



Norway's Foreign Policy in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries

Noble Rhetoric and National Interests

Geir K. Almlid

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ISBN 978-3-031-46284-9 ISBN 978-3-031-46285-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-46285-6>

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
EC	European Community/ies
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ESA	EFTA Surveillance Authority
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FPZ	Fisheries Protection Zone (around Svalbard)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (in Afghanistan)
KFOR	The Kosovo Force (NATO)
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NORDEF	Nordic Defence Cooperation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEEC	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation (European Union)

PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team (in Afghanistan)
SEA	Single European Act
SLP	Socialist Left Party (Norway)
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon



Introduction

Now we have a world order under attack. For Norway, this has profound implications.¹

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre voiced these concerns in February 2023, referring to Russia’s all-out attack on Ukraine one year earlier. He focused on how Norway’s security and prosperity rest on an international rule-based order—and that this was seriously threatened by its neighbouring country. The attack was in some respects a culmination of a number of negative developments in the twenty-first century. The global situation has become more complex with “new” challenges, such as climate change, international terrorism and cyber warfare. Furthermore, the position of democracy has been undermined. Freedom House stated in its annual report for 2019 that “democracy and pluralism are under assault”.² The organisation pointed to threats against free and fair elections, rights of minorities, press freedom and the rule of law. This pertains to European countries too. Norwegian governments have also been increasingly concerned about a tendency where the role of multi-lateral organisations has been downgraded in international politics, which reduces the possibilities to solve common challenges through compromise and cooperation.³ This tendency has also manifested itself in the

US, Norway's most important security partner. Finally, there is an intensifying US-China power struggle, which has the potential to influence the country negatively in different ways.

Certainly, there have been positive international aspects for Norway in recent decades. Petroleum has made it one of the richest per-capita countries in the world, thereby increasing the options it has for taking action in international politics. Norway has also integrated much closer with the European Union and entered into and strengthened other forms of international cooperation. The main picture of international politics is nonetheless rather gloomy seen from Oslo.

For a small West-European state like Norway, a well-developed liberal democracy that has no great power aspirations, instability and growing tensions in international politics is undesirable. Moreover, the country is highly affected by geostrategic fluctuations, particularly the movements of the USA, Russia and the European Union, and increasingly China. This is common for many small states, but it is especially significant for a country like Norway with its extensive international trade, both imports and exports, and a precarious strategic position. Balancing is therefore a key aspect in Norwegian foreign policies.

These typical small state features have influenced Norway's foreign policy since the early twentieth century. In 1905 the country broke out of the union with Sweden and formally established its own foreign-policy administration and an independent foreign policy. The room for manoeuvring in international affairs has varied in the 120 years since then: the World Wars blatantly revealed how the actions of the great powers could affect Norway; the Cold War positioned the country on one side of a deadlocked international system for almost half a century; the 1990s opened opportunities for assuming a role as an international peacemaker; while in the twenty-first century, foreign-policy options have increasingly declined. Throughout this long century, Norwegian foreign policymakers have sought to present Norway as "good" in international politics—a humanitarian and peace nation that emphasises dialogue and cooperation. However, particularly since the Second World War, Norwegian foreign policy has predominantly been motivated by an understanding of power politics and, above all, the pursuit of national self-interests.

OBJECTIVES AND APPROACHES

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive view of Norway's foreign policy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with a particular focus on the latter. It thereby offers an analytical introduction to Norwegian foreign relations since 1905 to academics primarily within various fields of history. This analysis is unique for the reason that it covers this long time period with such wide-ranging perspectives on foreign policy, all the way up to the mid-2020s.

Examining Norway's modern foreign policy in this manner is based on a fundamental premise of the book: long-running features in the country's history have shaped its foreign policy perspectives in recent decades. These longer historical perspectives are useful, and sometimes even necessary, for understanding Norway's foreign policies and actions in the present century.⁴ One example is how the EU membership debates in 1972 and 1994 have divided the country so much that many foreign policymakers subsequently have shunned the issue. Another is how national security and defence prioritisations in the interwar years, and the subsequent German invasion in 1940, have affected the thinking of policymakers and military leaders up until this day. Generally, continuity and stability are fundamental features of Norwegian foreign policy-making. Examining their origin and role is essential for understanding the country's more contemporary foreign-policy actions.

