

**Consular representation
in an emerging state:
The case of Norway**

by

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Foreword

This is the first Occasional Paper under my general editorship. First, I wish to thank Professor Neill Nugent for launching this series and getting it off the ground. The Centre for Small States Studies has supported this series in a very professional manner and has allowed material covering all aspects of small states to come into the public domain and add to the debate about small states.

This contribution, by two distinguished Norwegian authors, takes a historical view of the role of consuls in a small European state, Norway. They examine the period when Norway was not yet a sovereign entity, but nevertheless the Norwegian towns and cities examined had particular commercial interests and connections with the outside world. They tell the story of the development of the office of consul from something like a community leader to its more modern role, and place this in the context of local interest and international developments. They point out that the developments in the past have to be seen in the context of a mix of diplomatic, economic and social elements. All this makes for a rich tapestry woven by the two authors.

As chair of the editorial board of this series and of the Working Papers, I am constantly looking for good manuscripts that cover the general theme of 'small states'. As can be seen by this contribution, the orientation can be a historical one, or it can approach the subject from other social science perspectives. For details of what is required to submit material for the series please see the web-site: http://www.hi.is/page/ams_publicationseries.

Clive Archer
Chair, Editorial Board
August 2007

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Abstract

The consular institution has regularly been viewed by academics and practitioners alike as the poor sibling of diplomacy; as a career-sidetrack or tour of duty for aspiring ambassadors and as an example devoid of all the intrigue and politics by historians and theoreticians of diplomacy. Through a detailed case-study of the emergence and development of consular representation in Norway, we aim to demonstrate that any comprehensive history of diplomacy must include a history of the consular institution; that the history of the consular institution is nevertheless not reducible to a history of diplomacy; and that studying the consular institution offers up fresh perspectives on the social practices of representation and state formation.

* This article draws on archival research in the Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, British, Dutch and French national archives. Thanks are due to Maria Gabrielsen and Robert Mijatovic for research assistance in the French and Dutch archives. Parts of the argument were presented at the 47th annual ISA convention, San Diego, Ca, March 2006 and at a NUPI/DIIS workshop in November 2006. Our most sincere thanks to our discussants at those occasions, Friedrich Kratochwil, Richard Mansbach and Svend Aage Christensen, and to all other attendants at the panel and workshop. Thanks are also due to Bård Frydenlund, Øystein Rian and Carsten Due-Nielsen for comments on a Norwegian draft.

Introduction

The institutionalisation of the consul institute predates modern diplomacy by several centuries, and began in the Mediterranean.¹ After a period of conceptual multitude, a usage developed where consuls would serve a dual purpose – as *primi inter pares* in their group of compatriots, the “nation” of the port,² the consuls on the one hand had internal jurisdiction over their compatriots, on the other represented their compatriots vis-à-vis the rulers of the port or polity in which they resided.³ From the fifteenth century and onwards, the institution gradually spread to the North Sea, with its Baltic appendix. Here, state centralisation took place earlier and was more synchronous than what was the case around the Mediterranean. Thus, the North Sea area offers perhaps the best intake for studying the growth of the consular institutions among relatively similar polities. Among the available cases, we will argue that the Norwegian one offers up particularly interesting perspectives. As a recognisable part of the Danish composite state and as a polity of trading and strategic influence throughout the relevant period (from the late Middle Ages to the end of the Napoleonic Wars), Norway had the distinction of being a playground for emerging powers while itself remaining suzerain. This meant that the foreign diplomats were placed outside of its borders (in the state capital of Copenhagen). As we shall see, this meant that the political reasoning of foreign states for sending (or not sending) consuls emerged clearly, as do the political aspects of the consul’s work.

After brief discussions of existing literature and the precursors to consular representation around the North Sea, we spend the rest of this article detailing the establishment and growth of consulates in an emerging small state – Norway.

¹ We discuss this in detail in our article “Judges, Merchants and envoys; the growth and development of the consular institution”, submitted to *World Politics*.

² The concept of nationhood that underlay such an appointment is closer to the “nations” of European universities, where a “nation” was the collective of students from one particular province, than to our modern concept that conflates nation and people; Liah Greenfeld: *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, MA 1992, p. 4.

³ A more detailed etymology can be found in Jörg Ulbert: “Introduction: La fonction consulaire à l’époque moderne: définition, état des connaissances et perspectives de recherche”, p. 9-20 in Jörg Ulbert, & Gérard Le Bouëdec (eds.) *La fonction consulaire à l’époque moderne. L’Affirmation d’une institution économique et politique (1500-1800)* Rennes, 2006.

Missing in action – consuls in the existing literature

Consuls have created trouble for academics for centuries. Starting with the early thinkers on international law, Wicquefort, in his work on the functions of ambassadors published in 1681, treated the consuls as “but merchants” and argued that they had no extraterritorial rights, although he still admitted them the right to adjudicate between their compatriots.⁴ He nevertheless contradicted himself by reporting that states treated acts of violence against consuls as “a breach of international law”.⁵ Bynkershoek followed Wicquefort. Vattel on the other had took a more positive view, arguing that since the consuls were appointed by a Sovereign and accepted in that capacity by another Sovereign, they were to some extent protected by international law.⁶ Over the course of the next centuries this position became codified in case-law as well as treaties and conventions, and finally in the Vienna convention of 1963. However, even Vattel had a hard time fitting the diverse consular activities into the framework of international law. He for instance argued that “The functions of a consul require, in the first place, that he be not a subject of the state where he resides: as, in this case, he would be obliged in all things to conform to its orders, and thus not be at liberty to acquit himself of the duties of his office.”⁷ As we shall see below, such an assertion was at odds with the already established practice of having citizens of the receiving state as consuls, as well as with the subsequent widespread use of honorary consuls.

Moving from international law to traditional diplomatic history, we find that Garret Mattingly mentions the Italian consuls in the Levant as one of the main precursors of resident embassies, and thus diplomacy as such, but has little more to say.⁸ Hamilton and Langhorne concur, but stress that in most cases there was no direct evolution from consuls to envoys. The functions, the legal and social status and the method of selection all differed significantly.⁹ James Der Derian discusses the activities of merchants and the problems for permanent diplomacy stemming from

⁴ Jaroslav Zourek: “Second Report on Consular intercourse and immunities”, UN Document A/CN.4/131, Extract from the Yearbook of the International Law Commission 1960, vol. II, p.2-32. Downloadable from [http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/publications/yearbooks/Ybkvolumes\(e\)/ILC_1960_v2_e.pdf](http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/publications/yearbooks/Ybkvolumes(e)/ILC_1960_v2_e.pdf), accessed 25/2-06, p. 3-4.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Emeric de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, London ([1758] 1883), book II, chapter II, § 34. Accessible at <http://www.constitution.org/vattel/vattel.htm>, accessed 26/1-07.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Garret Mattingly: *Renaissance Diplomacy*, Boston 1955, p.58-60.

