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INSIDE NATO – OUTSIDE THE EU
NORWEGIAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE
POLICY IN THE HIGH NORTH

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“INSIDE NATO - OUTSIDE THE EU”: NORWEGIAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY IN THE HIGH NORTH*

Nina Græger

The end of the Cold War brought about changes in NATO’s strategic concept, command structure, tasks and identity as an organisation. NATO has transformed itself from a territorial defence alliance into a politico-military instrument with a global reach. This paper will discuss some of the challenges NATO is facing before the NATO summit 3-4 April, as well as how Norway is affected by and relates to them, not the least because Norway belongs to the diminishing group of NATO countries that are not inside the EU.

Today, international operations “out of area” have largely become NATO’s main task, with the ISAF-operation in Afghanistan representing the biggest milestone thus far. Military transformation has been a focal point in NATO since 2002, and came in response to 9/11 and the following US-led “war on terror”. Transformation was, however, played down in the last years of the Bush administration, under US secretary of defence, Secretary Robert Gates. Furthermore, the idea that European security can be guaranteed once and for all seems to have been replaced by the recognition that security risks are “manageable”, but rarely perishable.¹ Such a “risk society” potentially also questions the transatlantic security community as a “community of action”. The transatlantic community also has met with a number of political challenges, for example in relation to the Iraq war, as well as military challenges, for instance in the effort to stabilise

Afghanistan. An additional challenge is the increased need for coordination and cooperation with other international institutions and actors involved in peace operations. For instance, through its common European security and defence policy the EU has become a security actor that NATO increasingly needs to take into account. At the same time, the institutionalised EU-NATO cooperation under the “Berlin Plus” agreement has since long been hampered by the conflict between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus.

Norway’s security context: Inside NATO, outside the EU

Certain notions and ideas have defined and are put to work in national debates about Norwegian security and defence policy. During the Cold War, these ideas were, first, Norway’s geographical location – the proximity to the Soviet Union. The second defining concept has been Norway’s NATO membership and close bilateral relationship with the US.² Territorial defence and the need for allied assistance in the case

* Paper presented at *The Nordic Security Seminar* in Helsinki, 18 November 2008 (with some recent revisions and an epilogue).

¹ Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War. Terror, Technology and Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

² Rolf Tamnes, *Oljealder 1965-1995. Norsk Utenrikspolitikks Historie*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997.

of an attack on Norway (meaning an invasion) formed Norwegian security and defence policy in the Cold War period. Even with today's threat image, NATO is still the cornerstone of Norway's security and defence policy. The commitments under Article 5 are one of the pillars of the Norwegian defence concept. In fact, territorial defence concerns – now covered under the heading “core functions” and “core areas” (or “near abroad”) seem to be back on the Norwegian security and defence policy agenda. I will return to this below.

To a considerable extent, Norway's participation in the military transformation of NATO is based on the view that Norwegian security depends on the continued relevance of NATO. The Defence Plan for the period 2005–2008, for example, stated that:

Norway's most important contribution in this respect [to maintaining NATO's relevance] will be to follow up on the allied intentions realised through the work with NRF [NATO Response Force], a new command structure and PCC [Prague Capabilities Commitment], to ensure NATO remains an efficient security political tool seen from both sides of the Atlantic.³

Thus, defence reform in Norway has been legitimized and explained both with reference to NATO transformation and territorial security, and the linkages between the two. Despite this, transforming the Norwegian armed forces has dragged on, and there is still a long way to go before the old defence structure – and culture – is replaced by a modern one.

³ Ministry of Defence, “Den videre moderniseringen av Forsvaret i perioden 2005-2008”, *Stortingsproposisjon nr 42*. Oslo: MoD., 2003-04, p. 29.

Although NATO is Norway's first priority in security and defence policy, Norwegian governments gradually accepted that the EU also has a role to play, except with regard to security guarantees:

[I]n the future the EU will play an increasing role in European security and stability...For all practical purposes, it is NATO which has adjusted to the developments within the EU in the last decade, even though NATO's well established role and tasks set certain limits on which tasks the EU can take on.⁴

While NATO is dominant in defence matters, “the development of a unitary European security and defence policy is positive, also seen with Norwegian eyes”.⁵ The ESDP to a large extent still is seen as subordinated to NATO and the transatlantic relationship, however: “A strengthened ESDP leads to a strengthened European pillar in the transatlantic security community...”⁶ Norway's initial support for the ESDP was based on the idea that a stronger European defence capability would strengthen the transatlantic relationship and the total Euro-Atlantic crisis management capacity.⁷ Similar attitudes were expressed in response to the European Security Strategy, which was seen to represent “a useful contribution to improve transatlantic relations.”⁸

⁴ Ministry of Defence, “For Budsjetterterminen 2005”, *Stortingsproposisjon nr. 1*. Oslo: MoD. 2004, p. 19.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, chs. 1, 2.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Norge og Europa ved inngangen til et nytt århundre”, *Stortingsmelding nr 12*. Oslo: Mfa., 2000-01.

