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What is This?

Norwegian Strategic Culture after World War II

From a Local to a Global Perspective

NINA GRÆGER
AND HALVARD LEIRA

ABSTRACT

This article details the changes in Norwegian strategic culture, comprising grand strategy and practice, following the end of the Cold War. Throughout the Cold War, Norwegian security and defence policy was characterized by broad, non-politicized consensus. Basic elements of this grand strategic perspective were the smallness of Norway, the people defence and allegiance to the UN. Doctrines focused on survival, with the army as the lead service. Close ties were maintained between the military and societal elites, and the military was seen just as much in societal terms, namely as an employer in scarcely populated areas, as it was in defensive terms. The changes in strategic culture over the past 10–15 years have been uneven, partly driven by internal and external changes in discourse, but over recent years probably as much by changes in practice. The first post-Cold War years witnessed the emergence of an alternative grand strategic representation, focusing on international operations rather than on invasion defence. Mindful of the impact on local communities of a reduced military presence, politicians long resisted any change, but after years of resistance the alternative grand strategy was embraced by the armed forces, leading to the creation of a rapid reaction force and increased emphasis on special task forces. International experience is now considered positive, even necessary, for a military career. Furthermore, whereas general conscription was gradually undermined because of the way in which it is practised, new civil-military ties were forged through the practice of providing military personnel training that was interchangeable with regular education. It now seems that military practice, as well as the specialized military discourse, has outpaced the broader Norwegian discourse on the use of military means. Nevertheless, the tension between global and local concerns remains unresolved.

Keywords: defence discourse; grand strategy; international operations; military doctrine; Norway; post Cold-War period; strategic culture

‘The reason for having a defence is using it’ was the statement made by the Norwegian Minister of Defence when she sent Norwegian F-16’s to



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Afghanistan in October 2002, F-16's that would later fire the first official Norwegian live rounds at an enemy since 1945.¹ This stands in stark contrast to what had been common wisdom in Norway since World War II, i.e. that the reason for having a defence was in not using it. 'Invasion defence' defined the purpose and outlook of the Norwegian armed forces well into the 1990s. The substantial change in the perception and use of Norwegian armed forces came in the second half of the 1990s. The change in strategic culture has been uneven, driven partly by internal and partly by external changes in discourse, but over recent years probably as much by changes in practice. At the time of writing (May 2004), military practice and the specialized military discourse have outpaced the broader Norwegian discourse on the use of military means.

The purpose and patterns of military intervention cannot be understood separately from the normative context in which they occur. International norms increasingly set the standards for the appropriate behaviour of states (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 893). The coupling of power with 'legitimate social purpose' was a central element in US foreign policy during the Cold War (Ruggie, 1983), but was not a new phenomenon. Beliefs about social purpose constitute the meaning and rules (e.g. unilateral versus multilateral) of military intervention and in time will change intervention behaviour (Finnemore, 2003: 14). In nineteenth-century Europe, religious and historical ties formed the basis of humanitarian claims for military intervention (Finnemore, 2003: 53, 63). In the post-Cold War era, humanitarian norms have defined the referent objects, the framework, the goals and the success criteria of military intervention.²

Norway's participation in military interventions has been justified with reference to the importance of international norms for national security³ and to the security of others.⁴ The Norwegian government has underlined that use of force should be authorized by the UN and be conducted within a multilateral framework.⁵ Although international operations, including peace enforcement, are now defined as a core task of the Norwegian armed forces, this participation still evokes much debate, especially concerning funding — should international participation, including the training and deployment of costly special task forces, be given priority, or should the scarce means be used to ensure employment in thinly inhabited areas and exposed sectors of the industry? Is it more important to be a player in international affairs through forced contribution to operations than to uphold traditional Norwegian nation-building values such as the citizen-army and territorial defence? Is the conscript army useful in contemporary international operations? To what extent do localization issues prevail over the perceived necessity to be part of military globalization? In this article, we explore how these questions have developed and how they illustrate the duality of Norwegian strategic culture. We do this by means of tracing the continuities and changes in Norwegian strategic culture since World War II, with particular emphasis on the changes over the past 10 to 15 years. Since the relationship between discourse and practice is seen as dynamic interplay, we start by looking at the discourse (or grand strategy) and the prac-

tices of the Cold War, before moving on to the discourse and practice of the past 10–15 years.