⁹ Keith Hamilton & Richard Langhorne: *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration*, London 1995, p. 34.

the *droit d'aubaine*, under the rubric of “proto-diplomacy”, but he never mentions consuls explicitly.¹⁰ Finally, M. S. Anderson leaves consuls out of the history of diplomacy until the 19th century.¹¹ To the extent that these authors care about the consular institution at all, it is read as a precursor to diplomacy. Reading the history backwards thus creates a picture of the consul as a sidekick to the diplomat who is gradually integrated into a diplomacy-oriented national foreign service. As we will aim to demonstrate, reading the history of the institution forwards may create a more nuanced picture.

Consuls are, unsurprisingly, also largely omitted from national histories of foreign affairs.¹² When mentioned, attention is paid to national consuls overseas, not to foreign consuls residing on the polity’s own soil. The research interest in consuls has, however, been on the increase in later years.¹³ Previous research has to a large extent focused on the consular service of one particular country, separately,¹⁴ as part of larger studies,¹⁵ or at most comparatively discussing two countries.¹⁶ Other researchers have focused on the consular services of specific states in specific areas, some with special attention to one sending and one receiving polity,¹⁷ others comparing a set of sending and receiving polities.¹⁸ The former studies tend to pay special attention to driving forces; how mercantilist states created consular services in particular with the intention of boosting long-distance trade. The latter studies, on the other hand, focus on how consuls and host

¹⁰ James Der Derian: *On Diplomacy. A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*, Oxford 1987, p. 87

¹¹ M. S. Anderson: *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450-1919*, London 1993.

¹² See e.g. Olav Riste: *Norway's Foreign Relations – A History*, Oslo 2001. and Knud J. V. Jespersen & Ole Feldbæk: *Revanche og neutralitet 1648-1814. Dansk udenrigspolitisk historie bd. 2*, København 2002. At the FCO website, the history of British consuls is described as “A much neglected aspect of the history of Britain's foreign relations”. See <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029395879>, accessed 20/2-06.

¹³ A useful entry-point is the bibliography in Jörg Ulbert, & Gérard Le Bouëdec (eds.) *La fonction consulaire à l'époque moderne. L’Affirmation d’une institution économique et politique (1500-1800)* Rennes, 2006 and the individual chapters in the book.

¹⁴ E.g. DCM Platt: *The Cinderella Service. British Consuls since 1825*, London 1971.

¹⁵ E.g. Leos Müller: *Consuls, Corsairs and Commerce, The Swedish Consular Service and Long-distance Shipping 1720-1815*, Uppsala 2004.

¹⁶ E.g. Leos Müller & Jari Ojala: “Consular Services of the Nordic Countries during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Did They Really Work?”, in: Gordon Boyce & Richard Gorski (red.): *Resources and infrastructures in the maritime economy, 1500-2000*, St. Johns 2001, p. 23-41.

¹⁷ E.g. P. D. Coates: *The China Consuls. British Consular Officers 1843-1943*, Hong Kong 1988; Barbara J. Brooks: *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy. Consuls, Treaty Ports and War in China 1895-1938*, Honolulu 2000; Christian Windler: “Representing a State in a Segmentary Society: French Consuls in Tunis from the Ancien Régime to the Restoration”, *The Journal of Modern History* 73(2), (2001), p. 233-274.

societies interacted, and what effects the consuls had on the countries they were living in. We share the interest in why consuls arrived when they did, but we focus more on what they actually did once they were there. We are, furthermore, curious about the importance of the consuls in a macro-perspective. Their labour may tell us something about state-building, about the development of the state-system and about different forms of diplomacy.

Precursors of the consuls around the North Sea

In Northern Europe, jurisdiction over foreigners by other foreigners, similar to the consular practices of the Mediterranean, was established through institutions like that of the *alderman* of the Hanseatic League.¹⁹ The merchants of the Hanseatic cities in Germany established major offices (*Kontor*), i.e. communities of merchants, at major trading ports in Northern Europe such as Novgorod, Bruges, Bergen and London (the Steelyard). In London, their alderman “exercised certain important judicial powers at least as early as 1282”,²⁰ and at the office in Bergen, they had “their own executive, consisting of a council of 18 and two aldermen, who were responsible to the headquarters in Lübeck”.²¹ In England, the activities of the Hanse merchants led to a codification of foreign jurisdiction. As early as 1303, Edward I in his famed *Carta Mercatoria* declared that in trials concerning foreign merchants, where the death penalty was not called for, “one halfe of the Iurie be of the sayd marchants, and the other halfe of good and lawfull men of the place”. Furthermore, cases between merchants were to be decided “according to the lawe of marchants”.²²

¹⁸ E.g. Niels Stensgaard: “Consuls and Nations in the Levant from 1570-1650”, *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 1967, p. 13-55.

¹⁹ In the *Lexicon Mittelalter*, alderman and consul are e.g. cross-referenced; <http://netzwerk.wisis.de/lexikon/18.htm>. Accessed 17/2 2005. Cf. F. Borel: *De l'Origine et des fonctions des consuls*, St. Petersburg 1807, p. 20, who argues that the Hanseatic League managed without consuls for the very reason that the aldermen carried out many of the same functions, and Jaroslav Zourek: “Report on Consular intercourse and immunities”, UN Document A/CN.4/108, Extract from the Yearbook of the International Law Commission 1957, vol. II, p.71-103, at p. 74, who notes the similarity between “aldermen, conservators, praetors” of the Hanseatic and Flemish trading posts and consuls.

²⁰ Hyman Palais: “England’s First Attempt to Break the Commercial Monopoly of the Hanseatic League, 1377-1380”, *The American Historical Review* 64(4), 1959, p. 852-865, at p. 854.

²¹ Torolf Rafto: “Hansan Norge”, in: *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, volume VI Oslo 1961, p. 207-213, on p. 209.

²² Quoted in Richard Hakluyt & Edmund Goldsmid (red.): *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Volume 1, p. 121, 122. Edinburgh 1885-90. Available from <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=hakluyt>, Accessed 2/9 2005. Foreign merchants were thus accorded substantial protection according to the principle of the personality of law.