⁸ Jan Petersen, *Sikkerhetspolitisk samarbeid i Europa eller over Atlanterhavet? Ja takk, begge deler*. Tale i Oslo Militære Samfund, 2003 [www.odin.dep.no/ud/norsk/aktuelt/taler/statsraad-a/032171-090162/dok-bu.html].

As long as Norway is not an EU-member, its relations with the EU supplements its relationship with NATO and the United States. In the debate about whether Norway should join the Nordic EU Battlegroup in 2004, the Ministry of Defence assured that: “there is no competition but reciprocal complimentary”.⁹ This reflects the dominant Norwegian view that with regard to foreign and security policy Norway cannot choose between Europe and the US. This policy goes back to the 1980s and was also stressed by the foreign minister in the aftermath of the harsh debate on the war in Iraq:

Our security political approach must [thus] be anchored through our cooperation in both Europe and across the Atlantic. We say, as Winnie the Pooh: ‘Yes, please – both, please.’ Not because we are demanding or naïve, but because this is the best protection we can muster against the security threats of our time.¹⁰

Because the country is not a member of the EU, Norwegian governments need to work hard to keep security and defence issues within NATO and – where this is not possible – to obtain the best possible access to the ESDP. This is for all practical purposes likely to continue to be Norwegian policy, independent of which government is in power.¹¹

⁹ Bengt T. Eidem, ”Norsk deltakelse i EUs innsatsstyrker”, *Aftenposten*, 27. november 2004.

¹⁰ Petersen, *Sikkerhetspolitisk samarbeid i Europa eller over Atlanterhavet? Ja takk, begge deler*, p. 7. (My translation from Norwegian).

¹¹ Nina Græger, “Norway between Europe and the US”. In *New Security Issues in Northern Europe: The Nordic and Baltic States and the ESDP*, Clive Archer (ed), London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 94-114.

Norway was invited to participate in a Nordic EU Battlegroup where some 150 personnel would be listed every third year for six months at a time and take part in joint training and exercises as part of the “preparedness” claim. The Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party, were against Norway’s participation in the Nordic EU Battlegroup, claiming that Norway should contribute to upholding NATO’s relevance rather than supporting competing projects (Haga 2004). Furthermore, they argued that it was not in Norway’s interest to be part of the controversial EU army and the EU Battlegroups. The term “EU army”, often used by anti-EU parties, is probably intended as a warning that the building up of an EU military capability is in direct competition to and, hence, a challenge to NATO (even the most pro-EU politicians do not like the idea that NATO would be replaced). In addition to the usual EU scepticism, not to say resistance, the Nordic EU Battlegroup was seen as an additional framework for assigning Norwegian forces abroad. These personnel could otherwise have been used in UN operations or in the national defence of Norway, as argued by the Centre Party.¹² National defence in this context referred specifically to Norway’s allegedly international responsibility for ensuring sustainable resource management in the High North but also for asserting national sovereignty and interests. Despite the critique, a majority in Parliament agreed that Norway should join the Nordic Battlegroup, and the country was on call in spring 2008.

¹² Marit Arnstad, ”Ordinær spørretime”, 25 november 2004 (jfr. Spørsmål nr. 242 til forsvarsministeren fra Marit Arnstad (Sp), *Dokument nr. 15, Stortingstidende* (2004-05).

Geopolitics and new great powers – implications for Norway?

As a small state, Norway's security has been heavily influenced by those powers or power constellations which at any given time have had interests in Northern Europe, traditionally Russia, the USA and leading European states. This is also, as noted above, the main reason why Norway has one foot in Europe and one foot in the US when it comes to security.

While this is likely to continue, global political developments may have an impact on these constellations of interest, as well as on Norway's relationship with them. Such themes, which have emerged in the international political and academic debate over the past few years, are also reflected in the Norwegian debate.