As indicated, a broad definition of foreign policy is employed in this book; this includes peace-making and foreign aid, security and defence policies, foreign-trade policy and various types of international political cooperation. Often the term "foreign policy" may refer to all these areas, and sometimes more narrow phrases, such as "security policy" or "European policy", are used when discussed specifically.

Who is "Norway" in this analysis? The short answer is the people who are formally in charge of making the country's foreign policy. The government at any point in time is the most important party as it, according to the Constitution, has the prerogative to formulate foreign policy. Cabinet policies are therefore an important element in the book. It also examines disagreements within coalition governments, which is quite common in Norway, where foreign-policy views seldom determine the composition of political coalitions. However, the parliament (the Storting) is informed and to a large degree consulted in this area as well. This is based on the principle that the body that has been democratically elected by the people

should have significant control over the government, and thereby also foreign-policy questions.⁵ Moreover, deciding budgets, for example for the armed forces and foreign aid, is a parliamentary responsibility. Consequently, the book discusses views expressed in the Storting, including by the opposition.

The “black box” of the state is opened somewhat further. Far from being a bureaucratic politics analysis, the views of bureaucrats and senior military leaders are occasionally referred to. Furthermore, the opinions of NGOs and not least the general public are included. Norway is a pluralistic society, where traditionally a variety of interests are heard and have influence. This is perhaps less so in foreign policy than in most other domestic policy areas, but the views of the public may certainly have an effect on foreign policymakers. This is limited in some fields, such as high security, but in other areas it matters more. For example, the people’s negative views explain the passive attitude among governments to the question of EU membership in the twenty-first century.

Essentially, this book is an analysis of foreign policy in a historical perspective. The main focus is on Norway’s foreign-policy actions and, in particular, the rationales and motivations behind them. The book is less about the effects of Norwegian foreign policy on the international stage and its interactions with other states, which would take us more into the academic realm of international politics/international relations. However, as is commonly known, there are no watertight compartments between these academic fields.⁶ Indeed, there are grey zones in all foreign policy areas discussed in the various chapters of this book. Primarily the international level is in focus when discussing the main forces behind Norwegian foreign policy, as it is necessary to understand foreign actors’ expectations from Norway or how their changes in policy affect the country. Vitaly, the options Norwegian foreign policymakers have are largely determined by developments abroad.

This brings us to a central dichotomy that is employed as an analytical lens throughout the book when it comes to Norwegian motivations for its foreign policy actions over this time period: the role of altruism and idealism, on the one hand, and the role of seeking national self-interests, on the other. This is simplified in the subtitle of this book: noble rhetoric and national self-interests. However, it must be emphasised that these two categorisations of motivation may go hand in hand. Having multiple motives behind a certain policy or strategy is a common feature in any

country's foreign policy. It is also normal that both altruism and self-interest are incentives for the same policy. In various chapters we will see that spreading values such as human rights, poverty reduction, democracy and economic equality is stated explicitly as a Norwegian foreign-policy motivation.⁷ Nonetheless, this book will also show that Norway's foreign policies have mainly been motivated by self-interests—which of course is a fundamental assignment for national policymakers.⁸

It is not the intention to pass judgement on whether the various aspects of Norwegian foreign policy are morally right or wrong. Of course, judging what is morally superior is often difficult and based on personal preferences. Furthermore, when it comes to questions of security and defence, one must not necessarily assume that an idealist/liberal approach, as defined within the field of international relations theory (see more in Chapter 9), is naturally more praiseworthy. Having a realist view of international relations does not mean that one prefers war over peace more than what an idealist does—it simply means that other measures to avoid war and conflict are emphasised, based on a different understanding of how the world works. So, to clarify further, the intention of the book is to describe and analyse Norway's modern foreign policies, as objectively as possible.

A CASE STUDY OF A SMALL STATE

“It is very substantial”, Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt answered rather enthusiastically when asked about how great Norway's real power was as member of the Security Council in 2022.⁹ While she pointed in particular to foreign aid to Afghanistan and Syria, there is a general tendency that the country's power sometimes is overrated domestically. The foreign minister's opinion notwithstanding, in this book, it is assumed that Norway is a small state.