The activities of the Hanse aldermen and the privileges accorded them illustrate how tasks that would later be defined as consular were being carried out around the North Sea before appointments were made of people carrying the title of consul. Along the same lines, Henry IV, in 1404, gave the English merchants in Prussia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany the right to

freely and without danger assemble and meete together as often and whensoever they please in some conuenient and honest place where they shall thinke good, and that they may choose among themselues certaine sufficient and fit persons for their gouernours in those parts at their good liking.²³

These *gubernatores mercatorum* were given “speciall power and authoritie to rule and gouerne all and singular the English Marchants” that resided in or visited the ports over which the governors had jurisdiction, powers that included the right to judge in quarrels between the merchants, the role of arbiter between the English merchants and local merchants and authorities and the right to create and uphold statutes for the communities of merchants. The same right was granted to merchants in the Hanseatic towns and the Netherlands around the same time.²⁴

In the case of Norway, the key link between the medieval organisation of trading communities and the organisation of consuls that marked the emerging sovereign system is to be found among the merchants of the Hanseatic League and their competitors. The Hanseatic League had a *Kontor* manned by aldermen in Bergen, but the German influence in Norway was on the decline in the 16th century. One would expect that leading foreign merchants played informal roles in the internal jurisdiction of the merchant communities, but when the first consuls to Norwegian cities were appointed, the internal judicial functions of the consuls were negligible. Of far more importance was aiding compatriots in need and providing political and other forms of intelligence.

²³ Hakluyt & Goldsmid 1985-90, volume 1, p. 137-141.

²⁴ We have, however, not been able to verify Zourek’s claim that “Before the end of the fifteenth century there were English consuls in the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Denmark”. Zourek 1957, p. 74.

Bergen gradually became home to other foreign communities than the Hanseatic. As could be expected, given the historical and political ties as well as the relatively short distance across the North Sea, a Scottish community was established during the 16th and 17th centuries, engaging particularly in the timber-trade.²⁵ In the years 1600-1660, no less than 180 Scots became burgesses in Bergen, and there was even a “Scottish Quarter” in the town.²⁶ Scots were also numerous in the Danish-Norwegian military in the same period, and held high administrative offices, as well as diplomatic positions.²⁷ It should thus come as no surprise that they acted in concert, through the leaders of the community, when necessity arose. A John Thommessen Scot, tailor merchant and city councillor, e.g. acted on behalf of his fellow Scots in a claims case against the Hanseatic community following “the Scottish Incident” in 1523, when the German merchants apparently tried to intimidate and force out their competitors.²⁸ Thus, some of the typical consular functions were covered, but on an ad-hoc basis, and with no formal status accorded. It is also noteworthy that the leading Scottish merchants married into the very highest social strata of the town, and that there was a high rate of intermarriage and re-marriage within this group.

The development of regular consular representation

With growing networks of trade and the integration of the Northern and Central European state systems, the consular institution spread from the Mediterranean and the Baltic Seas to Western Europe. The spread was gradual at first, then more rapid with the increase in long-distance and bulk trading in the 16th and 17th centuries.²⁹ New markets were opened for more countries and the mercantilist states were increasingly willing to support the trade of its own citizens. In Sweden, for example, during the latter half of the 17th century a division was established between consular

²⁵ The Shetlands and the Orkneys were transferred from the Danish-Norwegian crown to the Scottish crown by the end of the 15th century, but the islanders retained customs exemptions until the late 16th century, and Bergen continued to be a “spiritual capital” for them. Nina Østby Pedersen, “Scottish Immigration to Bergen in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, in Alexia Grosjean & Steve Murdoch (eds.), *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, Leiden: Brill, 2005. p. 135-167, at 152-53.

²⁶ Steve Murdoch, *Britain, Denmark-Norway and the House of Stuart, 1603-1660*. East Linton: Tuckwell Press (2003), 29-30.

²⁷ Ibid. *Passim*.

²⁸ Pedersen, 2005, p. 137-141.

²⁹ As late as 1688, the Danish-dominated conglomerate state (including Norway, Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and colonial outposts in the Caribbean, India and Western Africa) had only a royal agent in Amsterdam and consuls in Amsterdam, Nantes and Lisbon. During the following eight years, however, commissioners were

and diplomatic functions, largely as a result of the establishment of the chamber of commerce in 1651. The Swedish consular service was governed by that chamber until 1906.³⁰ Even though the consular and diplomatic functions were formally separated, there was no corresponding separation in representation. Titles and functions would remain intermingled until the end of the Great Northern War (1721).³¹

The first “consul” mentioned in the Norwegian sources carried out similar functions to those described above in the case of John Thommessen Scot, but his family history at least in addition bestows upon him the formal title. Andrew Davidson Christie immigrated to Bergen from Scotland, and was awarded the right to trade (by being made a *borger* i.e. a burgess) in 1654.³² Sometime after that, he started looking after the interests of English ship-owners when English-owned prizes were brought to Bergen, and also reported to London on political issues.³³ Christie soon had fellow consuls, and warfare was what caused the growth in their number. The Danish-led conglomerate state of which Norway was a part was a key naval state during the war of the Grand Alliance (1688-97),³⁴ when its neutrality made it a central provider of raw materials as well as an important trading state and a crucial harbour for privateers.³⁵ It should thus come as no surprise that we also find English consuls in Christiania³⁶ and Trondheim during the 1680s.³⁷ As

created in Dunkirk, Dover and Portsmouth, and consuls in Malaga, Alicante, Cadiz and San Lucar, Genova and London; Jespersen & Feldbæk 2002, p. 165.

³⁰ In Denmark, the parallel structure lasted until 1848, while the “British” consuls in the Ottoman Empire until 1834 were appointed by the Levant Company; Müller & Ojala 2001, p. 40-41; Peter Byrd, “Regional and Functional Specialisation in the British Consular Service”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 7(1/2) (1972): 127-145, at 130.

³¹ Müller 2004, p. 39-40. Horn notes that there was also considerable overlap between diplomats and consuls in the English Foreign Service during the same period; D. B. Horn: *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789*, Oxford 1961, p. 237-38, p. 241-243.

³² W. H. Christie: *Genealogiske Optegnelser om Slægten Christie i Norge 1650-1890 og med den forbundne Slægter*, Bergen 1909, p. 3. His life can be traced in the church records and tax records available at <http://digitalarkivet.uib.no>. When we refer to church records, tax records or census data, they are all gathered from this online database.

