

SUMMARY:

Norway has important interests, especially in the north, that are not necessarily shared by its allies or partners. This means that Norway needs a military capability to handle crises on its own. Accordingly, the Norwegian Armed Forces have maintained a broader range of military capabilities

than many NATO member states, which have optimised their force structures for international operations. Moreover, because crises related to disputes at sea are seen as far more likely than an invasion of the mainland, the air force and the navy have suffered far fewer cuts than the army.

This paper discusses Norway's security policy and military posture as it has developed in the past two decades, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between national interests and military posture and strategy, Swedish-Norwegian relations and Nordic-Baltic security.

Balancing act – Norwegian security policy, strategy and military posture

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In February 2013, General Sverker Göranson, the Swedish Chief of Defence, stated that if Sweden was ever invaded, the country would be able to defend itself for one week. Thereafter, according to *Aftonbladet*, the general hoped for help from Norway.¹ In January 2008, General Robert Mood, at the time chief of the Norwegian Army, held that the army was only capable of defending a single district of Oslo, or a line 5 kilometres in length.² Assuming an opposition with capabilities even slightly similar to the threats faced by

both Sweden and Norway during the Cold War, both generals were undoubtedly right. Even so, both statements caused huge controversy. From my perspective, the public reaction to the generals' frustrated outbursts was far more interesting than the statements themselves.

This paper discusses Norway's security policy and military posture as it has developed in the past two decades, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between national interests and military posture and strategy, Swedish-Norwegian relations and Nordic-Baltic security.

Norwegian interests and security policy

Seven simple propositions go a long way towards explaining Norwegian security and defence policy:

Norway lives off the Sea. Its economy and welfare depend heavily on oil, gas and fish, and on the advanced maritime industries that support and supply these fields both at home and abroad. Norway controls areas of sea seven times the size of its land territory. The successful management of fisheries in Norwegian waters stands in sharp contrast to the tragic depletion of fish stocks elsewhere. The enforcement of Norwegian sovereignty and law in these areas, as well as responsibility for environmental protection and search and rescue, are important day-to-day tasks of the Norwegian Armed Forces. While Norway's most important maritime interests are coastal and local, the country also has strong global maritime interests. Norwegian shipowners control the sixth largest merchant fleet in the world.

1 "ÖB: 'Sverige kan försvara sig en vecka'", *Aftonbladet* 13.01.2013, Downloaded April 2013 from <http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article16013259.ab>

2 "Hæren kan bare forsvare én Oslo-bydel", *Verdens Gang* 28.01.2008. Downloaded April 2013 from <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=503300>

Norwegian companies are increasingly involved in the production of and providing support services to offshore oil and gas all over the world.

After decades of dispute and negotiations, an agreement setting the maritime border between Russia and Norway took effect on 7 June 2011. It settled one of Norway's two remaining important geopolitical challenges. The second challenge, the as yet unresolved dispute between Norway and many other states over the status of the waters around the Svalbard archipelago, is probably the single most important issue of Norwegian foreign policy. The special status of Svalbard is regulated by a treaty of 1920, which gives Norway sovereignty over the islands but any signatory to that treaty equal rights to conduct business there. The treaty also defines Svalbard as a demilitarised zone. Some signatories to the treaty hold that it should be extended to an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles (nm) around the Islands. Norway's position is that the area in question, beyond the 12 nm that defines the territorial waters of Svalbard, is part of the Norwegian continental shelf and thus, according to the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), under Norwegian jurisdiction. The area is currently defined by Norway as a fish stock protection zone, which is one step removed from a regular EEZ.

The Norwegian military posture in the high north is not based on fear. It is better explained as an acceptance of the truth of the statement that 'good fences make good neighbours'.

Norway is an Arctic country with strong interests in the high north. In a geopolitical sense Norway stands with one foot in a thoroughly regulated European park which to a large extent may be defined as a security community and an area where war between states is more or less unthinkable. The other foot is placed in the cold wilderness of the high north. The high north is not unregulated, but it is not a security community. In the European park states do not reinforce policy towards each other with displays of military power. In the high north they do.