Grand Strategy

Traditionally, there has been broad, non-politicized consensus about the main elements of Norwegian defence policy, particularly because consensus has been seen as important for a small country in a geopolitically unstable corner of the world. In Norway, there is no tradition of strategic thinking (Neumann, 2002) and military doctrine is not a sub-component of any ‘grand strategy’ (Posen, 1984: 14), but rather a strategy in itself. This dominant representation of grand strategy has been challenged by opponents of NATO membership ever since the late 1950s, but not to the extent that there has been any doubt about Norwegian policy. As we argue, there was a duality in the views of the role of Norway in the international system, with ‘realistic’ and ‘idealistic’ traits, respectively. Nevertheless, the grand strategic perspective of both these positions emphasized the particular relationship between the Norwegian soldier and the motherland.

Norway: ‘a Small Country in the World’

The German invasion of 1940 was a rude awakening for Norway in many ways, and amply illustrates the point made in the introductory article, i.e. strategic culture is transnationally nested. At the level of international relations, Norwegian grand strategy after World War II was decisively influenced by the German invasion, which shattered the belief in disarmament and in the safety of being small. The communist takeovers in Eastern and Central Europe in the immediate after-war years further enhanced the feeling of insecurity and led to the abandonment of traditional policies of neutrality, and to membership of NATO in 1949. Following the terminology suggested by Farrell (2001), Norwegian strategic culture underwent radical norm transplantation, induced by a series of shocks and perpetuated by active social entrepreneurs and a generational change in the armed forces as well as in politics.

Before the war, topography, climate and history were seen to define the Norwegian attitude towards armed force, as well as the possible use of such force. After World War II, the geographical location of Norway, particularly its closeness to the Soviet Union, and NATO membership were also increasingly emphasized as defining factors of Norwegian defence policy. The geopolitical argument was particularly potent. The Soviet military presence and activity on the Kola Peninsula, or ‘the local problem of force’, was to a large extent seen as structuring for Norwegian security policy (Holst, 1978: 17). The frequently used phrase ‘Norway is a country with her back to Europe and facing the Atlantic’ (see, e.g., Brundtland, 1981: 2) was more than a geographic description; it also captured a state of mind. Norwegian grand strategy thus had loyalty to the alliance, particularly the US, as its mainstay, but this was balanced by the notion of Norwegian peacefulness

and a continuous urge to emphasize the uniqueness of the Norwegian geopolitical situation.

Bringing Peace to the World

After World War II, the traditional idea of Norway as a particularly peaceful country was coupled with the new availability of trained personnel to create a discourse on peace-making as a Norwegian speciality. It was stated policy during most of the Cold War that Norway should supply a relatively high number of UN peace-keepers, and as the Cold War wound towards an end there was sustained academic argument that Norway had some special features that made the country a trusted negotiator and mediator in international and civil conflicts (Egelund, 1988).⁶

Adding to this picture of secular mission was the relatively substantial development aid given by the Norwegian government and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), paralleled by religious mission and emergency relief (e.g. the Norwegian Church Aid's engagement in Mali). The idea was that in low-tension areas Norwegians were able to perpetuate their beneficial work, while NATO provided security in contested areas and 'high politics'. Of special interest here is the separation that existed between the 'idealistic' discourse and the 'realistic' discourse.⁷ Attempts to combine them, and to create a coherent Norwegian discourse on foreign policy as such, and the place of military force in it, were few and far between. This takes on added importance with regard to strategic culture, as international engagement in UN operations was more related to the 'idealistic' discourse than to the 'realistic' one. As such, UN operations were not seen as a core task of the armed forces.