What is a small state? As with most concepts, there are divergent views on the definition.¹⁰ Wivel et al. agree, but also comment that there seems to be consensus on the opinion that small states tend to adapt to their external environment, and not dominate it, and often seek influence through membership in international institutions.¹¹ This is a viewpoint that is shared by the present book.

More specifically, it is common to base the categorisation of states on specific levels of quantifiable characteristics, such as the size of the national economy, population, territory and military capabilities. Where

the exact dividing lines are between great and small, or other categories of size, is still open to interpretation. Moreover, similar to other states, Norway varies much according to which category is emphasised. deCarvalho and Neumann are correct when arguing that the country could easily be said to be a medium power.¹² They point in particular to the economy. Indeed, Norwegian GDP was ranked number 29 globally in 2021.¹³ Furthermore, Norway is the world's second largest natural gas exporter and among the top ten oil exporters, as well as the second largest exporter of fish. Geographically, too, the country is relatively large, number eight according to land area of the European states.¹⁴ However, the country is weak in some other important natural resources. And due to its climate and topography, only three per cent of its area is cultivated land,¹⁵ rendering it dependent on the import of food and foodstuffs. When it comes to population, with its five and a half million people, Norway is well below the world average.¹⁶

As a NATO member Norway is committed to having a fairly strong defence. In fact, although difficult to measure, the country's military strength ranks slightly above the medium in a NATO setting.¹⁷ However, this by no means suggests that Norway is a great military power. Its military weakness was evident in the first half of the twentieth century, culminating with the fairly easy German invasion of Norway in 1940. Since 1949, when Norway joined NATO, and indeed in the twenty-first century, the Norwegian military has been regarded as strong enough to repel an attack from a great power for only a few days at best—it is totally dependent on help from its allies.

Edstrøm et al. point out that the distinction between small and great powers emerged in the final phases of the Napoleonic Wars, in the early 1800s.¹⁸ The small powers were too weak militarily to act as guardians of peace accords and of international order, from the perspective of the great powers. Indeed, in 1814 Norway was taken from Denmark and given as a prize to Sweden for fighting on the right side in the Napoleonic wars, underlining also the country's inferiority to its Scandinavian neighbours at the time. In the twenty-first century, the three Scandinavian countries are more equal. Indeed, this book could to a certain extent be seen as a case study of the small northern European states' foreign policy. They share important similarities in terms of size, being strong liberal democracies, having strong belief in multilateral solutions and all being affected by a more self-assertive and aggressive Russia. It is vital, however, to emphasise that this is not a comparative study.

SOURCES

To reduce potential political, ideological and institutional biases, this study is based on a wide range of sources. It has been considered, though, that interviews with persons who have been involved in Norwegian foreign policymaking were not necessary. They would have had a relatively modest added value to the many other good sources that are openly available, which also include clear-stated views of the foreign policymakers in question.

Typical primary sources are government white papers, reports and press releases. Other public-sector sources are also important material for the study, such as government agencies' websites and parliamentary debates. In general, such information is readily available in an open society like Norway with a strong Freedom of Information Act. Archival government documents are also employed when discussing developments in the twentieth century. Material from political parties, such as election programmes, is also useful for the study and is largely available online.

Furthermore, articles, opinion pieces and debate programmes in Norwegian news outlets constitute important sources. Comments and reports from NGOs and research institutes are also useful.

The book also employs and in part criticises previous academic literature. Due to the broad approach to foreign policy employed in this study, these sources are comprehensive and fragmented. There are some previous works that have a similar wide approach.¹⁹ Riste's book is important for understanding Norway's foreign relations in previous centuries.²⁰ Lange et al. include contributions on several of the aspects discussed in this book, but only cover the first years of the twenty-first century.²¹ On their key question, whether the end of the Cold War represents a turning-point towards a more ambitious Norway in international relations, the authors conclude differently. Moreover, Fermann's edited work has a narrower focus: security and defence.²² A key strength of the book is its varied and in-depth analyses of different cases of international military operations. The debate book *Norske Interesser* (Norwegian Interests) from 2008 has a broader foreign-policy perspective.²³ The book was initiated by then Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, and some of the authors worked for the Foreign Ministry.²⁴ The 2015 edited book by de Carvalho and Neumann offers valuable contributions on the country's foreign affairs.²⁵ Its main focus is on how Norway as a small state has

sought status in various arenas. The present book will have perspectives on foreign policy where status-seeking is one of several aspects.