This does not mean that Norwegians fear a Russian invasion. Such scenarios have not been part of Norwegian defence planning since 2002. In 2013 the Norwegian Intelligence Service expressed some concern regarding political developments in Russia and recognised Russia's growing military capabilities.³ However, the report does not see Russia as a threat or as having hostile intentions towards

Norway. Instead it states that Russia is likely to prioritise international cooperation and avoid militarisation in the high north. Norway and Russia have developed a cooperative, if not always friendly, modus of coexistence in their high-north neighbourhood. To a certain extent Norway and Russia have common interests in the region, especially in the management of fisheries. However, there is a broad consensus in Norway that the country must be able to back up its policies with force if necessary. The Norwegian military posture in the high north is not based on fear. It is better explained as an acceptance of the truth of the statement that 'good fences make good neighbours'.

Norway is highly dependent on the existing world order. Norwegian foreign policy is geared towards the promotion of a rules-based international order. This is not just words or values-based rhetoric. Norwegian control of its EEZs and continental shelf is based on the UNCLOS, which in turn is based on the UN and international society at large. Norway is therefore a very strong supporter of the UN, and it was the fourth largest financial contributor, in absolute terms and by far the largest per capita, to the UN system in 2010.⁴

³ "Fokus 2013", Etterretningstjenestens vurdering. Available at <http://forsvaret.no/om-forsvaret/organisasjon/felles/etjenes-ten/Documents/FOKUS-2013.pdf>

⁴ After the USA, Japan and the UK. Norway and Sweden together would have ranked second

Norwegian security policy depends on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). In 1940 both the Norwegian Armed Forces and the country's traditional politics of neutrality were crushed as German troops invaded and occupied Norway. During the Second World War new forces were built in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, and strong political and military ties were built with the Western powers. Some traits of neutrality remained, however, and NATO forces were not permanently stationed in Norway during the Cold War. At that time it was very important to be able to secure and train reinforcements for Norway at times of crisis or war. NATO is still of fundamental importance to Norwegian security policy and defence planning.

In terms of Nordic-Baltic security, however, it is important to note that for Norway the Barents Sea is far more important than the Baltic Sea.

Norway, for instance, has participated in all the NATO operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. The ongoing repositioning of US forces to Asia, the downsizing of NATO command structures and cuts in European defence capabilities, however, are viewed in Norway with some unease – raising

the question of whether the NATO security guarantee is still credible in practical military terms.

The USA is Norway's most important ally. The military relationship between Norway and the USA goes far beyond the fact that both are members of NATO. Norway deployed forces to Afghanistan and Iraq to honour that relationship and to be seen as a good ally in Washington. A NATO without the USA might not be totally important, but it will certainly be a far less credible military force. While Norway would prefer NATO to focus on the defence of its member states, it cannot ignore US repositioning towards Asia. Norwegians have not yet debated what this means for NATO and for Norway's security. If the USA were to make a request for Norwegian forces to participate in a future conflict in Asia, for instance, what would the answer be?

Norwegians are split as regards membership of the European Union (EU), but Norway is integrated into the EU. In both 1972 and 1994, by a small majority, the Norwegian population voted against membership of the EEC/EU. No other political question is more controversial or provokes more heated political debate. Norwegian nationalism is to a large extent a reaction to historical unions with Denmark and Sweden from 1397 to 1905. Nationalist sentiments and symbols are rarely used in political debates, but debates on EU membership are an exception.

In spite of this fact, Norway is strongly integrated into EU structures through the European Economic Area and the Schengen agreements. Norway contributes large sums to the EU every year and has implemented more EU directives than many of its member states. Europe is obviously important to Norway: some 85% of Norwegian exports went to EU member states in March 2013.⁵

Norway is strongly Scandinavian and Nordic, but Norway is not a Baltic power. The Nordic states, and Sweden in particular, are important to Norway economically, culturally and in terms of shared values and common perspectives on the main issues in international politics. In terms of Nordic-Baltic security, however, it is important to note that for Norway the Barents Sea is far more important than the Baltic Sea. Norwegian support for Baltic cooperation should be understood in the light of Norway's wish for Finnish and Swedish engagement in the north

These seven truths affect Norwegian security and defence policy in different ways and to different degrees. The importance of each is perhaps best discussed in the light of Norway's military choices. After all, what a state

⁵ Only goods, not services. Based on Statistisk sentralbyrå: Utenrikshandel med varer, mars 2013, foreløbige tall. Downloaded 3 May 2013 from <http://www.ssb.no/utenriksokonomi/statistikker/muh/maaned/2013-04-15?fane=tabell&sort=nummer&tabell=107627>

actually does is probably more interesting than what it says.