³³ Helga Christie: *Slekten Christie i Norge. Supplement til W. H. Christies genealogiske optegnelser om slægten Christie i Norge 1650-1890*, Oslo 1964, p. 7. Barbour describes how the English consular service grew rapidly in the years after 1664, and explains the growth by the threats against English sea-borne trade that followed from the wars against the Netherlands and French privateering, a rapidly growing English trade and the ability of the consuls to gather political and economic intelligence at negligible cost for the Treasury; Violet Barbour: “Consular Service in the Reign of Charles II”, *American Historical Review*. 33, 1928, 553-578, at p. 578.

³⁴ Also known as the Nine Years war, the war of the Augsburg League and, in North-America, King William’s war.

³⁵ Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, wars implied expansion of consular services. Neutral states gained opportunities for trade, and as trade expanded into new areas, consuls followed. Cf. the expansion of the Danish consular service described in note 29 above. States at war on the other hand expanded their consular services in neutral states, so as to be able to bolster trade and protect ships and men.

³⁶ The city today known as Oslo.

the commercial centre of Norway, Bergen nonetheless had most consular activity. Christie's son inherited his position, and corresponded regularly with the British ambassador to Copenhagen.³⁸ His functions were political as well as commercial, and included the search of luggage of travellers between Scotland and Sweden, as well as being the representative of his compatriots in Bergen.³⁹ As has been the case elsewhere, consular representation depended on personal ties and personal initiative. When Christie died in 1719 without leaving any adult sons, the British consulate in Bergen intermittently disappeared. To the extent that the British crown at this time had some sort of control over its consuls,⁴⁰ an additional explanation of the disappearance could be that Britain was not engaged in warfare at the time being, thus there was no pressing need for consular presence. The short-lived consulate in Christiania in 1686-88 was not perpetuated.

Other states were nevertheless already represented. The Dutch Republic had an interest in Norway as a provider of wood and sailors that dated back to the Thirty Years' War. At the time, around 25 % of the sailors in the Dutch merchant and regular navy were Norwegians, recruited at least to some extent through Dutch merchants, the same people who were usually made consuls.⁴¹ With the war of the Grand Alliance, on top of a trade-war with Denmark in 1687-88, the Dutch, in the form of their permanent representative in Copenhagen, Robert Goes, decided to formalise

³⁷ Dagny Jørgensen: *Danmark-Norge mellom stormaktene 1688-1697. Dansk-norsk sjøfart og utenrikspolitikk under den pfälziske arvefølgekrig*, Oslo 1976, p. 198, 209, 295. It should be noted that they were both appointed before hostilities broke out, so we must assume that commercial considerations mattered as well as intelligence gathering, and that their appointment might have been merchant-driven rather than state initiated. The consul to Christiania, Daniel Buts, seems, in 1686, to have been the first consul to Norway that received some form of exequatur, i.e. confirmation of the incoming consul by the receiving state.

³⁸ H. Christie 1964, p. 8-9.

³⁹ The younger Christie did not refer to himself as "consul", and the title seems to have been more important in distinguishing status than functions. At the same time, one Alexander Forbus, after becoming a merchant burgher of Bergen in 1706, served as Scottish (not British) Consul, even after the Treaty of Union of 1707. In 1716 both Forbes and his wife, the sister of the town bailiff, wrote to the magistrate of Bergen to complain about the costs and problems related to being a consul, as Scottish skippers and merchants neglected paying their fees; Steve Murdoch, *Network North. Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe 1603-1746*. Lieden: Brill (2006), 157. When Horn refers to consular reports from Norway dated 1718, it is not clear whether these were from Christie or Forbus; D. B. Horn: "The board of trade and Consular reports, 1696-1782", *English Historical Review*, 54, 1939, s. 476-80.

⁴⁰ This is not a given, as late as in 1809, Foreign Office bureaucrats complained that many consuls were "like lost sheep in the Wilderness", and that according to the merchants they did more harm than good; Platt 1971, p. 11. The British service won notoriety "as a refuge for the lazy and incompetent who had some claim on the Secretary of State's patronage", and by 1900, the failings of the service is said to have reached "the level of practically a national scandal"; Byrd 1972, p. 128, 130.

⁴¹ Jonathan I. Israel: *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806*, Oxford 1998.

their presence in Bergen.⁴² The first consul was appointed in 1693, the Dutch merchant Tewis Dominicus, who represented the Dutch East India Company, and had been a correspondent of Goes since the war broke out.⁴³ Dominicus and his successor were Dutch merchants, but in 1720, the Dutch merchants trading with Bergen suggested a Dane as consul. The Danish king was hesitant, but finally accepted what was increasingly becoming the norm, but what was, as we have seen, almost 40 years later criticised by Vattel; namely that the representatives of foreign states used host state citizens as consuls.

Warfare led to more shipwrecks, more ships and sailors astray and more privateering and prize-courts. New wars thus led to new consuls.⁴⁴ At the outbreak of the fourth Anglo-Dutch war in 1780, Dutch vice-consuls were appointed in several Norwegian coastal towns. As was often the case, a few of them retained their titles even after the war, further increasing the number of foreign representatives.

The war of the Grand Alliance also brought increased French interest, particularly after the naval loss at the Battle of Barfleur/La Hougue in 1692 made France dependent on privateers. The first consular agent in Bergen, Denis Bossinot, was a French-born merchant, who turned out to be more interested in protecting his own privateering interests than French affairs of state.⁴⁵ He was soon joined by French representatives in Christiansand, at the southern tip of Norway, but none of these representatives continued in an official function after hostilities ended.⁴⁶ The next large-scale war, the War of the Spanish succession (1701-14) brought renewed French consular presence. Sometime between his arrival in Bergen around the turn of the century, and his first

⁴² Jespersen & Feldbæk 2002, p. 158. The information about Dutch consuls can be found in O. Schutte: *Repertorium der Nederlandse vertegenwoordigers, residerende in het buitenland 1584-1810*, Haag 1976.

⁴³ Jørgensen 1976, p. 198.

⁴⁴ At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756, a French vice-consulate was e.g. established in Christiansand, at the southernmost tip of Norway, with the explicit reason that it was a port well situated for bringing in prizes; Pierrick Pourchasse, "Les consulats, un service essentiel pour le monde négociant: une approche comparative entre la France et la Scandinavie" pp. 191-209 in Ulbert & Le Bouëdec 2006, at p. 198.

⁴⁵ P.J Charliat: "Réfugés français an Norvège. Le Consulat français à Bergen au temps de Louis XIV", *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, 77(1), 1928, p. 7-13.