The international engagements of the armed forces have primarily been justified with reference to the obligation to enforce respect for international norms and to contribute to stability in Europe or in more remote regions, which may affect Norway's security (*White Paper no. 22, 1997–98*: 36). Thus, the dominant representation has seen Norwegian participation in international operations as a supplementary task. Accordingly, the 'real' task of the military is to defend Norwegian territory — land and people (Christie, 1995; Ulriksen, 2002: 157). This view has lost both relevance and adherents over the past four to five years, with the operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The People and the Land

A central aspect of the dominant representation has been the concept of the 'people's army' — defence based on the sons of the nation fighting on their home turf. This connection between nation and territory was institutionalized through the practice of general male conscription. The concept of the 'people's army' has a long ancestry in Norwegian historical scholarship, and, as discussed below, it still resonates in the debate about conscription versus professional soldiers in relation to international operations. To a large extent, the literature on Norwegian defence policy and security policy

has focused on the tough climate and rugged terrain of Norway, and the innate ability of the Norwegian soldier to handle such conditions because of his nearness to nature and an outdoor lifestyle (Eriksen, 1995, 1997). The historical tradition — and particularly the literature about World War II and the experiences from the German invasion in 1940 — also contributed to an emphasis on tactical rather than strategic challenges in Norwegian defence discourse. The relative ease of the invasion also contributed to the myth of 'Never again April 9th'. Central elements of this myth have been military preparedness (hence invasion defence) and allied support versus the neutrality line, and realism versus naïvety. Although presented well before World War II, these ideas were perpetuated after the war, regardless of the mixed success of established practices in the Norwegian campaign.

Although a radical rewriting of the role of Norway in the international system took place, it seems that the failures of the practices of World War II did not lead to changes in the specialized military discourse. Rather than learning from the experiences of 1940, a tradition was re-established that excused and justified the disaster, and perpetuated the link between the Norwegian soldier and the Norwegian mountains. Men (preferably on skis) with rifles were given priority over technological development (Ulriksen, 2002: 166).

With alliance membership and insecurity followed steep increases in defence expenditure. The Labour Party, in office from 1945 to 1965, sought to balance increased defence spending with post-war economic and social rebuilding. A functioning welfare state was seen as pivotal to avoiding internal political strife and, in turn, to ensuring a coherent security policy. The military were integrated in the welfare state through the practices of placing bases not just in strategic areas, but also in areas that needed the employment offered by auxiliary services. The military was seen as a nation-building institution that not only integrated men from all social, cultural and geographical strata, but also offered careers for men of all backgrounds. Indeed, while the military in the inter-war years had been seen as class-based and anti-socialist, the post-war years saw reconciliation between most Norwegians and the armed forces.

Cold War Practices

Doctrines

Norwegian military doctrine between 1945 and 1989 was based on national and territorial imperatives, and was linked to the concept of national survival in the face of a superior enemy, the USSR. The Norwegian defence concept rested on four mutually reinforcing principles: a nationally balanced defence (military capabilities from all services to hold against an enemy in the initial phase of an invasion), allied cooperation, total defence and conscription (Defence Commission of 1990, 1992: 12: 146–7).

At the level of general international politics, the nearness to the USSR led to practices designed to deter the Soviets, but at the same time to

reassure them of Norway's defensive intentions. Norway held an important position in NATO as a 'watchtower' in the North and there were yearly NATO exercises in Northern Norway. At the same time, Norwegian authorities pursued a policy of self-imposed restrictions regarding the prestocking of nuclear weapons and allied bases on Norwegian soil and allied flights close to the Soviet border in peacetime. From around 1980, it was widely assumed that practices like these had been influential in assuring the independence of Norway. However, it has been argued that these policies were intended for internal purposes rather than external politics (Græger, 2002: 36). When the government was showing restraint, NATO sceptics and adherents to the more 'idealistic' line were placated to some extent.

The practices of UN peace-keepers also reaffirmed the 'idealistic' discourse, but UN operations had a relatively low status inside the military hierarchy. Since the main task of the military was national defence, it was assumed that international experience had little to offer with regard to relevant skills and scenarios. This was reflected in career patterns. Service in Northern Norway was a prerequisite if one wanted to rise to the highest positions, whereas international experience was neither necessary nor advantageous for a career in the armed forces and could even spoil future promotions.