How are the forces used?

The military is only one of the many instruments of the state. The size of the Norwegian Armed Forces does not allow permanent contributions to all relevant international institutions. Its deployments go a long way towards explaining Norwegian military priorities.

First, the continuous operations in Norway and the surrounding seas are clearly the most important. They include surveillance and intelligence, enforcement of sovereignty and law, search and rescue, and assistance to the police. Readiness in case of terrorist attacks is in the process of being reinforced. They also include guarding the royal palace in Oslo and the border with Russia. These operations are supported by the whole of the coast-guard, a large part of the Intelligence Service, Special Operations Forces (SOF), maritime patrol aircraft and fighter aircraft on 15-minute alert to patrol Norwegian airspace, helicopters operating from five airfields in a state of high readiness for search and rescue, two battalion-sized light infantry units as well as naval ships and submarines for extended periods.

Second, there are the contributions and commitments to operations led by NATO and the US, and to NATO

command structures and response forces. Such activities employ large parts of the army, navy and air force as well as the SOF. Since 1999 the Norwegian Armed Forces have contributed to NATO- or US-led operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Mediterranean (Operation Active Endeavour), Libya and the Indian Ocean (Operation Ocean Shield), as well as to policing the airspace over the Baltic states and Iceland. NATO's ability to respond quickly to a crisis and the maintenance of NATO interoperability are very important to Norway. Norway is therefore and will remain a strong supporter of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the standing naval forces that form part of the NRF. The navy aims to continuously contribute one mine countermeasures vessel to the Standing NATO Mine Counter Measure Group (SNMCMG1) and one frigate to the Standing NATO Maritime Group (SNMG1). It is highly likely that the army, the air force and the SOF will also contribute units to the NRF on a regular basis.

Third, Norway contributes to UN- and EU-led operations. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence have set increased Norwegian participation in UN operations as a goal for many years. Even so, apart from individual or small groups of officers, Norway has only contributed to two UN-led operations since

the termination of its participation in UNIFIL in Lebanon in 1998.⁶ The army deployed a field hospital to MINURCAT in Chad in 2009–2010, and the navy, in cooperation with Swedish naval vessels, deployed a squadron of fast attack craft to UNIFIL II in 2006. As for EU-operations, a Norwegian frigate participated in Operation Atlanta for six months from August 2009 and Norway provided some 100–150 troops to the Swedish-led Nordic battlegroup in 2008 and 2011.

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The deployment pattern of recent years is very clear. NATO and US-led operations are highly prioritised alongside the continuous operations to provide intelligence and enforce sovereignty and law at sea. Contributions to UN- and EU-operations depend on the availability of capabilities. As is shown below, national readiness for more serious threats to national se-

⁶ One should note, however, that most operations led by NATO and the EU have been mandated by the UN.

curity has been given a lower priority than NATO operations.

When it comes to the geographical focus of deployments abroad, 'who asks' is probably more important than the 'where to'. Norway has few or no interests in Afghanistan per se, but close relations with the US and NATO are vitally important to Norway. That is not to say that the UN or relations with the EU and the Nordic countries are not important, just that the armed forces are not the main instrument for engagement in these cases.

The Nordic and Baltic dimensions

During the Cold War, 92% of Norway's eastern borders were protected in the sense that an invader would have to cross Finland, Sweden or both to reach Norwegian territory. This allowed Norway to concentrate most of its forces on holding a relatively narrow line in Troms County in northern Norway until NATO reinforcements arrived. This strategy was relatively credible if it was assumed that Finnish and Swedish territories were either not invaded or could be successfully defended, and that NATO reinforcements would be able to make it to Norway in good time. In other words, Norwegian strategy depended strongly on Finland's and Sweden's will and ability to defend themselves if attacked by the Soviet Union. As long as Norway does not fear a Russian invasion of Scandinavia, there is no such

strategic dependency today. Nonetheless, it is in Norwegian interests for some kind of balance of power to be maintained in Europe's far north. No state should be so weak as to invite sabre rattling or gunboat diplomacy as a practical political strategy.