⁴⁶ Charliat 1928, p. 10; Jørgensen 1976, p. 206, 211, 279. The war of the Grand Alliance was the historical apex of French privateering, cf. Janice E. Thomson: *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns. State-building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe*, Princeton, NJ 1994, p. 24.

preserved consular report dated 1716;⁴⁷ Jacques Buteaud was made French consul to Bergen.⁴⁸ This appointment not only fits with the general trend of expanding consular services in times of war, but also with the competitive logic of the state-system that dictated where a state should be represented. At the outbreak of hostilities, the Netherlands had, as noted above, been permanently represented in Bergen for a decade.

Buteaud and the later French consuls of the 18th century were all officially appointed as consuls of the French nation in Bergen (or Trondheim or some other city), not as representatives of the king. The French “nation” in Bergen consisted of the French merchants residing in the city. Nevertheless, as soon as problems arose, the consuls were eager to point out that they were selected by the king, and that they thus were his representatives. Such practices illuminate the historical break, where the consul institute transformed from designating the first merchant among equals in a foreign port to designating the representative of the sovereign in the same port.⁴⁹

And problems did arise. Buteaud’s nephew, Jean Etienne Dechezaulx, who inherited the consular title in 1748 and set up his own trade, soon ran into trouble.⁵⁰ In 1755 leading personalities in Bergen complained to the king that Dechezaulx had revoked his burgess status, that he refused to pay taxes and that he intended to continue trading without the rights conferred by being a burgess. The background story was that Dechezaulx was broke, and in the spring of 1756 he wrote to the Danish king and pleaded for protection. Even though the king promised that Dechezaulx would be given respite to set his house in order and would be able to continue as consul, calamities arose. In a *Memoire* dated October 1756, the French ambassador to the king wrote about “the insults and outrages that had been carried out in Bergen against Mr. Dechezaulx,

⁴⁷ Centre Historique d’Archives Nationaux (CHAN), AE B207, correspondance consulaire, Bergen. 1716-1792, volume I.

⁴⁸ The sources are imprecise, but we do know that Butaud, a protestant, left France sometime after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685; Charliat 1928, p. 11. He was made a burgess of Bergen in 1709, and in his consular report from 1716 refers to his vice-consuls in other cities. Upon his death, in 1748, his nephew commented that Buteaud had been in the service of the French king since 1703: “ce bon veillard, qui depuis 1703 avait eu l’honneur d’être au service du Roy”.

⁴⁹ This transformation started in the 17th century, when the states increased control, and when merchants sought the protection of the king when trading companies and guilds lost the ability to protect the individual merchant; Barbour 1928, p. 555.

⁵⁰ Danish National Archives (RK), TKUA, Diverse Sager, Realia Akter vedr. fremmede konsuler i Danmark og Norge 1747-1768, 3-019.

the French consul, his belongings and the consular papers, showing contempt for the law, well known regulations and the law of peoples”.⁵¹ Dechezaulx’s furniture had been auctioned off to cover outstanding debts, and in an undated *Memoire* the issues are dealt with in detail, and described as “l’injustice” and “scandale”. Dechezaulx was nevertheless able to continue as consul, and in 1760 he married the daughter of one of the leading men of the city.⁵² In 1763, it was reported that Dechezaulx no longer engaged in trade, but made his living through a salary from the French king.⁵³ In the same way as the Dutch, the French also established subordinate consulates in other coastal towns in the second half of the 18th century, most notably in Trondheim, Christiansand and Christiania, and judging by their names, the consuls were either permanently settled French merchants or their descendants.⁵⁴

New warfare brought new consuls. The British-born Alexander Wallace, had become a burgher in Bergen in 1737, and a few years into the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), he made his presence known.⁵⁵ In the summer of 1744, he reported to the British envoy to Copenhagen, Walter Titley, that he had ensured the liberation of a crew of British sailors by interacting with the French Consul. The official record tells of how two British ships had been brought as prizes to Bergen, and how:

On his arrival the 14th instant July a Merchant and Trader for the British nation, Mr Alexander Wallace applyd him self to the Consul [Buteaud] & solicited for the liberating of the said Twelve Prisonners of War, in order to their being sent home on Condition that he the said Alexander Wallace, who was personally present, should be

⁵¹ “des insultes, et des violences commites à Bergen contre le Sr. Dechezaulx, Consul De france, ses effets, et les papiers du consulat, au mépris Des Lois, Des régles les plus connues, et contre les drois Des gens”.

⁵² Dechezaulx remained consul until his death in 1799, and was followed in quick succession by his two sons, even though they were known in the French system as “commissaries” rather than consuls, since the consular title was reserved for the three formal French heads of state (with Napoleon as first consul) 1799-1804.

⁵³ Anthon Mohr Wiesener: “Om utenlandske konsuler i Bergen”, 22, 1916 *Bergen historiske skrifter*, p. 35- 43, at p. 37. French consuls to Bergen and other central ports were apparently salaried at least from 1755, as opposed to their British counterparts; Pourchasse 2006, p. 201. In general, the French service seems to have been much better organised than its British counterpart, where it is not even clear if it makes sense to discuss such a thing as a consular service during the 18th century; G. W. Rice, “British consuls and diplomats in the mid-eighteenth century: an Italian example”, *The English Historical Review*, 92(365) (1977): 834-846, at, p. 836, 845.

⁵⁴ With the notable exception of the Irishman, James Brown, who was consul in Trondheim 1758-67, and who was eventually replaced due to his inability to serve the French interests; Pourchasse 2006, p. 206-07.

⁵⁵ RK, TKUA, Almindelig del, Diverse Sager, Realia Akter vedr. fremmede konsuler i Danmark og Norge 1747-1768, 3-019.

obliged, as he hereby becomes obliged, to procure effectually and without any delay, the liberty of a like number and quality of French Prisonners in England in exchange for these Twelve Prisonners the necessary Pasports for their Security.⁵⁶

Wallace seems to have been keenly aware of his own possibilities in the current economic and political situation. The very next day, he wrote to Titley as follows:

Sir, [...] as the Warr now broke out between Great Brittain and France requires if thought necessary more than ever a Consul for the British Nation over this Country (the French and Dutch having theirs here already) in order to the regulating what may happen with regard to the bringing up of Captures and many other affairs that will easlie occur to your Honour, and as its so [?] great a distance from your Honour for one [...] application, you will see the necessity thereof that the British ought to have one of their own Nation that would with freedom and integrity [...] them. If I should be so fortunate as to be thought worthy of that Honour, it would lay an eternal obligation on me and my family.

Wallace was made consul in the autumn of 1744, and cemented the “eternal obligation” by baptising a son born in 1745 Walter Titley Wallace.⁵⁷ Even disregarding the previous British consular presence in Bergen, this was an early appointment. At the time the only other British consuls in Northern Europe were in Ostende, Elsinore and St. Petersburg.⁵⁸ Wallace combined commercial and political reporting, detailing the movements of French ships and warning against the possibility that “rebels & Jacobite agents” might use the Norwegian coast as a base for strikes against Scotland.⁵⁹ In this case, the consul was conducting diplomatic tasks.