The end of the Cold War shifted the power balance from bi-polarity to unipolarity, with the United States as the dominant power. Over the last three years or so, we have seen the rise of a multi-polar or non-polar system where regional powers like Russia, China and India have become aspiring global powers. Shifting power relations could, eventually, also be reflected in a future re-negotiation of the international order.

Ad hoc diplomatic arrangements between great powers, informal institutions like the 19th century Concert of Europe, a hegemonic order or the idea of geopolitics generally reduce the political space for small states.¹³ In a con-

¹³ For an analysis of the theory and history of the Concert of Europe, see Holbraad, C. (1970) *The Concert of Europe. A Study of British and German International Theory 1815-1914*. London: Longman Group Ltd. Different varie-

stitutional order based on the rule of law and binding institutions, small states may appeal to international norms, rules and practices should they become subject to political and/or military pressure from other states. International organisations play an important role in such a system by restricting states' legitimate use of power and, hence, room of maneuver.¹⁴ The political costs paid by an aggressor through shaming and other reputational mechanisms may at least encourage norm compliance.¹⁵ This is not always the case, however.

The Georgian-Russian conflict in August 2008 displayed that Russia is capable and willing to use military force to pursue its political goals, despite international protests and in disrespect of international norms. The conflict may illustrate the geopolitical notion that great powers live by different rules than other states, and that great powers have "spheres of influence". Georgia was part of the Soviet Union for seventy years, and Georgia has a Russian (speaking) minority and is located in what Russia sees as its zone of protection or "backyard". Russia is a key state both for NATO and for Norwegian security and defence policy.

ties of order among states are analysed in Ikenberry, G. J. (2001) *After Victory. Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹⁴ Anders Wivel, "The Security Challenges of Small EU Member States: Interests, Identity and the Development of the EU as a Security Actor", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43 (2005), pp. 393-412.

¹⁵ Frank Schimmelfennig, "The Double Puzzle of EU Enlargement. Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Decision to Expand to the East", *ARENA Working Paper*. Oslo: ARENA/University of Oslo 1999.

NATO-Russia relations in change

NATO has been important for the integration of Russia into Western security cooperation structures, and the prospects for close partnership were quite good in the 1990s.¹⁶ The relationship between the West and Russia has deteriorated for some time due to NATO enlargement to the east, the 1999 Kosovo War, the Western acceptance of the independent status of Kosovo, the deployment of U.S. missile defence installations in Poland and the Czech Republic and, most notably, the Georgian-Russian conflict in 2008. In the wake of the Russian invasion of Georgia cooperation between NATO and Russia, including bilateral defence cooperation, was mutually frozen (but meetings in the Preparatory Committee were held). The continued Russian withdrawal from the CFE Treaty, which e.g. regulates the military presence on the ground in the North and ensures mutual inspections, also reduced the number of arenas for Russian-Western security cooperation and dialogue.

When the dialogue between NATO and Russia is cut this also affects NATO's role as an arena for political consultations. In a long term perspective, this could reduce the prospects for and attraction of Russian-Western security and military cooperation. Hence, the main problem for NATO in its relationship with Russia seems to be that Russia does not conceive of NATO as an arena for *political* consultation and discussions but as a political player, a Western player or *actor*.

¹⁶ Yuriy Borko, *Possible Scenarios for Geopolitical Shifts in Russian-European Relations. Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe. Security, Territory and Identity*. London: Sage, 1997.

Norway-Russian relations in a tight spot?

How are these changes in the global power-relations likely to affect the dynamics and precondition for action in the High North, which is becoming increasingly important in a Norwegian security context? The recent years' deterioration of Western-Russian relations potentially has serious and negative security implications for Norway. So far, the importance of pursuing a cooperative approach towards Russia has been emphasised by the Norwegian defence minister: "Our policy towards Russia will still be marked by pragmatism, interests and cooperation".¹⁷ In the same vein the foreign ministry has stressed that Norwegian policy in the High North is marked by cooperation, firmness, predictability, clarity and engagement, and should be recognisable to Russia, to avoid misunderstandings.¹⁸

Norwegian-Russian bilateral cooperation in the region goes back to the 1970s.¹⁹ The Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation from 1996 represents the most important international cooperation network in the region.

¹⁷ Anne Grethe Strøm-Eriksen, *Trusler og utfordringer, sikkerhet og forsvar*. Speech in Oslo Militære Samfund, 7th January, 2008.

¹⁸ Øyvind Nordsletten, Speech in Oslo Militære Samfund, 26th March 2007; Jonas Gahr Støre, *Et hav av muligheter - en ansvarlig politikk for Nordområdene*. Speech at the University of Tromsø, 10th November 2005.