Defence Structure

After World War II, only the navy and air force had standing units, while the army and the coastal artillery and anti-aircraft artillery were based on the mobilization of conscripted men. Given the invasion scenario, the army was the lead service, while the navy and the air force played secondary roles. As for concrete military planning, the army was supposed to fight where the special qualities of the Norwegian soldier could be used to advantage, rather than in more densely populated areas. The role of the Norwegian forces was twofold: to hold in the mountains of Northern Norway until NATO reinforcements could arrive, and to make preparations in times of peace to facilitate such assistance (Tammes, 1997: 61). With a doctrine based on endurance warfare, military capability was measured in terms of the number of soldiers with guns. Towards the end of the Cold War, Norway could mobilize a military force of 320,000 men within 24–72 hours (Militærbalansen, 1988–89: 81).⁸

On the whole, the Norwegian defence concept was neither challenged nor put to the test during the Cold War. It was the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and the new generation of international operations that disclosed that military capability was about modern warfare and modern technology. In Norway, the thorough modernization of the defence material from the 1960s that was meant to take place between 1978 and 1990 never occurred (Defence Commissions of 1974, 1978: 58). Neither the budget level nor the structure was adjusted to the winding up of American arms support at the end of the 1960s (see e.g. *White Paper no. 54, 1987–88*: 10). Consequently, at the dawn of the new era, the Norwegian army, along with the Portuguese

army, was the least mechanized in NATO and hopelessly old-fashioned (Ulriksen, 2002: 229). On the whole, the defence material standard was not improved until the 1990s.

Civil–Military Relations

After 1945, stated policy was that military and civil society should be more closely connected, and these ideas were carefully put into practice. The one military practice that affected most Norwegians during the Cold War was conscription. The discursive focus on conscription was reflected in practice, as most Norwegian men served in the military. The number of conscientious objectors was relatively stable, and below 10 per cent.

The location of military bases and activities, especially in Northern Norway but also in other sparsely populated regions, was bridging the gap between the military and the civilian community. In all areas, the Home Guard, which is open to those who have done their compulsory military service, is an essential part of the total defence concept. While the military career systems of many other countries (e.g. Great Britain) reflected the social layers in society, Norway aimed for a popular defence. A military career was an alternative and a social mobility route for sons of farmers, industrial workers, lower employees and others who could not afford civilian education well into the post-World War II period. However, the officer elite tended to live their professional lives outside the political, business and academic circles. In Norway, there is a strong and widespread notion that people with specialized education, be they doctors or high-ranking officers, are less suited for political offices or business leadership. One reason why this has been upheld for so long may be related to another grounded idea, that popular democracy means that the representatives of the people should come from 'the people' and not from the educated lot in society. In practice, this has meant very little crossover between sectors.

The informal social bonding between politicians, officers and other societal groups in Norway has therefore taken place in organizational settings such as the Norwegian Atlantic Committee, the Norwegian Defence Union and People and Defence. Although a member organization, the Norwegian Atlantic Committee is an important arena for informal and social bonding between politicians, officers, researchers and civil servants. Members of the foreign affairs and defence committees usually hold several places on the board of the organization.

People and Defence fills a similar function — but addresses its activities more towards the armed forces and the military community and less towards the political community. Its members are mostly civilian organizations. The by-laws of the organization state that the central organization of employers and the largest labour organization will each have two of the nine board members, and by tradition they also share the duties of chairman and vice-chairman.

In addition to arranging meetings and seminars about current issues on the political–military agenda, the Norwegian Atlantic Committee and People and Defence invite smaller delegations to visit central places of

politico-military interest abroad and in Norway. Participants are usually politicians and researchers, and, to some extent, officers and bureaucrats. These trips, which usually last from three to five days, provide excellent surroundings for informal and social bonding between the participants.

In the Norwegian Defence Union, former, usually conservative, politicians and retired high-ranking military officers make up a considerable number of the active members. Here, conservative refers to the organization's criticism of the Norwegian authorities for not having taken home defence seriously and for having given priority to international operations (*Norges Forsvar* no. 6, 2003: 46). MPs are usually involved in the union as speakers, not as members of the board.

The trade unions represent another civilian–military meeting place, but one where informal bonding is not necessarily social. Military trade union representatives with particular party affiliations are invited to the defence fractions of 'their' party in Parliament to be informed and heard when the defence committee is dealing with important defence issues. These issues could be anything from wider questions concerning defence reform to narrow issues concerning the localization of training fields, etc. These meetings would typically take place in the Parliament building; for example, in the defence committee room. The Labour Party, for instance, has a formal organ for such contacts.

The impact on concrete policy outcomes of the various organizational settings mentioned here is difficult to assess. But the bringing together of people from military and civilian communities has probably contributed to the consensual line and to upholding the dominant representation in the Norwegian security and defence discourse.