Wallace had experiences that were similar to Dechezaulx’s. The British envoy wrote a memorandum in November 1766 about “l’insulte” and “l’injure” that Wallace had suffered by

⁵⁶ National Archives (NA), London, SP 75/87.

⁵⁷ The son died shortly thereafter, and Wallace found other names for his later sons.

⁵⁸ Platt 1971, p. 10. It is noteworthy that all the lists of English and British consular posts in the 17th and 18th centuries omit Bergen; Barbour 1928, p. 578, n.91; Horn 1961, p. 254-255; Platt 1971, p. 10.

being forced to pay taxes, in breach of the law of nations.⁶⁰ The envoy demanded that the minister of foreign affairs should investigate, and make sure that “les privilèges & les prérogatives” that were attached to the consular dignity were respected. The clincher would seem to be his observation that the French consul was relieved of paying such taxes. Apart from the issue at hand, it is worth noting that Wallace was consistently noted as being the King’s consul, not the consul of the British nation.

The complaints of Dechezaulx and Wallace also shed light on the status of the consuls in international law more generally, and the continuous tug-of-war going on about their international status at the time when Vattel wrote his famous treatise. Both the French and British envoys in Copenhagen emphasised that there were certain privileges and rights attached to the consular dignity, and they both appealed to the law of nations in their critique of the officials of Bergen. Nevertheless, there were no commonly accepted rules detailing the role of consuls in the current international law. As late as in 1596, a French consul was executed in Alexandria, while dressed in his consular uniform.⁶¹ This dovetails nicely with the situation in which diplomats found themselves, for as Anderson notes, the position of diplomats was not entirely clear either:

The immunity of diplomats from civil proceedings was also being more and more clearly asserted. This was a process which extended over a long period, and in the seventeenth century the extent of their privileges in this respect was still far from clear. In 1666 the Portuguese minister-resident in the Dutch republic had his household goods seized for debt; and when, two years later, he attempted to leave for Portugal his creditors secured a court order for his arrest. The most important and spectacular case, however, came in London when, in September 1708, A.A. Matveyev, the Russian minister, was arrested on the complaint of a number of

⁵⁹ As one recalls, 1745-46 were the years of the final Jacobite rebellion in Britain, where promised French support did not materialise. Wallace’s reports were thus potentially of high political importance. With the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden on the 16th of April 1746, the Jacobite threat against the British throne subsided.

⁶⁰ RK, TKUA, Almindelig del, Diverse Sager, Realia Akter vedr. fremmede konsuler i Danmark og Norge 1747-1768, 3-019.

⁶¹ Steensgaard 1967, p. 18. During the reign of Charles II in England (1660-85), the British consul to the Canary Islands was driven from the islands, the consuls to Madeira and Cadiz were jailed and the consul to Alger was killed; Barbour 1928, p. 571. When the entire French nation in Aleppo, including the consul, was incarcerated in 1623, this

tradesmen to whom he owed money. He spent only a few hours in prison; but when he was released the heads of all the foreign missions in London (except that of Sweden, which was then at war with Russia) accompanied him to his house in a demonstration of solidarity and next morning visited him to promise their support. The following year saw the passing by [the English] Parliament of legislation protecting foreign diplomats against criminal and civic proceedings.⁶²

As late as in the 18th century, diplomats could nevertheless be charged with more serious crimes, and diplomatic immunity was not finally codified in international law until the Congress of Vienna in 1815.⁶³ In the middle of these processes of expansion and codification of immunity-laws, the consuls in Bergen wanted the protection of the same international law. Such attempts at gaining privileges were met by controlling moves by the state. A royal decree from 1771 stated that:

Every foreign Agent or Consul sent to His Majesty's realms and lands shall, in accordance with the custom which has always been observed both here and abroad, be immune, as regards his own person while carrying on his consular business, from Norwegian jurisdiction, and shall enjoy all the advantages, privileges and exemptions attaching to this office; nevertheless, if he possesses a house or other property in Norway, he shall in every case be under a duty to bear and be responsible for the charges attaching thereto, and if he engages in trade or business, he shall be subject in respect thereof to the Constitution and the laws of the country on the same footing as His Majesty's own subjects, and hence also the local authority of the place where he is resident.⁶⁴

Extraterritoriality was thus restricted, covering only the consul in his official capacity. This regulation is actually quite similar in intent to what was codified in Vienna almost two centuries

was nevertheless a result of the French envoy to Istanbul trying to recoup expenses he had had on their behalf: Steensgaard 1967, p. 39-40.

⁶² Anderson 1993, p. 54.

⁶³ The current Vienna convention on diplomatic rights is from 1961. It provides immunity for diplomats, e.g. from criminal proceedings in the host state. Typically enough, a Vienna convention on consular rights was created afterwards, in 1963, on the pattern of the diplomatic convention. It provides consuls and their archives with a more limited immunity.

⁶⁴ Norwegian National Archives (RA), UD 14.1/9, box 549.

later. The tensions between consular privileges and trading rights also seem to have subsided as the consuls became naturalised Norwegians.

Returning now to the case in hand, Wallace remained in service until his death in 1788, and was even made consul general. True to form, he was followed by his son, who was in turn followed by Alexander Grieg, who had been working as a subordinate officer at the consulate for 25 years, in 1797. The title then remained with the Grieg family for several generations.

In 1782, perhaps as a consequence of the ongoing (fourth) Anglo-Dutch war, John Mitchell was made British consul to Christiania. He seems to have been the first consul specifically sent from the home country that stayed for any significant amount of time.⁶⁵ After 16 years of regular but unspectacular reporting,⁶⁶ he happily left Christiania and became British consul in Hamburg:

I neither am, nor ever was, concerned in any kind of Commerce to tie me to one sovereign [*sic*] Country more than another; and Norway is not a country wherein a Person would wish to live and die, if they had easie [?] choice.⁶⁷

As we have seen, up to this point, the pattern had been for merchants to serve as consuls, and these consuls had tended to marry locally and become naturalised, spawning sons that succeeded them as consuls. These consuls would be citizens of the country in which they worked, and would be tied to the state that they represented by their family history. The fact that Mitchell was not permanently settled in Norway indicates an increasing professional consular corps, which might explain Mitchell's boredom with everything Norwegian. As soon as he was settled in Hamburg, he posted detailed and inspired analyses of the international political scene to the Foreign Office, of a type completely missing from his correspondence from Christiania.