¹⁹ It includes the management of marine resources since the 1970s, nuclear safety cooperation with Russia since 1995, and Norway's nuclear safety action plan, which was revised in early 2008. For documents, see [www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Sikkerhetspol/atomhandlingsplan0802.pdf]. Accessed on February 18, 2008.

The fact that Russia has interests and claims in a region marked by not only a lack of international rules and regulations but also marked by territorial claims and border disputes between countries represents a major challenge to Norway. The High North now appears as a showground for Russia's relations with the West. With reference to the increased Russian military exercises and tests in the region, the defence minister has noted: "...we see that the High North will still be of great strategic importance. This underlines NATO's continued relevance for the stability in the North."²⁰ While the intensified military activity hardly is directed towards its small neighbour, a more self-confident and ambitious Russia is something that Norway is following closely.²¹

This situation constitutes the backdrop for the Norwegian position in the early negotiations about NATO's new strategic concept, to be adopted in 2010 (or 2011 at the latest). A key concern voiced by Norway is about NATO's profile on Alliance territory and on its periphery to restore the balance between missions away (e.g. the ISAF-operation) and at home. According to a Norwegian position paper (non-paper), NATO should increase its "situational awareness" and "geographical knowledge" about the regions in NATO's periphery on a daily basis. To Norway this means the High North, where Norway shares a border with but has conflicting interests with Russia. However, Norwegian officials argue that a stronger focus on NATO territory also

would increase NATO's relevance and legitimacy in the public opinion. Norway's position was immediately supported by countries who also were sceptical towards the sidelining of Article 5 operations and "out of area" operations back in 1999 and who are facing potentially similar challenges around the Black Sea and the Mediterranean like Greece and Turkey (and Poland).²² The Norwegian position is in line with those who argue that NATO should "come home to Europe" and reclaim its role as a Euro-Atlantic security organisation, rather than an organisation for global security.²³ The negative developments in Afghanistan may make such a view more attractive to NATO-countries.

Strategic partners in the High North – constraints and possibilities

Norway's security challenges in the High North have been a driving force in Norwegian debates about the value of NATO-membership and about NATO's future role. What role could NATO play in this increasingly complex northern picture?

Arguably, the extent to which the rules of the game in the High North are defined by norms, regimes and laws or, conversely, by "hard power" will also define which actors (states, organisations) that are seen as legitimate, and which capabilities that are most efficient. The importance for Norwegian security of an international order based on law, and the indivisibility of national and European security has been emphasized by the government as well as by

²⁰ Anne Grethe Strøm-Eriksen, *Aktuell norsk forsvars- og sikkerhetspolitikk - fra Kabul til Nordområdene*, Speech at the convention of Folk og Forsvar (landsmøte) in Oslo, 22nd February, 2007.

²¹ Espen Barth Eide, Interview, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 27th February, 2008.

²² Sources in NATO, interviews 27 and 28 October 2008.

²³ See e.g. Pierre Pascallon, "What Will Nato's Future Be?", *Europe Diplomacy and Defence* 173, 4 November 2008.

academics.²⁴ In a multi-polar world, Norway should seek to be embedded in a substantive multilateral Western security web and to blend all of its bilateral relationships into the multilateral strategies.²⁵ In that sense, as noted by Ståle Ulriksen, “[T]he international community is Norway’s first line of defence, literally speaking”.²⁶

In the case of a bilateral dispute between Russia and Norway, however, the relevance of established security structures and bilateral partnerships is not obvious. A major challenge since the end of the Cold War, when the High North was NATO’s important Northern flank, has been to attract international attention to the region. The immediate post-Cold War enthusiasm and visions in Northern Europe for cross-border cooperation and integration (e.g. the Euro-Arctic Barents Region initiative in 1992) were replaced by disappointment and detachment from the mid-1990s.²⁷

For most other states than Russia the region has remained either marginal or peripheral.²⁸ When revitalizing the High

North as a priority in Norwegian foreign and security policy in 2005, Norwegian authorities emphasised the importance of environmentally sustainable resource management (of fish and in the exploitation of energy) and the world’s need for energy security and energy diversification to reduce the dependency on oil and gas from more troubled regions like the Middle East and a more self-conscious Russia.²⁹ In NATO, energy security was only recently added to its mandate at the Riga summit in 2007. As part of the High North Strategy (2005), Norway initiated bilateral dialogues with countries like Germany, Great Britain, France, Canada, the United States, as well as with the EU. However, there is no systematic documentation of the results of these dialogues. Indeed, the assumed interest from international actors such as the EU and US in the High North in an energy context appears as somewhat exaggerated.³⁰ Which potential security implications could this apparent lack of (non-commercial) stakeholders in the region entail?