Procurement of Defence Material

Norwegian procurement during the Cold War was closely tied to alliance cooperation and local employment. Major platforms were generally bought from larger allies, e.g. Great Britain, Germany and in particular the US. An extensive part of Norwegian defence material was bought with financial support from NATO and the US during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Lighter weapons and ammunition were typically made in Norway to NATO standards. The Norwegian munitions industry even developed some weapons (e.g. the Penguin anti-ship missile) that were generally used and exported to other alliance members. Of larger platforms, only naval vessels were built domestically, and this has been related to the practice of ensuring local employment.

Changes in Discourse since 1989

Norway was a reluctant learner after the end of the Cold War. The geopolitical and territorial argument, now reconstructed and adjusted to the chaos threat and environmental risks, as well as the 'residual threat' from an unstable Russia, remained central until the mid-1990s. External discus-

sive changes, however, made it clear that some sort of change was in store for the armed forces. Before discussing how the dominant representation reacted to these pressures, we nevertheless need to establish the different framings of the grand strategic discourse.

The first thing to note is that, following on from the historical ‘idealism’ mentioned above, and, after World War II, the concomitant dualistic nature of Norwegian foreign policy, there is no real tradition for thinking about military matters in purely military terms in Norway. The armed forces have never been important solely for their value in defending the country, but instead as one of many institutions in the Norwegian society. More often than not, grand strategic discourse is thus imbricated in other discourses about political, economic, social and cultural aims and needs in Norwegian society. This has been the case increasingly since the end of the Cold War.

The internationalization of the armed forces is, for instance, decisively imbricated in a discourse on regional policies, a discourse that emanates from the role of the military as employer in peripheral areas, particularly in Northern Norway. As noted above, military installations, garrisons, airfields, naval bases, etc. generate both military and civil jobs, directly and indirectly. The coalition trying to make military activity a question of employment (and thus habitation) in peripheral areas consists first and foremost of local and regional politicians, and MPs from the same constituency,⁹ sometimes cooperating with representatives of the relevant businesses. The leader of the defence committee has ensured that:

Northern Norway has so many local communities, which are and which have been depending on the armed forces, that one must make completely different considerations [here] than elsewhere in the country. Thus it is out of the question to remove any further military related jobs in Northern Norway.¹⁰

There are also continuous attempts at framing the debate about military reform in a general economical discourse on reduced defence spending after the Cold War. The main position in this discourse is that a better balance must be created between the military structure and its funding in order to maintain the military capability (see Nybakk, 2001). Even though there is general understanding that new security threats are important, this position stresses that they provide *additional* tasks for the armed forces, rather than supplanting the old ones. The tendency to frame the debate in economic rather than military terms was obvious in the Defence Study 2000. It was a description of what sort of armed forces the politicians would have if the proposed financial frame were to be adopted, rather than a professional recommendation based on the military tasks those same politicians have defined.

On the level of military capability, the debate about change has been framed in relation to the ability of Norwegian soldiers to engage in combat.¹⁰ During and after the war in Kosovo, for instance, the gap between the politicians’ expectations on the one hand, and military evaluations, on the other, with regard to whether Norwegian forces were physically and psychologically ready for live military action, was exposed. Internal audits

revealed that as late as 1998 the military leaders had made systematic attempts to filter information and rewrite the 'facts' (e.g. evaluations of military exercises with NATO participation) in an attempt to create a better image of Norwegian troops. In an attempt to divert some of the critique, the Chief of Defence emphasized the divide between political ambitions and adequate funding. The framing of the question of Norwegian soldiers' combat readiness in terms of political ambitions, military expertise and funding was to some extent accepted by the political leadership. As the Defence Minister put it: 'it's time for the politicians to make up their minds about what kind of armed forces we want' (*Aftenposten*, 9 October 2000).

The implication of NATO membership is that Norway has been unable to guard itself completely from making changes in the military structure. The struggle over framing has nonetheless been decisive in determining the degree of internationalization of the armed forces. When regional politics have been given priority, this has had consequences for which military installations are kept and which are shut down, even when this has clashed with professional military advice. The regional discourse has generally been hegemonic in Norwegian politics, and has implied that many questions that would seem to be related to professional military affairs have turned into questions about localization.

