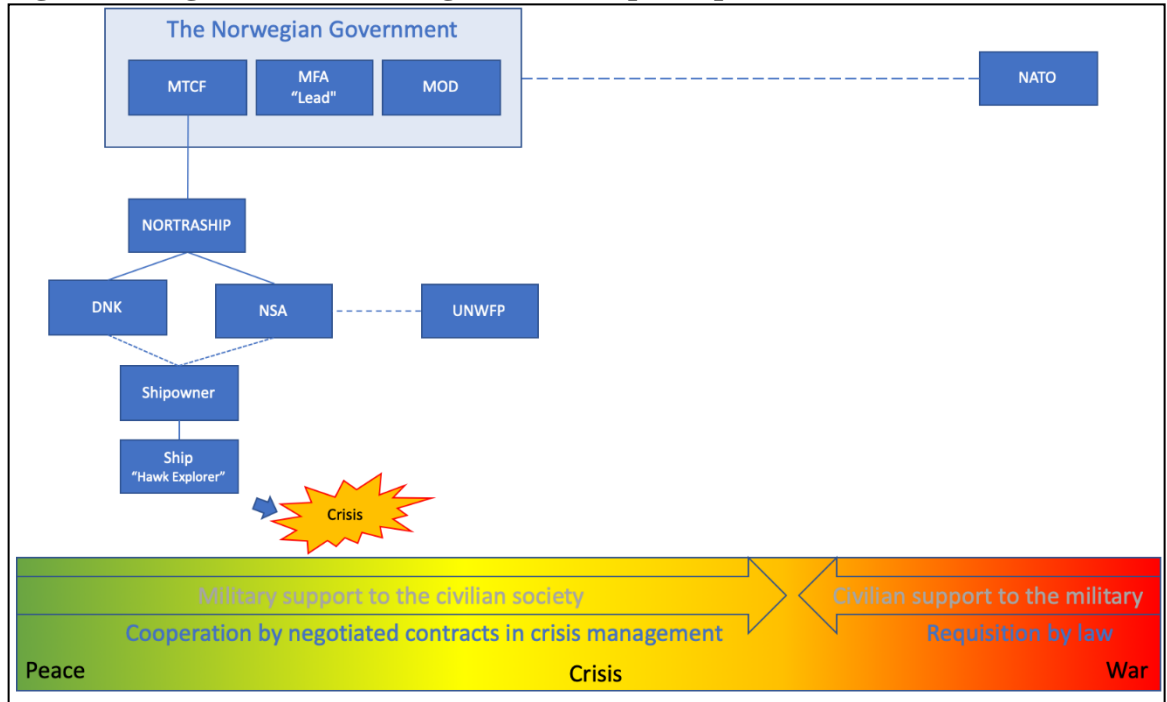
Norway has a unique relationship between the government and the shipowners. "Hawk Explorer's" efforts in Yemen show that the Norwegian forward presence ships

have the capability to rapidly render assistance; however, the government should develop concepts on how to utilize the ships in a wider range of operations before the next crisis.

The NG must develop concepts to be able to respond rapidly to crisis with an expeditionary force deploying from Norway, either unilaterally or as part of an interagency or multinational effort. The merchant fleet and maritime clusters can enable logistical support for an expeditionary force in a rapid crisis response or limited contingency operation of national interests.

**Appendix A – Norwegian Crisis Response Process.**

**Figure 1. Diagram of the Norwegian crisis response process in Yemen.**



Appendix B – Disposition of the Norwegian Merchant Fleet.

Figure 2. The Norwegian Merchant Fleet, February 15, 2019.<sup>86</sup>



Source: Produced by Clearwater.

**Appendix C – The Norwegian Merchant Ship used to support UNWFP**

**Picture 1. “Hawk Explorer.”**



Source: [www.shipspotting.com](http://www.shipspotting.com).

## Appendix D - Acronyms and Abbreviations

AHTS	Anchor Handlers Tus Supply Vessel
CSV	Construction Support Vessel
DNK	<i>Den Norske Krigsforsikring for Skib</i> (The Norwegian Shipowners' Mutual War Risk Insurance Association)
DSA	Defense Shipping Authority
GDP	Global Domestic Product
KSE	Krisestøtteenheten (Crisis support unit)
MFA	The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTCF	Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Fisheries
NAF	Norwegian Armed Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBS	<i>Nasjonalt Beredskapssystem</i> (National Plan and Crisis Management System)
NCAGS	Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping
NCRS	NATO's Crisis Response System
NF	<i>Norsk Folkehjelp</i>
NG	Norwegian Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NORTRASHIP	Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission
NSA	Norwegian Shipowners Association
NSC	NATO Shipping Center
OCV	Offshore Construction Vessel
PSV	Platform Supply Vessel
UK	United Kingdom
UNWFP	United Nation World Food Program
US	United States
USD	United States Dollars

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