²⁴ Ministry of Defence (2003-04) ”Den videre moderniseringen av Forsvaret i perioden 2005-2008”, p. 20.

²⁵ Alyson J.K. Bailes, “Security and the Norwegian interests in a globalized world”, *Globale Norge - hva nå? Friske blikk på norsk utenrikspolitikk*. Oslo: Utenriksdepartementet, 2007; Christoph Bertram, “Security Threats Facing Norway - How Can These Be Approached?”. In *Globale Norge - hva nå? Friske blikk på norsk utenrikspolitikk*. Oslo: Utenriksdepartementet - Refleksprosjektet, 2007.

²⁶ Ståle Ulriksen, ”Norske Sikkerhetspolitiske Utfordringer”. In *Globale Norge - hva nå? Friske blikk på norsk utenrikspolitikk*. Oslo: Utenriksdepartementet - Refleksprosjektet, 2007.

²⁷ Geir Hønneland, *Barentsbrytninger. Norsk Nordområdepolitikk Etter Den Kalde Krigen*. Oslo: Høyskoleforlaget, 2005.

²⁸ Jakub M. Godzimirski, ”The New Geopolitics of the North?”, *Security Policy Library 2*.

Oslo: Den Norske Atlanterhavskomite, 2005, p. 5.

²⁹ Støre, *Et hav av muligheter*; Jonas Gahr Støre, *Nordområdene - geopolitiske og sikkerhetspolitiske utfordringer*. Opening speech at a conference in Paris, 24th November, 2005.

³⁰ Simen Ramberg, *Nordområdene: En Blindsoner i Amerikansk og Europeisk energipolitikk*. Master thesis, University of Trondheim (NTNU), Department of Sociology and Political Science, 2007.

The role of NATO

While NATO still is the bedrock of Norway's security, NATO is only marginally interested in the High North in a security context in so far as a major violent conflict in the region invoking NATO's Article 5 is unlikely for the foreseeable future.³¹ And formally, NATO has no role in conflicts or incidents over territorial claims in disputed areas where sovereignty is not permanently established according to international law. NATO involvement, should a situation involving a NATO ally occur in the High North, is therefore questionable.

Secondly, while NATO's role as a forum for transatlantic consultations would be vital to Norway in the case of such an incident, NATO is being challenged in this capacity. German chancellor Gerhard Schröder stated in February 2005 that NATO was no longer the primary arena for transatlantic consultations and coordination and called for reform of Europe-US relations.³² The statement probably reflected the United States' neglect of NATO in the planning and initiation of "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan in 2001 and especially the unilateral intervention in Iraq and the subsequent split between the US and European allies. Schröder's statement triggered negative reactions in Norway, not least from the Norwegian foreign minister:

The moment we get an axis between Washington and Brussels within security policy, it means that

³¹ This was remarked by Norway's ambassador to NATO, Mr. Kim Traavik, at the opening session of the Norwegian Atlantic Committee's Leangkollen conference on 4. February 2008.

³² "Ny Norsk EU-runde etter Nato-utspill", *Aftenposten*, 14 februar 2005.

the four NATO-countries, which stand outside [the EU] . . . fall completely on the sideline in the efforts to put their mark on this transatlantic cooperation. It means a further marginalization of Norway.³³

One year later, the new German chancellor, Angela Merkel, stressed the need to strengthen NATO as a political forum, also for transatlantic relations. This shift probably made the Norwegian government breathe a sigh of relief. The lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan with regard to the legitimacy gained through allied cooperation are also likely to strengthen US commitment to NATO.³⁴ If seen as the embodiment of the Western security community, however, NATO undoubtedly has been dealt a blow over the past six to seven years. This may change with the new US administration under president elect Barack Obama, whose speeches have emphasised dialogue, diplomacy and cooperation with European allies and partners. This is likely to affect NATO in a positive way. However, tighter bilateral relations between the EU and the United States could also result from a new US administration, with more focus on the EU-US Summits, for example. As a non-EU member, Norwegian influence on security matters of importance to Norway would be significantly reduced should such a scenario materialise.