Several works present interesting aspects on Norway's foreign policy within primarily one area. Examples are Stokke on what has guided Norwegian foreign-aid policy: altruism or self-interest²⁶; Hønneland and Jensen on Norway's High North relations, particularly in the large ocean areas²⁷; Tamnes and Offerdal on petroleum resources and security challenges in the Arctic²⁸; Østhagen on Norway and Svalbard²⁹; and Heier, Kjølberg and Rønnfeldt on Norway's role in international military operations.³⁰ Moreover, Tvedt has examined how Norway's political leadership has attempted to transform the country into a great humanitarian power.³¹ On Norway's relationship with Europe, Rye's historical account and Eriksen and Fossum's anthology offer useful insights.³² These are all selected examples. In all foreign-policy areas discussed in this book, the chapters will engage with a wide range of scholarly literature.

Despite this extensive variety of sources, as well as having the genuine desire to deal with each source objectively, it is unrealistic to expect that the author's experiences, perspectives and viewpoints on international politics and history can be totally eliminated from influencing the analyses in the book. Indeed, in some foreign-policy areas the author's position is relatively clearly expressed, such as on whether Norwegian NATO membership is a good idea. Moreover, the different sources are interpreted with a view to who produced them. Clearly, for example a political party manifesto, a statement by an opposition politician without any realistic chance of coming to power or a government press release all have different purposes and are based on different foreign-policy outlooks. Eventually, it is the intention of the author to employ the various sources in a balanced manner—as much as possible for a Norwegian author writing on Norwegian matters—in order to present an account of Norway's foreign policies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

The book follows largely a thematical structure. A majority of the chapters have an internal chronology: the long historical lines are presented in the initial parts. But throughout the chapters, events and developments from the twentieth century are used to explain and understand more contemporary Norwegian foreign policy.

The two first chapters after this introduction are closely related since they deal with Norway's expressed ambitions and actions to help foreigners in need. Chapter 2 discusses the country's motivations behind its peace-making efforts and how successful these have been. Chapter 3 focuses on foreign aid and, similar to the previous chapter, examines potential Norwegian self-interests and tries to explain the changes in policies over the last decade.

The next two chapters, dealing with security and defence policy, are largely chronological in the overarching sense that Chapter 4 analyses Norwegian approaches in the first decade after the Cold War, and not least its contributions in various international military operations in the subsequent decade, while the main theme in Chapter 5 is Russia's increased self-assertiveness and aggression over the last decade. This has led to Norwegian policies aimed at strengthening the armed forces and seeking stronger alliances.

Chapter 6 deals with the economic and political importance of Norway's large ocean areas, and how these also pose considerable challenges vis-à-vis other states. The country's problematic relationship to the European Union is examined in Chapter 7, both in a historical and contemporary perspective, which reveals this small state's substantial dependence on this large international actor.

Chapter 8 analyses which foreign-policy circle—the Atlantic, the European or the Nordic—have carried the most weight in Norwegian foreign policy since 1905. It also outlines briefly Norway's relationship to the emerging superpower that is China.

Chapter 9 highlights main characteristics of Norwegian foreign policy over these two centuries. It applies some concepts from international relations theory together with some new empirical data as well as historical developments that have been presented in the preceding chapters.

NOTES

1. Norwegian Government website, "Prime Minister's Speech at the Leangkollen Security Conference", 6 February 2023. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/prime-ministers-speech-at-the-leangkollen-security-conference/id2962116/>.
2. Freedom House website, "Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy", no date. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>.