Development of an Alternative Representation

Moving on from the different framings of the grand strategic discourse, it is possible to trace an alternative representation to the one presented above for the Cold War period.

In most Western countries, the end of the Cold War meant the end of a simplistic military paradigm, and the beginning of a process where traditional priorities, doctrines and operational concepts for the deployment of troops were adjusted to fit new threats. This was not to any large extent the case in Norway. Here, the reduction in the number of troops, which commenced in the early 1990s, was a result of increasing discrepancies between the military structure and defence budgets rather than a reflection of the internalization of new defence concepts among political and military leaders. Whereas the changes after World War II had been induced by a series of external shocks, neither politicians nor the military were sufficiently shocked by the events of the early post-Cold War period to initiate large-scale changes in the military structure.

It was nevertheless on the basis of the debate about international operations that an alternative representation of the role of the military emerged. At first, criticism was voiced with regard to the discrepancy between the new post-Cold War threats and conflicts and Norwegian defence policy; in other words, between foreign policy, on the one hand, and one of its primary instruments, military power, on the other. Neither the Defence Commission of 1990 nor *White Paper no. 16 (1992–1993)* put any weight to alternative defence concepts in their recommendations. As declared in the White

Paper: 'our present concept, with its ambition to repel invasion of our most vulnerable region, stands firm' (p. 117).

It soon became evident that a heavy military force in Northern Norway, preparing for a potential Russian invasion, did little for the new security needs of NATO. The alternative representation also claimed that one needed to create more of a balance between import and export of security. What the argument furthered, and which was gradually received in the general defence discourse, was that Norway, due to its dependence upon allied support, could best ensure its own security by dutifully supporting the common NATO structure. Development of rapid reaction forces and high levels of training is therefore not only beneficial for Norwegian participation in international operations, but also useful as regards specific Norwegian defensive needs. As stressed in the parliamentary debate on defence reform in 2000 by Defence Minister Bjørn Tore Godal: 'If we cannot contribute abroad, then we cannot expect help from abroad should we need it' (*Parliamentary Proceedings*, 2000–01: 3762).

As one would expect, the argument that Norway could ensure its own security by participating in international operations added a lot more weight to the alternative representation. This argument also borrowed heavily from the 'idealist' discourse, by building on the traditional Norwegian concern for creating a more peaceful world as a way of ensuring Norwegian peace and security. As such, Norwegian participation in international operations could receive support from Norwegians who had long been critical of all sorts of use of military power, and of NATO membership. There also seemed to be logical ties between the substantial Norwegian engagement in mediation and peace-making and military, peace-enforcing operations.

Around the year 2000, the alternative representation had penetrated deeply into the mainstream defence discourse. Following Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), national and transnational (e.g. in NATO) norm entrepreneurs had mobilized sufficient support within the target community for the new norms ('norm cascade'). The Defence Study 2000, for instance, concluded that the most likely military scenarios close to Norwegian territory were conflicts of limited type and duration (sabotage, terrorism, projection of power, conflicts over resources, etc.), and not massive invasion.

One paradoxical result of the increased focus on international operations, however, was that the number of Norwegian UN soldiers declined rapidly. For example, Norwegian peace-keepers were withdrawn from the UNIFIL operation in Lebanon. This was to a large extent due to the new NATO operations in former Yugoslavia in the second half of the 1990s, combined with a lack of targeted recruitment policy.

Recruitment of Norwegian troops for international operations is based on voluntary contracts. The Law of conscription (§2) obliges all military personnel to serve in operations abroad but only in collective defence operations based on NATO's Article 5. Other operations were not considered as part of the core tasks of the armed forces and therefore were based on voluntary application and short-term contracts

(*Odelstingspropopsisjon no. 56, 1994–95*). Younger officers who have served in NATO-led operations in the Balkans have warned against the use of conscripts in these operations because of their lack of relevant training and experience. However, this critique has not led to any sustained debate over the role of conscription. The critical voices have generally been dismissed as irrelevant in the Norwegian setting.