The EU nevertheless has become a central arena for European political debates and decisions about the broader regional and global security issues.³⁵ Furthermore, the EU has a multifaceted

³³ Quoted in *Ibid.*

³⁴ Bertram, "Security Threats Facing Norway - How Can These Be Approached?"

³⁵ Helene Sjursen, "What Kind of Power?", *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2006), pp. 69-81.

tool box to deal with them. In relation to Russia, for instance, the EU has initiated an EU-Russia strategy, and the dialogue has been furthered also after the war in Georgia. If the EU's potential in these regards were exploited, then NATO's role increasingly would be as a military tool at the disposal of its members but also of the UN and the EU. The likelihood of such a scenario also depends on the EU's ability to follow up on its ambitions with action, of course. NATO is militarily superior to the EU, which might be one of the reasons why France is returning to the military cooperation in NATO, from which the country has opted out for more than forty years.³⁶

The role of the EU – potential new partner?

What could Norway expect from the EU in the High North then? The EU represents the world's most heavily institutionalised security community.³⁷ Norway is integrated into the EU structures and is participating in several policy areas, including in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the Nordic EU Battlegroup in 2004, which was on standby in spring 2008 for the first time. Norwegian participation in the ESDP is not coupled to territorial defence, but to its role as a contributor to international operations, and to the idea that the provision of forces could produce influence, based on what I have earlier called a "troops-for-influence" strategy.³⁸

³⁶ President Charles de Gaulle withdrew France from the integrated military structure in NATO in 1966, due to what he considered to be US dominance in the alliance.

³⁷ C. Bretherton and J. Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*. London: Routledge, 2006.

³⁸ Nina Græger, "Norway and the EU Security Dimension: A 'Troops-for-Influence' Strat-

Norwegian EU-membership is not an issue in the foreseeable future but a closer partnership with the EU's common foreign and security policy seems possible. The EU strategy for the Arctic (2008) may also increase the European awareness of Arctic-related issues, including the emerging security challenges in the region. The EU has a greater potential for managing Russia and for de-securing issues in the High North than NATO, because of its political nature and civilian tools. This would be in Norway's interest. The value of both NATO and the EU largely depends, however, on the path of Russian foreign policy and on whether the West is willing to accommodate Russia. Because Russia generally views international relations as a zero-sum game, it will probably have difficulties in accepting that other states, and especially the United States, become central players in the High North.

Special relationships: The role of the United States

Norway's relationship with Russia in the High North also mirrors Norway's relationship with its closest ally, *the United States*. In a multi-polar world, having good relations with a major player like the US is important for a small state. Besides, the US still is the security provider of last resort for Norway. At the same time, bilateral priority relations to the US could affect Norwegian security concerns towards Russia in a negative way, because of difficult

egy". In *The ESDP and the Nordic Countries: Four Variations on a Theme*, Nina Græger, Henrik Larsen and Hanna Ojanen (edd). Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs and Bonn: Institut für Europäische Politik, 2002. pp. 33-89.

US-Russian relations.³⁹ At the extraordinary meeting of NATO's foreign ministers on 19th August 2008 during the Georgian-Russian conflict, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned that by flexing its military muscle in Georgia as well as elsewhere, and by resuming the Cold War-era strategic bomber patrols off the coast of Alaska, Russia was playing "a very dangerous game and perhaps one the Russians want to reconsider".⁴⁰ According to the Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang*, Rice also made a direct reference to the Russian Bear planes patrolling off Norway's coast as a demonstration of military force against a small neighbour country that was not inspiring confidence.⁴¹ Though Norwegian decision-makers not necessarily shared this interpretation, it illustrates how Norway is being drawn into international power politics, because of its geographical location. It demonstrates the return of geopolitics. It also shows that it is not up to Norway alone to decide when and how Russia is framed as a potential aggressor, a strategic partner, or a security partner. Again, the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States may probably have a positive impact, due to his focus on dialogue and cooperation (which should not be confused with softness, though).

Enhanced focus on Nordic security and defence cooperation

The renewed focus on *Nordic defence cooperation* could increase the Nordic

³⁹ Bertram, "Security Threats Facing Norway - How Can These Be Approached?"

⁴⁰ "NATO won't let Russia succeed in Georgia", *Associated Press*. Accessed on April 2, 2009.