3. Norwegian Government, “Norges rolle og interesser i multilateralt samarbeid”, White Paper (St.meld.) 27 (2018–2019), 14 June 2009, 5.
4. Many authors argue for the value of a historical approach when studying a state’s foreign policies. See, for example, Peter Calvert, *An Introduction to Comparative Politics* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 11; Gunnar Fermann, “Utenrikspolitisk Analyse: Begreper, Perspektiver, Anvendelser”, in *Utenrikspolitikk og Norsk Krisehåndtering*, ed. Gunnar Fermann (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2013), 90. For an excellent illustration, see Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (Melbourne & London: Scribe, 2018).
5. Helene Sjørusen, “Enighet for enhver Pris?—Om Legitimitetsgrunnlaget for Norsk Utenrikspolitikk”, *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 32, no. 3 (2015), 220.
6. Fermann, “Utenrikspolitisk”, 90.
7. There are several studies that focus on the dichotomy between values or interests in Norwegian foreign policymaking, for example Janne H. Matlary, *Verdidiplomati—Kilde til Makt? En Strategisk Analyse av Norsk Utenrikspolitikk* (Oslo: Unipub., 2002); Nina Græger, “Kommentarer til Stortingsmeldingen ‘Interesser, ansvar og muligheter: Hovedlinjer i norsk utenrikspolitikk’: Idealer og Interesser i Nytt Samspill”, *Internasjonal Politikk* 67, no. 3 (2009), 517–537.
8. This is also explicitly stated by Norwegian governments. See, for example, Norwegian Government, “Interesser, ansvar og muligheter. Hovedlinjer i norsk utenrikspolitikk”, White Paper (St.Meld.) 15 (2008–2009), 13 March 2009, 85.
9. Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, “Nyhetsmorgen”, NRK Alltid nyheter radio programme, 3 January 2022. Author’s translation.
10. Håkan Edström, Dennis Gyllensporre and Jacob Westberg, *Military Strategy of Small States: Responding to External Shocks of the 21st Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 10.
11. Anders Wivel, Alyson J.K. Bailes and Clive Archer, “Setting the Scene: Small States and International Security”, in *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, eds. Clive Archer,

- Alyson J.K. Bailes and Andes Wivel (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 5–6.
12. Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho, “Introduction: Small States and Status”, in *Small State Status Seeking: Norway’s Quest for International Standing*, eds. Benjamin de Carvalho and Iver B. Neumann (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 13.
 13. World Bank website, “GDP (current US\$)”, no date. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?most_recent_value_desc=true.
 14. World Population Review website, “Largest Countries in Europe 2023”, no date. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/largest-countries-in-europe>.
 15. Norwegian Government website, “Jordvern”, 12 October 2021. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/mat-fiske-og-landbruk/landbrukseiendommer/innsikt/jordvern/jordvern/id2009556/>.
 16. CIA The World Factbook website, “Population”, no date. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/population/country-comparison>.
 17. Global Firepower website, “2023 Military Strength Ranking”, no date. <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>.
 18. Edstrøm, Gyllensporre and Westberg, *Military Strategy*, 8.
 19. In addition to those mentioned below here, see also Matlary, *Verdidiplomati*.
 20. In the 1990s, a six-volume series on Norwegian foreign-policy history was published, with contributions from leading Norwegian historians. It comprehensively covered Norwegian foreign relations from the Middle Ages but had a main emphasis on the period from 1905 until 1995. See, for example, Rolf Tamnes, *Oljealder: 1965–1995*, vol. 6 of *Norsk utenrikspolitisk historie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997). Olav Riste led this project, and in 2001 a summary of it was published in English: Olav Riste, *Norway’s Foreign Relations—A History* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001).
 21. Even Lange, Helge Pharo and Øyvind Østerud, eds., *Vendepunkter i Norsk Utenrikspolitikk: Nye Internasjonale Vilkår etter den Kalde Krigen* (Oslo: Unipub, 2009).
 22. Gunnar Fermann, ed., *Utenrikspolitikk og Norsk Krisehåndtering* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2013).
 23. Leiv Lunde and Henrik Thune et al. *Norske Interesser: Utenrikspolitikk for en Globalisert Verden* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2008).