Norway turned down Sweden's offer of a Scandinavian alliance in 1948, and joined NATO in 1949. It remains true for Norway that no amount of Nordic defence cooperation can replace NATO. Therefore, the impact of the Nordic dimension on Norwegian defence planning is clearly weaker than that of NATO and the USA. For Norway, Nordic defence cooperation is a matter of choice, not of necessity. It is nonetheless true that Nordic defence cooperation has improved in recent years. It was a disappointment to Sweden that Norway chose to purchase US F35s instead of the Swedish Gripen in 2008. In 2012, however, Norway decided to spend NOK 10 billion on Swedish artillery and infantry combat vehicles. Along with other common systems, this opens up avenues for increased cooperation on maintenance, updating and training.

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In Norway's exercise Cold Response in 2012, the Swedish contingent of 1,800 troops and 12 fighter aircraft was the largest participating foreign force. Common systems and mutual trust built through military exercises could ease the way for the deployment of combined Nordic forces in international operations.

The defence budget

While most of Europe has experienced hard times since the start of the 2008 financial crisis, the Norwegian economy has been doing well. Based on estimates for 2012 the International Monetary Fund ranked Norway the 22nd largest economy in the world, with a nominal GDP of USD 500 billion. Sweden was ranked 21st with a GDP of USD 520 billion. Norway is a high-cost economy, however, and in a similar ranking based on GDP purchasing power parity, Norway was 46th, with USD 265 billion while Sweden was ranked 33 with USD 384 billion.

In 2012 the Norwegian trade surplus was USD 414 billion. Norwegian reserves in the state owned oil fund are expected to reach NOK 4,500 billion by the end of 2013. In terms of military expenditure, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) ranks Norway 27th in the world, at USD 7,083 million or USD 1,245 per capita. That said, in 1990 the defence budget was almost 7% of total state spending and 3% of

GDP. By 2012 defence's share of the state budget was slightly more than 3% and its share of GDP around 1.5%.

In comparison, Sweden is ranked 31st, spending USD 5,248 million (1.2% of GDP) or USD 657 per capita. This comparison does not take into account the introduction of gross budgeting by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence in 2011, which led to an upward technical adjustment of the budget by some NOK 3.5 billion compared to 2010,⁷ to reflect the fact that the armed forces must now pay rent for all the buildings and land they use. The defence budget for 2013 is NOK 42.2 billion but the nominal budget would be NOK 35.8 billion. In other words, the actual defence budget is some 15% lower than the number used in national and international statistics.

Thus, while a glance at the statistics may show that, for the first time, the Norwegian defence budget is larger

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than the Swedish, the reality is different – the Swedish defence budget still provides substantially greater purchasing power than the Norwegian.

Military strategy and posture

Given a certain amount of resources a military organisation may decide either to put its efforts into a broad range of capabilities or to focus on a small number. Each capability, however small, still needs a critical mass of resources for education and training, procurement, maintenance, and so on. The fewer the number of capabilities, the larger the proportion of total funding that can be spent on operational units. For instance, a state that gives up its fighter aircraft can spend more on its infantry and will be able to rotate large contingents of ground forces in operations – but it will have to depend on allies to provide air support. Nor will it be able to handle conflicts above a certain level of complexity or intensity on its own. For a state that feels completely secure within an alliance, it is a rational choice to focus on fewer capabilities, not least because this will increase its contribution to and influence within that alliance.

For a state that either does not trust that help will be immediately available or has national interests separate from the alliance, it makes more sense to retain a broad range of independent

capabilities that enable it to manage a crisis or conflict on its own. It also provides flexibility as regards the choice of tools. This is what Norway has tried to do. The downside of this choice, however, is the lack of quantity and sustainability within each category of capabilities. The Norwegian Armed Forces are small. It is obvious that even if they could handle a crisis or even a conflict alone, such a capacity would be limited in time and space. It is not a force designed primarily for the defence of the realm in times of war. Rather, it is designed to enable Norway to contribute forces to NATO, on the one hand, and protect the country against political and armed threats, on the other. In addition, if the need should arise, it is designed to handle a crisis or the first phase of a conflict on its own. This balancing act between contributing to the long-term maintenance of international society and the continuing concern for national security is the crux of Norway's military strategy.