⁴¹ [www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=534407]. Accessed on September 12, 2008. Author's translation from Norwegian.

attention to and support for Norway's security challenges in the High North, either bilaterally or within a NATO framework. Sea and air surveillance in the High North are among the areas of bilateral cooperation suggested by the Norwegian and Swedish chiefs of defence.⁴² Former foreign minister of Norway Thorvald Stoltenberg led a group that was mandated to identify concrete ways in which Nordic foreign policy and security cooperation could be enhanced in a ten year perspective.⁴³ Whether his report to the Nordic foreign ministers will lead to concrete policies, however, remains to be seen.

Nordic defence cooperation has taken place in UN and NATO peace operations since the 1990s, and later within the EU (e.g. the Nordic EU Battle-group). To Norway, Nordic cooperation also represents a potentially important backdoor to the EU.⁴⁴ The adoption of the EU's Northern Dimension in 1997 under the Finnish EU presidency shows that even small Nordic states may succeed in putting their issues on the EU agenda.⁴⁵ The new regionalization trend in the EU may increase the incentives for Nordic regional security cooperation and, in the longer run, strengthen "Norden" as an actor in the High North. However, regionalization of security, at the cost of security coop-

⁴² Håkan Syrén, and Sverre Diesen, "Nytt försvarssamarbete mellan Sverige och Norge", *Dagens Nyheter*, 31. august 2007.

⁴³ Thorvald Stoltenberg, *Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy*. Oslo: Report to the Nordic foreign ministers, 2009.

⁴⁴ Græger, "Norway between Europe and the US.

⁴⁵ For an early analysis, see Lassi Heininen, "Finding a Concrete Form for the Northern Dimension Initiative". In *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?*, Hanna Ojanen (ed). Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs & Bonn: Institut für Europäische Politik, 2001. pp. 20-53.

eration in NATO (and the EU) is not on the Nordic agenda. The Nordic countries want to maintain a strong American interest and presence in Europe and in the High North.

Increased attention to the High North from existing security institutions and partners, as well as the creation of new strategic partnerships could reduce Norway's prospects for being "left alone" with Russia. However, such attention is not necessarily favourable with regard to Norwegian foreign policy interests, such as territorial claims. Norway's exercise of jurisdiction beyond the territorial waters of the Svalbard archipelago also is challenged by those EU-members who have individual national interests and engagements in the High North. And it was an awakening to the Norwegian government when Great Britain invited Russia, the US and several EU-members to a meeting about Svalbard without involving Norway.⁴⁶ The balancing of foreign policy and security interests in the region is likely to be a continuous challenge to Norwegian authorities.

The prospects for conflict – the role of the armed forces

Despite the security cover Norway enjoys through NATO and its "special relationship" with the US, and despite the importance of international norms, a limited military conflict in areas not subject to international law, or disputed areas, is possible. What role is there for the armed forces? While the Norwegian armed forces were not intended to provide the flesh on the bones of the High North Strategy, increased Russian military activity has fuelled the public demand for a stronger Norwegian military

presence in the region.⁴⁷ This demand was intensified by the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008. Another state with stakes in the region, Canada already has adopted a plan for a stronger military presence in its northern areas.

The security-related challenges in the High North already are shaping the proposals for Norway's future defence policy.⁴⁸ Norway should be able to establish a military threshold that increases the costs of using military power and reduces the room to manoeuvre for a potential aggressor.⁴⁹ Also during the Cold War was Norway expected to handle smaller incidents on its own. While the invasion scenario created the Army as lead service, the new security challenges in the High North are strengthening the role of the Navy and the Air Force. The new frigates have a stronger capacity than the old, increasing Norway's military capabilities in the region. In the purchase of new fighter planes, their capacity to conduct surveillance, patrols and to exercise sovereignty, which is particularly relevant in the High North, is given considerable weight.⁵⁰ The ability to

⁴⁶ Morten Fyhn, "Støre gikk i taket", *Aftenposten*, 13 april 2007.

⁴⁷ Jacob Børresen, "En Forsvarsstrategi som ikke passer for Norge", *Aftenposten*, 10 februar 2005; Finn Martin Vallersnes, *Interpellasjon om Nordområdestrategien*. Oslo: Stortinget, 2007.

⁴⁸ *Forsvarssjefens Forsvarsstudie 2007 Sluttrapport*. Oslo, 2007; *Et Styrket Forsvar. Rapport fra Forsvarspolitisk utvalg*. Oslo: Norges offentlige utredninger (NOU) 2007.

⁴⁹ Sverre Diesen, *Status og utfordringer i Forsvaret*. Speech in Oslo Militære Samfund, 26th November, 2007.