The 1780s also saw British consuls established in smaller Norwegian port towns, but since there are no records of their activities in the British archives, we must assume that they were subordinate to the consuls at Bergen and Christiania, and reported to them.

⁶⁵ Even so, he was also engaged in trade, being the main importer of potatoes from Britain to Norway; Ludvig Daae: *Af Geheimeraad Johan v. Bülow's Papirer*, Christiania 1864, p. 122.

⁶⁶ Cf. Alexander Bugge: "Stemninger i Norge omkr. 1790. Breve fra den engelske konsul i Oslo", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 5. rekke, 7. bind, 1928, p. 108-113.

⁶⁷ NA, FO 22/33 Mitchell to Grenville 13 November 1798.

The most explicitly political consul to Norway was the Swedish consul general Martineau, who was dispatched to Christiania in 1787, with orders to explore and possibly exploit the rumours of growing Norwegian dissatisfaction with the central authorities in Copenhagen.⁶⁸ Although he did report on commercial issues, the bulk of his reports dealt with the political situation, and Martineau self-consciously described himself as a “diplomatic bastard”.⁶⁹ The character of Martineau’s position was well known in Christiania, and later historians have described his consulate as a veritable “spy-central”.⁷⁰ He was followed by undercover government officials when he travelled around the countryside.⁷¹ The acceptance of the political undertakings seems to have varied according to the relations between Sweden and the Danish composite state. When relations were good, Martineau was accepted in high society and could go about his work unhampered. In periods with higher tensions and fear of Swedish aggression, he was virtually ostracised and even threatened with expulsion. As such, the Dano-Norwegian government’s relations with Martineau mirror regular diplomatic practice. With the assassination of the Swedish king in 1792, which coincided with Martineau’s death, the embryonic consular corps was halved, and when Mitchell left in 1798 it was dissolved altogether, not to be reconstituted until the end of the Napoleonic wars, when Norway’s political situation had been dramatically changed.⁷²

In 1814, Norway was split off from the Danish-led conglomerate state, and joined with Sweden as a separate small state in a loose personal union under a common King. An indigenous constitution and local institutions (like a parliament and a bureaucracy) ensured wide-ranging internal sovereignty. There could still be no diplomats accredited to Norway, but its newfound status as a state made it a lot easier and more attractive to have consuls in the country. As trade started to blossom again after decades of warfare and the states reorganised their consular

⁶⁸ Cf. Yngvar Nielsen: “Gustav den III’s norske Politikk”, *Historisk tidsskrift* 2. rekke, 1. bind, 1877, s. 1-307 and the Swedish National Archives (SR), “J. C. Martineau Brev 1787-92”, Danica 447.

⁶⁹ Nielsen 1877, p. 121.

⁷⁰ Sverre Steen: *Tidsrummet 1770 til omkring 1814*. Volume 7 of Edvard Bull, Wilhelm Keilhau, Haakon Shetelig & Sverre Steen: *Det norske folks liv og historie gjennom tidene*, Oslo 1933, p.126-127.

⁷¹ Daae 1864, p. 39.

⁷² In addition to the representatives of England, the Netherlands, France and Sweden, there were Prussian, Russian and American consuls in Norway, dating back to the last decades of the 18th and the first decade of the 19th century.

services to fit with increases in trade, the number of consuls in Norwegian coastal towns grew rapidly.⁷³

Consuls could also continue to play the role of diplomats. John Rice Crowe settled as merchant and entrepreneur in Northern Norway around 1820, and was soon made British consul. Around the middle of the 1830s, he started sending dispatches to London where he described the potential Russian threat to the area, thus playing a pivotal role in creating a wide-spread and lasting fear of Russian intentions in parts of Norwegian, Swedish and other public opinions.⁷⁴ Crowe continued reporting along the same lines when he moved to Christiania as Consul General in 1844, a post he held until 1875. During the Crimean war, he managed to persuade his superiors that the threat from the east was imminent, which again led to the November-treaty of 1855, where Great Britain and France promised to protect Sweden-Norway against Russian attack.⁷⁵ Crowe was also crucial in securing British funding and expertise for the first Norwegian railroad.⁷⁶ Since the November-treaty implied a major reorientation in foreign policy, and the building of railroads was a central government project during this era, it is easy to conclude with Platt that the consulate in Christiania belonged to a group of consulates that were “diplomatic missions under a different name”.⁷⁷

When Norway gained full external sovereignty in 1905, the need for political consuls diminished, and even if some of them have been (and still are) the sole representatives of their countries in Norway, they have made little waves as anything other than trade representatives and issuers of visas. The one exception to this rule can be found during the Second World War, when Norwegian territory was once again subject to external (German) sovereignty. The foreign diplomats were soon expelled, but a consular corps consisting of career consuls from Axis and neutral states remained in Oslo throughout the war, maintaining social interaction with the Quisling regime. The Swedish consulate was of particular importance, and was an important

⁷³ Increased lust for consular titles in Norway also seems to have spurred the growth. The prestige attached to the title continued to grow, even as more people gained it and became consuls for European states of various stature. Thus, the wars of national unification must have dealt a severe blow to the markers of social status in Norwegian towns. Bergen was still the city with most consuls, but the career consuls, growing in number from two to six during the 19th century, were invariably located in Christiania.

⁷⁴ Jens Petter Nielsen: *Altas historie vol. 2. Det arktiske Italia 1826-1920*. Alta 1995, p. 208-210.

⁷⁵ Nielsen 1995, p. 211-212.

⁷⁶ Jens Arup Seip: *Ole Jacob Broch og hans samtid*. Oslo 1971, p. 194.

node in communication-chains between Norwegian authorities in exile and Norwegians in Norway. During the war-years, the consuls, as in the earlier period of semi-sovereignty, took care of what could be carried out of diplomatic functions.

Concluding remarks - why did the consuls arrive?