Obviously, this structure would be hard-pressed to sustain prolonged participation in international operations based on the rotation of any single capability or force category. Thus, it is planned to contribute different types of forces in different roles and perhaps different operations. This model was the starting point for of departure Norwegian operations in

7 MOD Prop. 1 (2010–2011) chapter 04.10.

Afghanistan,⁸ but it proved difficult to implement in practice. Until 2005 Norwegian forces were ‘plugged into’ the roles in which they were needed and had the capabilities to contribute. This allowed for the deployment of a wide range of capabilities which took their turn in line alongside other NATO forces. This practice spread the burden of deployment among the different services, branches and units of the armed forces. In September 2005 Norway relieved the UK as the lead nation in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh in Faryab province in north-western Afghanistan. Almost simultaneously a three-party coalition government took charge in Oslo. The Socialist Left party was strongly opposed to Norwegian participation in Operation Enduring Freedom, and transferred its scepticism to ISAF’s operations in southern Afghanistan. The result was that Norwegian forces were concentrated in north-western Afghanistan in one specific military role, which demanded the rotation of similar units over time. This increased the burden on certain units and had a detrimental effect on important capabilities. In 2012, for instance, the Ministry of Defence recognised that the pattern of

deployment to Afghanistan had led to a loss of competence in brigade-level operations.⁹ It recommended that in future operations, Norway should aspire to rotate different capabilities in a “plug and play” mode rather than take on obligations that demand the long-term rotation of specific capabilities.

The command structure

In 1990 the Norwegian Armed Forces had a single High Command, two regional Joint Commands, and four Territorial Commands for the army and seven for the navy. In 2013 there is only a single Joint Command left. The individual services are responsible for recruiting and training their own forces, but the Joint Operational HQ (FOH) at Reitan leads all operations. It is responsible for maintaining a

high level of situational awareness and building what is known as a recognised picture, covering both security related events but also activities related to fishing and traffic at sea and in the air on Norwegian and adjacent territories. Norway has prioritised its Intelligence Service and means of collecting information. Among these means are the intelligence ship *Marjatta*, a squadron of P3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft and a number of radar stations, which operate in the high north on a continuous basis. This high level of situational awareness and the accumulated knowledge of the area form the basis for Norwegian operations in the north.

Until 2008 there was a NATO Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Reitan, Bodø. When

	1990	2000	2013	2020
Army total	160,000	89,000	approx. 16,000	na
Army territorial commands	4	4	0	na
Brigades	1+12	1+5	1	1
Independent battalions	2+35	3+19	2*	
Home Guard	83,000	83,000	45,000	
Home Guard reg. commands	18	18	11 (planned)	na
HG Rapid reaction units	–	–	11 (planned)	
HG SF units	5	5	0	

*includes HJK/FSK, a SOF unit. The strength of Norwegian SOF was dramatically increased after 2000.

8 General, Chief of Army Staff, Lars J. Sølvberg (2004) Hæren omgrupperer til innsatsområdet Afghanistan, article in Aftenposten 15 July. See <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article828338.ece#.T5VDEKu1551>

9 Norwegian Ministry of Defence (2012) Et Forsvar for vår tid, Prop. 73 S (2011-2012), chapter 7.1. Available at <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fd/dok/regpubl/prop/2011-2012/prop-73-s-20112012/3.html?id=676051>

it closed its responsibilities were transferred to CAOC Finderup in Denmark, which will in turn close in 2013. NATO currently has only two CAOCs in Europe. It is perhaps symptomatic of developments in NATO that the Norwegian Government in 2012 decided to establish a *national* Air Operations Centre at Reitan, due to be operational in 2016.

The Special Operations Forces: A strategic asset?

Norway has two SOF units: one in the army and the other in the navy. Both forces have been strengthened dramatically in the past decade, and both have regularly experienced successful but dramatic combat in Afghanistan. Since August 2012, a debate has raged over whether the two SOF units should be merged into a single unit, placed under a new SOF command or remain within their original services. The MOD has proposed maintaining separate units under a new SOF command. Both units will be given roles in assisting the police with counterterrorism operations, hitherto the preserve of the army's SOF. This role will probably include heightened readiness in order to provide capabilities for rapid response nationwide. The introduction of such a system is a natural response to the massacre of 22 July 2011. Ironically, the Home Guard's specialist forces, which had rapid response units in the largest cities, were disbanded

after a heated debate in 2010. If the opposition wins the election in September 2013, these units are likely to be re-established. The SOF are busy units. A further strengthening of their numbers will probably be needed if they are to maintain readiness for both counterterrorism missions at home and operations abroad.

Ground Forces: The Army and the Home Guard

The army and the Home Guard are separate services. Although a merger has been debated, the cultural and functional gaps between the two organisations are wide. The Home Guard has a very strong political position and there are no immediate plans for a merger. When the army closed its regional commands and abolished its territorial regiments, the Home Guard took over all territorial roles. The Home Guard is mainly a light infantry force with little mobility or firepower.