⁵⁰ Industrial cooperation agreements involved in the purchase, as well as the planes' fighter capabilities (air combat) also are important. For a discussion of the strategic aspects, see Jakob Børresen, "Noen Betragtninger Om Kjøp Av Nye Kampfly Til Luftforsvaret". *Norsk Militært Tidsskrift*. 2006.

protect Norwegian interests in its near abroad is “the rationale for our future fighter plane capacity”, whereas the fighter plane’s capacity “to contribute internationally comes as a bonus effect of our national efforts”, the defence minister has assured.⁵¹

The indivisibility of security is generally accepted and has changed the framework conditions for Norwegian defence policy.⁵² The threat of invasion lies in the past but Russian political and military pressure against Norway to enforce a change of its policy positions or give in to Russian demands is a possible scenario.⁵³ A scenario where Norway might have to deter Russia militarily could re-open the debate about Norway’s contributions to international operations and military “overstretch”. At least, the need to strike a new balance in the allocation of resources to international operations and national military presence has been voiced in several political and military circles. Recent Russian foreign policy and regular military activity are likely to strengthen these voices.

Concluding remarks

Norwegian security and defence policy has been anchored in NATO since 1949. The continued relevance of NATO and a close relationship with the USA are still seen as vital for the territorial defence of Norway, and territorial defence still means a lot in the Norwegian security discourse. However, over

the past ten to fifteen years events and developments in both the EU and the US have called transatlantic relations into question.

The close relationship with the US is likely to be continued and, hopefully, further strengthened under president Obama. Such cooperation is not likely to be based on the idea of a transatlantic ‘community of destiny’ but on the need for cooperation with relevant allies. In the foreign policy of the Bush Administration NATO seemed to play a less important role, and it seemed as if the EU might have a greater role to play as a transatlantic forum in a long term perspective. The wider implications of these developments for Norway’s security policy are only slowly trickling down into the political discourse. At least there have been few principal public debates about the impact of these events for Norway’s traditionally Atlantic security policy orientation.

For Norway, who shares the European values and visions about how to deal with the security threats of the 21st century, standing outside of the EU may become even more challenging than before. Norway’s new security challenges in The High North do not easily attract the interest of neither old nor traditional partners in security. In principle, the NATO–Russia Council could be a forum for dialogue in the case of a dispute or incident between Norway and Russia in the High North. However, with the Russian-Georgian conflict last August, NATO-Russia cooperation is in a stalemate (though formally re-opened). These concerns are playing into Norway’s positions in NATO’s work on a new strategic concept, which will formally commence at the NATO summit in Strasbourg on 3-4 April 2009.

⁵¹ Strøm-Eriksen, Speech at the convention of Folk og Forsvars (landsmøte).

⁵² For an analysis of the post-1990 developments in Norwegian defence discourse and practice, see Nina Græger, *Norsk forsvarsdiskurs 1990-2005: Internasjonaliseringen av Forsvaret*, Dr.polit dissertation, University of Oslo, Department of Political Science, 2007.

⁵³ Diesen, *Status og utfordringer i Forsvaret*.

Epilogue

Europeans in NATO already have experienced that the new Obama administration is in place in Washington. Under the leadership of President Barack Obama and secretary of state Hillary R. Clinton, the US has set a new tone in the US relationship with Europe. Not necessarily because they are more fond of Europe than the administration they replaced but rather because more attentiveness towards the US allies and partners would benefit American national interests. This echoes the advice from Suzanne Nossel to the Bush government back in 2004, where she argues that a foreign policy that is “focusing on the smart use of power to promote U.S. interests through a stable grid of allies, institutions, and norms” will “reassure an uneasy American public, united a fractious government bureaucracy, and rally the world behind U.S. goals”.⁵⁴ In addition, president Obama shares more of the European foreign policy goals pursued by NATO but to some extent also the EU. For NATO, as well as for Norway, this is good news.

Another piece of good news for Norway in the context of security policy is that NATO seems to recognise the security challenges the country is facing in the High North. At least this was the message from participants – officials and analysts – at a security conference held in Iceland in early 2009, where Norway presented its concerns to NATO officials, including the secretary general. The success was followed up by an interview with the Norwegian foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre published by *NATO Review*. Furthermore, in the debate on the revision of the stra-

tegic concept, Norway’s “Near abroad initiative” has gained support also from key NATO-countries like Great Britain, Germany, Denmark and even the United States.

⁵⁴ Suzanne Nossel, “Smart Power”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004.

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