That the first instances of consular representation in Norway could be found in Bergen in the last decades of the 17th century fits well with developments in the rest of Northern Europe. From the middle of the 18th century, we find vital but small consular corps in several Norwegian towns. Starting in the 1730s, and increasingly thereafter, the consular titles could be found in the hands of the wealthiest and most prominent merchant families. The titles were more often than not hereditary, and if there were no sons, or if they declined, the title would usually pass on to subordinate consular officers. In the smaller towns, with few suitable persons from which to choose, it was not uncommon for one and the same merchant to be the consul of two or more states. In the second half of the 18th century, the main consuls of the leading nations were made consuls general, following what seems to be a competitive balancing logic. The perpetuation of a French consular presence in Norway/Bergen in the second half of the 18th century, with a salaried consul, also seems to have depended to a large extent on political interests and competitive balancing, not on trading interests. In a long memo from 1787, the above-mentioned consul Dechezaulx noted that “Commerce and navigation in the North have always been much neglected by the French [...] and at the present time, with the exception of vessels the King has sent to the Baltic, the French flag appears only very rarely in these seas”.⁷⁸ The year before, there had not been a single French ship in Bergen. Apart from the particular cases of Mitchell and Martineau, the permanent and regular consuls were local residents, and it is telling that the only “career” consuls were the ones dispatched to the political centre in Christiania during the tumultuous end of the 18th century. When regular diplomatic representation was not a possibility, consuls were given what have traditionally been diplomatic functions, in the form of reporting, but during wars also the handling of privateering and prizes. As noted, war was also the most important catalyst for establishing new consulates.

⁷⁷ Platt 1971, p. 131.

Where warfare motivated the states, status seems to have been the driving force for the consuls. Among the first generation of consuls, several were elected after having been approached by their countrymen. They must have been some sort of *primi inter pares* in their own communities, as was usual in earlier periods and as the references to the “nations” in the towns suggest. It is also worth noting that in the public records (censuses, church records, tax lists etc.) a large majority of the consuls gave ‘consul’ as their occupation, ahead of both merchant and, more noteworthy, burghers. Gradually, as the consuls became naturalised Norwegians, the title changed from being a status-marker within a group of compatriots abroad to being a status-marker in the host society. A consular title could also be helpful in avoiding other claims. Traditionally, a consul did not have to serve as an elected deputy, a right of omission that the consuls guarded jealously, but that was abolished in the 1820s.⁷⁹ Furthermore, there were economic motives. Status led to privileges, like reduced taxation, and a consular title also made importing and exporting to and from the state one represented a lot easier, as the title was seen to signal trustworthiness.⁸⁰ As the two complaints from Bergen in the 1750s and 1760s illustrate, a consular title on the other hand need not signal trustworthiness in the host society, as consular privileges were seen to interfere with fair trading.

Applying a general international economic perspective, the emergence and growth of consular institutions in Norway can be seen as an effect of growing exports and imports to and from Norway. Combining political and economic factors, it should also be noted that convoys of ships engaged in long-distance trading in wartime more often than not chose to stop in Norwegian towns when entering and exiting the Atlantic, preferring the rather longer route through Norwegian waters to the privateer-infested passage through the English Channel. This in itself created a demand for consuls. Moreover, such practices also brought increased privateering to Norwegian waters, and with it a need for consuls that could support (or as indicated control) privateers and seamen captured on prizes.

Seen from the state system, the consuls to Norway before 1905 are first and foremost of interest as the representatives of the European Great Powers in Norway. They reported to their home

⁷⁸ Quoted in Paul Walden Bamford, “French Shipping in Northern European Trade, 1660-1789, *The Journal of Modern History*, 26(3) (1954): 207-219, at 217.

⁷⁹ Anthon Mohr Wiesener: *Slegten Mowinckel*, Bergen 1914, p. 17; G. W. Bruenech: *Konow. Personallistorie og genealogi 1260-1936*, Oslo 1937, p. 135-136.

governments and until 1814 also to their ambassadors in Copenhagen. As the sole representatives of foreign powers, they also embodied the competitive self-help nature of the state system; where one state employed a consul, others would follow, and where one consul did this, that or the other, others will follow. Several of the consuls did also play political roles, reporting on political affairs, interacting with Norwegian officials and elites and the consuls of other countries. To a large extent, these practices could be classified as diplomatic.

Such a perspective is, however, too narrow. Reading the long and diverse history of consular institutions in the small state of Norway in the light of the much shorter and straightforward history of diplomatic practice in Norway is putting the cart before the horse. The economic perspective is also too constricting, for as we have seen, consuls have also fulfilled a host of other tasks. Approaching the consuls in a wider perspective, the vital social functions that they handle emerge more clearly.

As was generally the case in Northern Europe from the 17th century onwards, the consuls to Norway never had extraterritorial jurisdiction over their compatriots, and even their own extraterritorial rights were a matter for discussion. Until the middle of the 18th century we nevertheless see remnants of the function previously carried out by the aldermen; the consuls were *primi inter pares* for their “nation”, i.e. the collective of compatriots in a city. The consular dignity, which depends on royal recognition, was part of what made the consuls first among equals. That the consuls were the representatives of the king also became crucial in times of war, when the consuls held key positions for dealing with citizens of hostile third countries. From the middle of the 18th century, the fact that the consuls were the representatives of the king became even more important, not in relation to compatriots or citizens of third countries, but in dealings with the Norwegian authorities. With the growth of nationalism and the growing reach of the state, the ‘nations’ of merchants became less significant, as did the task of keeping order among them. The consuls shifted their focus to visiting compatriots. The relation between consuls and compatriots moved from being permanent to being periodic. This change also made possible a change in personnel. Where foreign merchants dominated well into the 18th century, from that

⁸⁰ Müller & Ojala 2001, p. 41.

point onwards they were replaced by Norwegian citizens or career consuls. In the former cases, the political functions disappeared; in the latter cases it was strengthened.

The background history and functions of consuls overall suggest that they are less vulnerable to changes in conceptions of sovereignty and also to reductions of estrangement than the diplomats that they have been grouped with over the last centuries. When economic, legal and political patterns change, consular institutions change with them. Suggestive if inconclusive evidence can be found in our case. A hundred years ago, most consuls in Norway were merchants. Today, by contrast, they divide relatively evenly among merchants, lawyers and ship-owners. This change can be read as an indication of the growing importance of law in post-modern society, but also of the maturity of the global economy. Earlier one needed consuls that knew how to move goods physically from one place to another, whereas the current economy primarily needs people who know the legalities of transfer. The change also reflects changing patterns of interaction, where there is less trade in detail and more tourists to cater to and visas to be written.⁸¹ The gradual changes in personnel did, however, not change the social capital associated with the title. From the middle of the 18th century, the consular title increasingly became a marker of social status in Norwegian society. Such a function did not disappear with the growing numbers of consuls or even with the arrival of diplomats to the newly independent small state of Norway in 1905. To some extent it survives to the present day.

⁸¹ It could be read as symptomatic that whereas, in 2003, the consulate general in Hamburg, one of the oldest in the Norwegian consular service, was reduced to an honorary consulate, a new consulate general, with career representatives, was established in Phuket in the aftermath of the Tsunami of 2004.