The army has some 9500 personnel, half of whom belong to the one remaining brigade. The only large units outside the brigade are His Majesty the King's Guard, a light infantry battalion in Oslo, and the Border guard, a ranger force deployed at the Russian border.

A large number of trained soldiers and officers are transferred to the Home Guard and the army reserve every year, but the army itself does

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not have organised units for mobilisation. The last mobilisation brigade was closed down in 2008. In 2013, however, the MOD signalled that efforts are under way to develop new ways of using reserves systematically in order to improve the sustainability of operations at home and abroad.¹⁰

Brigade Nord has three manoeuvre battalions, two mechanised and one light infantry, each of which is the core of a battalion battle group. Two such battle groups are stationed in northern Norway and one in the south. For a decade the latter, the Telemark battalion, and its support forces were manned by professional soldiers while the rest were dependent on conscripts. In 2012 it was decided that both the Telemark battalion and the Armoured battalion would be manned mainly by professionals, but with a number of conscripts as well. The Second Infantry battalion, which is being reorganised into an Arctic force, the Royal Guard and the Border Guard will still mainly be manned by conscripts.

¹⁰ Stortingsmelding 14 (2012–2013) Kompetanse for en ny tid. Published 1 March 2013.

Since 2003–2004, the army has had a strong focus on its operations in Afghanistan, to the extent that it would now be at a disadvantage in operations against a symmetric enemy. In 2005, the army lost both its air defence battalion and its heavy artillery battalion, along with its Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS). More recently, the Ministry of Defence has signalled that an air defence capability will be re-established in the brigade, but as yet there are no plans

to reactivate the MLRS. The MLRS, undoubtedly the most potent weapon system in the Norwegian Army, was deactivated as part of Norway's adaptation to the so-called anti-personnel mine convention.¹¹

The mechanised battalions operate Leopard 2A4 main battle tanks and CV90N infantry combat vehicles, but they are also equipped with lighter, wheeled armoured vehicles. In 2012 it was decided to modernise the army's 103 existing CV90N infantry combat

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vehicles and to purchase an additional 43 from Sweden. Another Swedish product, the Archer artillery system, will equip the army's single remaining artillery battalion.

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Sea Forces: The Navy and the Coastguard

The navy consists of the Coastal Squadron, which is the navy proper, the coastguard and the Naval Special Operations forces. The Coastal Squadron is made up of coastal rangers as well as ships and submarines. The main naval base is Haakonsværn, in Bergen, while the main coastguard base is situated in Sortland, in the Vesterålen Islands, in northern Norway.

In 1990 the Royal Norwegian Navy was a force organised in coastal districts, structured to fight in the lit-

	1990	2000	2013	2020
Naval territorial commands	7	(3)	–	–
Coastal defence installations	40	15	–	–
Frigates	5	3	5	5
Corvettes (Light escort)	2	–	–	–
FAC and Coastal corvettes	36+8 reserve	14	6	6
Submarines	13	10	6	6
Minelayers	2	2	–	–
Mine clearing vessels	4	9	6	6
Landing ships tank	7	5	–	–
Large support ships	1	2	1	na
Fleet oilers	–	–	–	1
Combat boats	–	20	20	na
Large OPV with helicopters	3	3	4	4
OPV 3001t+	–	–	4	na
OPV 1001–3000t	4	6	1	na
Patrol vessel 501–1000t	6	5	6	na
Patrol vessel 500t or smaller	–	6	–	na

OPV= Ocean Patrol Vessels

¹¹ The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

toral zones and to protect coastal and sea lines of communication between southern and northern Norway. Norway maintained advanced area denial systems in areas of strategic importance. These systems included a large number of coastal fortress, minefields and torpedo batteries as well as submarines, fast attack craft and fighter aircraft. Today, the Coastal Rangers are the only remaining element of the old Coast Defence force, which used to be able to mobilise more than 30,000 men. The current navy is still a coastal force, but has a much improved sea-going capability.