24. Two of the contributors, Leiv Lunde and Henrik Thune, later published a debate book that aimed to contribute to more public debate on Norwegian foreign policy, particularly during the 2013 parliamentary election campaign: Leiv Lunde and Henrik Thune, *Hva Norge Kan Vere i Verden* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2013).
25. Benjamin de Carvalho and Iver B. Neumann, *Small State Status Seeking: Norway's Quest for International Standing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).
26. Olav Stokke, "Norwegian Aid Policy: Continuity and Change in the 1990s and Beyond", in *Perspectives on European Development Co-operation: Policy and Performances of Individual Donor Countries and the EU*, eds. Paul Hoebink and Olav Stokke (London and New York: Abingdon, 2005), 448–492; Barratt also discusses Norway briefly in her analysis of motives behind foreign aid: Bethany Barratt, *Human Rights and Foreign Aid: For Love or Money?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
27. Geir Hønneland and Leif C. Jensen, *Den Nye Nordområdepolitikken—Barentsbilder Etter Årtusenskiftet* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2008); Geir Hønneland, *International Politics in the Arctic: Contested Borders, Natural Resources and Russian Foreign Policy* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017); Geir Hønneland, *Arctic Euphoria and International High North Politics* (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2017). Leiv C. Jensen, *International Relations in the Arctic: Norway and the Struggle for Power in the New North* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).
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Noble Peace-Making—With Benefits

Working for peace has been one of the foundations that Norway has built itself on for centuries.¹

This statement, made by Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik in his New Year's speech to the public in 2003, displays how peace-building has been a feature of the Norwegian national self-image for a long time. It has been important both domestically and in foreign-relations settings. Since 1901 the country has proudly awarded the annual Nobel Peace Prize. Its long tradition as a peace facilitator blossomed fully with the Palestine-Israel peace negotiations in the 1990s, known as the Oslo Accords. The consequent rise in Norway's international reputation and boosted self-esteem spurred a plethora of peacemaker engagements across the world in the following decades.

A strong commitment to peace mediation, as well as international development, is often seen as a common Scandinavian or Nordic trait. These countries share a political culture characterised by the idea of doing good on the world stage.² While Leira et al. agree with this, they argue that the altruistic self-image has been more complete in Norway than in the other Nordic countries.³ Nissen contends that of the Nordic countries, traditionally, Sweden and Norway have cultivated the peace-nation narrative, while referring to recent voices in Sweden arguing for their government to catch up to its neighbour.⁴ It is difficult to gauge which

country makes the strongest efforts in this area. What is certain, though, is that there was a prevalent view among Norwegians during the first two decades after the Cold War of having the most prominent position. This self-image, and desired international image, was accompanied by a feeling of moral superiority and thus a responsibility to spread peace throughout the world.

This chapter investigates Norway's long traditions as a so-called peace nation. Moreover, it discusses whether the country has particular qualities that make it an especially effective peace nation. The chapter also examines the motivations behind Norwegian peace-making efforts, revealing that more self-interest is involved than one might initially think.

LONG HISTORY AS A "PEACE NATION"

The Nobel Peace Prize has for more than a century been a trademark of Norway's peace-nation image. It is the most prestigious prize awarded for the preservation of peace in the world.⁵ For many Norwegians the Prize is a source of national pride.

In 1896 Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel left all his realisable assets to fund five prizes awarded to "those who, during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind".⁶ Four of the prizes were to be awarded by Swedish institutions, while the peace prize became the responsibility of the parliament of his homeland's union partner. The Norwegian parliament eagerly accepted this idea.⁷ It is not known, however, exactly why the Storting was chosen to appoint a committee that would award the peace prize. It seems likely that this was connected to the peace stance taken by the Storting in the 1890s, where several parliamentary members were peace activists. The Storting was the first parliament to economically support the Interparliamentary Union from 1890, and Norwegian activists were involved in initiatives for peaceful change, such as the Central Organisation for Durable Peace.⁸ Knutsen points out that during this period few other countries had peace activists who dominated the public debate on foreign policy as much as in Norway.⁹ Finally, the country did not have an independent diplomatic service at the time, as foreign policy was Sweden's responsibility, and it was thus expected that Norway could deal with this more objectively.¹⁰

Where did these peace sentiments originate from? To start with, Norway had a century-long tradition of seeking peaceful co-existence with other countries. Slettebø et al. point out that the peace-nation approach