In 1990 the navy proper had 78 vessels with a total displacement of 36,500 tonnes. In 2013 its 24 ships displaced more than 40,000 tonnes. The coastguard has also increased the number, quality and average size of its ships since 1990. In 1990, the navy had many bases and depots along the coast. Now there are few left. In 2009 it was decided to close the only remaining naval base in northern Norway, Olafsværn in Tromsø. As the government has stated repeatedly that the High North is priority number one, the strategic wisdom of this move has been questioned. The planned procurement of a combined fleet oiler/logistics ship in 2016 might alleviate the need for a base to some extent, but one such a ship will not fill the gap.

During the Cold War most of the fleet was kept in a state of high readiness. The navy of 2013 has taken many

years to introduce new classes of ships, which have suffered serious delays. The navy proper has less than one crew per ship and suffers from shortages of crewmembers with specialist skills. The coastguard, on the other hand, operates continuously and each ship has two crews. There is no doubt that such an arrangement is needed in the navy proper if the billions invested in fast attack craft and frigates is to yield a proportionate return in terms of operational availability.

Displacing more than 5,000 tonnes, the five Nansen class frigates that entered service between 2006 and 2011 are nearly three times as large as their predecessors, the Oslo Class. The frigates are equipped with Aegis combat systems to counter air threats but, compared to similar ships in the navies of other NATO members, they have few missiles. The Nansen class has only one or two eight-cell vertical launchers (VLS). All the frigates will probably be re-equipped with more missile launchers in the future. Each cell can carry four Evolved Sea Sparrow (ESSM) air defence missiles

or alternatively one Standard 2 or Standard 3 Ballistic Missile Defence missile. Aegis supports the use of the latter, more capable missile, but the Norwegian Navy has not yet procured any. All this means that the Nansen class has the potential to be developed into a far more capable air defence ship at a relatively modest cost.

First and foremost, these frigates are optimised for anti-submarine warfare and equipped with both hull-mounted and towed sonar as well as an NH90 ASW helicopter. Fourteen NH90s were ordered for the coastguard and the navy in 2001. The helicopters were to have entered service from 2006, but by 2013 only a single helicopter had been delivered.

Kongsberg's Naval Strike Missile is the main anti-surface weapon on both the Nansen-class frigates and the Skjold-class corvettes. The NSM is a highly manoeuvrable medium-range cruise missile with an advanced passive seeker system. It is especially suited for use in the littoral zones, but it may also be used against targets on land. A version is being developed for the F35.

	1990	2000	2013	2020
F-35	-	-	-	+/- 20 (tot 56)
F-16 A/B	62	58	57	Decreasing
F-5 RF	16	16	(10 in store)	-
Orion P3 C/N	6	6	6	Na
C-130 transport aircraft	6	6	4 (new)	
Helicopters (TPT/SAR)	30	30	30	Na
Naval Helicopters	6	6	2 operational	18

When the NSM was ordered in 2002 the delivery date was 2007. However, the first missiles were not tested on ships until October 2012.

Obviously, these delays in the delivery of missiles and helicopters have led to severe limitations in the capabilities of the frigates, as well as for the fast attack craft and the four helicopter-carrying coastguard ships. In fact, when the 14 Hauk class fast attack craft were taken out of service earlier than originally planned, the Norwegian Navy did not have a serious surface combat capability between 2008 and 2012.

The Norwegian Navy suffered a serious drop in capabilities between 2008 and 2012.

In the next few years this trend is likely to be reversed dramatically as weapon systems are delivered and skills in using the new, advanced ships improve.

The six Ula-class submarines are seen as a strategic deterrent.¹² They are probably Norway's strongest deterrent against military threats. They are likely to be replaced with new and more

12 Norwegian Ministry of Defence (2012) Et Forsvar for vår tid, Prop. 73 S (2011-2012), chapter 7.2. Available at <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fd/dok/regpubl/prop/2011-2012/prop-73-s-20112012/3.html?id=676051>

capable submarines with air independent propulsion around 2020. Even with the huge investments in the F35 fighter aircraft, Norwegian politicians have stressed the need for submarines and the will to pay for them. It is significant that when Volker Rühle, the German minister of defence, proposed a common North Sea submarine fleet in May 2012, Espen Barth Eide, at the time the Norwegian minister of defence, declared that Norway needed its own submarines.¹³

The Norwegian Navy suffered a serious drop in capabilities between 2008 and 2012. In the next few years this trend is likely to be reversed dramatically as weapon systems are delivered and skills in using the new, advanced ships improve.

The Air Force

The Royal Norwegian Air Force operates all the aircraft in the Norwegian Armed Forces as well as the helicopters used for search and rescue owned by the Ministry of Justice. The number of aircraft has not been dramatically reduced since 1990, and will expand as the NH-90 helicopters are introduced. The number of bases, on the other hand, has been sharply reduced since 1990. Fighter aircraft and ground-based air defence units are currently

13 "Norge gir ikke opp ubåter», Aftenposten 20 May 2012. Available at <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/uriks/Norge-gir-ikke-opp-ubater-6832837.html#.UYwi-7X0mn8>

stationed at Bodø and Ørland, but the plan is to move all the aircraft to Ørland in the coming years. A forward base with rapid reaction aircraft will be established in Evenes.

During the Kosovo campaign in 1999, Norwegian fighter aircraft were assigned to fly patrols in daylight over the Adriatic Sea, probably the least demanding task in the operation. The Norwegian F16s were neither equipped nor trained for attack missions against Serbian targets. In 2002, six F16s were deployed as part of a Danish-Dutch-Norwegian unit operating from Manas Airbase in Kyrgyzstan. In January 2003, Norwegian F-16s dropped two bombs on a rebel force in Afghanistan that was attacking a US patrol. Both bombs hit their target. It was the first time the Royal Norwegian Air Force had attacked anyone since the Second World War, and a stark contrast to the Kosovo experience.

On 19 March 2011 the Norwegian Government ordered six F-16s to take part in operations against Libya. The aircraft were deployed on the 21st and dropped their first bombs on the 25th. The air force's F16s carried out 286 missions as part of Operation Odyssey Dawn and Operation Unified Protector. They flew 615 sorties totalling 3,121 hours and dropped 588 bombs.

The procurement of 56 F35 Lightning II fighter aircraft is by far the largest Norwegian defence procurement. Four training aircraft have

already been ordered, and six aircraft a year will be delivered from 2017. The choice of F35 remains controversial because of uncertainty about the final cost, and because future technological developments seem likely to favour fewer manned aircraft and committing a larger proportion of resources to drones.

The Orion aircraft has supported Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean and Operation Ocean Shield in the Indian Ocean, and are still constantly active over the Barents Sea. Norway took delivery of the new C130J Hercules aircraft in 2008.¹⁴ They, like their predecessors, have been constantly active supporting Norwegian troops both at home and in international operations.

Between 2008 and 2012, the air force kept three helicopters in Afghanistan in support of the Norwegian-led PRT. This continuous deployment was successful but put major strains on the small number of helicopter units. It may also have set a precedent for future operations, in which Norwegian Army units may be reluctant to deploy to high risk operations without an organic helicopter capability. If military helicopters are to play a larger role in domestic security in response to the events of 22 July

2011, while simultaneously maintaining a detachment abroad, the service will probably need to be reinforced.

As a whole, the Royal Norwegian Air Force is a highly operational, deployable and professional force. The introduction of NH-90s and F35s will dramatically increase its capabilities. Its main challenge, perhaps, is to manage the transition from the current system and base structure to the new one. The air force should be careful to avoid the drop in capability experienced by the navy during the latter's recent transition.

The choice of F35 remains controversial because of uncertainty about the final cost.

Conclusion

Norway has important interests, especially in the north, that are not necessarily shared by its allies or partners. Moreover, the US repositioning of its forces to Asia and European cuts in force structures imply that a rapid NATO military response to a crisis cannot be taken for granted. This means that Norway needs a

military capability to handle crises on its own, albeit a capability that is limited in space and time. Accordingly, the Norwegian Armed Forces have maintained a broader range of military capabilities than many NATO member states, which have optimised their force structures for international operations. Moreover, because crises related to disputes at sea are seen as far more likely than an invasion of the mainland, the air force and the navy have suffered far fewer cuts than the army.

In terms of capabilities, the Norwegian Armed Forces probably reached their low point in the period from 2008 to 2012 due to both the strain of deployments to Afghanistan and major changes in the navy. Even so, the operations in Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere have proved that the Norwegian Armed Forces have made huge progress in terms of professionalism. Ongoing and planned technological improvements will strengthen them further in the coming years. Even so, it is an open question whether such small forces will be enough in a world where multipolarity and great power rivalry is on the rise. From such a perspective, the warnings of General Göranson and General Mood should certainly be taken seriously.

¹⁴ The C-130J that crashed in Sweden in March 2012 with the loss of all five crew members has been replaced.

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