Instead, continuous efforts have been made at writing international service seamlessly into the traditional Norwegian defence discourse. In 2001, the armed forces' homepage presented the everyday life of Norwegian soldiers in Dragas, Kosovo, as a sort of military camping life. Pictures, text and headings ('Wildlife', 'Cairn', 'In the mountains') create an image of life at the outpost that invokes hikes in the Norwegian mountains (www.mil.no/fn-nato/kfor/artikkelen/20010921a). This again reflects how well Norwegian soldiers are suited to military operations in such an environment. The organizing idea here is that participation in international operations is fundamentally similar to exercises in Norwegian surroundings. The website is thus geared towards a Norwegian public, with the intention of creating recognition, and thus acceptance, and of confirming that the Norwegian conscript soldier is well suited for the new tasks. The basic message, here and elsewhere, is that Norwegian soldiers are making a name for themselves internationally, not in spite of conscription, but as a result of it. There is, consequently, no need to turn to a professional army, because the innate hardiness and conscription meet the requirement perfectly well.

In 2002, an independent commission looking at a new/revised overall organization of all members of the armed forces suggested that compulsory posting to international operations be introduced because this would visualize that the moral responsibility lay with the authorities and society as a whole and not with the individual officer. Compulsory posting might also draw attention to the personal suitability and qualifications of officers, which are particularly important in sharp operations, the commission argued. As part of the further modernization of the armed forces compulsory posting to international operations is now introduced for all officers.¹²

Carriers of the Discourse

A number of institutions and power constellations related to Norwegian defence policy, such as the MoD, the MFA, the Defence Command, the defence committee in Parliament, and so on, as well as certain research communities sustain a certain representation of reality, the dominant one, and reject all changes that would challenge that representation. In the mid-1990s, people in these institutions made attempts to de-legitimize carriers of the alternative representation by characterizing them as misinformed, sloppy in their handling of 'facts' and generally flippant, to mention a few of the categories employed.¹³

Since defence policy, as all policy, is a struggle where groups and persons are named, it is often easy to single out the carriers of the main positions and their varieties, and the central texts in which the positions materialize. As regards the Norwegian defence discourse, there have been three main

groups of carriers of the dominant representation: historians/academics, politicians/bureaucrats and officers/'friends of the military'. The carriers of the alternative representation were a group of researchers at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), younger officers, officers who participated in international operations during the 1990s and a handful of defence bureaucrats. Although diverse groups carried both representations, there was a certain element of generational change involved. Younger officers and academics seem to have been more open for change than their older counterparts. The point here is not that they have followed a common agenda or have had definite ends in their argumentation about conscription, international operations and the restructuring of the military. The carriers of the alternative representation have not necessarily even been aware that they are part of a representation.

New Practices

The main changes in the practice of the Norwegian armed forces after the Cold War have been related to externally induced pressure, through participation in international operations. International experiences have probably influenced practices (and the internal military discourse) even more than the general discourse over the later years.

Doctrines

In the 'Main Guidelines for the Armed Forces' activity and development in the period 1994–1998', preparations were still being made for the territorial defence of Northern Norway (*White Paper no. 16, 1992–93*: 19). Even in *White Paper no. 22 (1997–98)*, which deals with defence planning for the period 1999–2002, the government saw no need for change: 'In the present situation (...) it is out of the question to consider alternative defence concepts' (p. 53). As international operations increased in number and became more intensive however the Norwegian defence concept also changed. In 2001, a modern and flexible defence replaced the traditional invasion defence and total defence was broadened to include civilian–military cooperation in situations other than war (*Government Proposal no. 45, 2000–2001*: 14). However, conscription remains a central pillar in the defence concept, but a more flexible and differentiated system has been introduced.¹⁴

Given the frequency with which Norway participated in international operations during the last half of the 1990s, changes in practice preceded changes in concept and discourse. In 1993 a professional, specially trained battalion was established (Telemark Bataljon), later serving in Bosnia (IFOR, SFOR), Kosovo (KFOR) and Iraq (OFI, an engineer squadron). The battalion has been changed into the mainstay of the Norwegian Immediate Reaction Force (FIST-H), which counts some 3500 troops (*White Paper no. 38, 1998–99*). The special task forces have also become an asset and an important niche instrument for Norwegian foreign policy (*Government Proposal no. 1, 2003–2004*: 13). Personnel from the special task forces were among the

first behind the frontlines in Kosovo in 1999 after the air strikes ended, and also participated in Afghanistan in 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (January to June 2002 and April to September 2003).

While the general public was not informed about the participation of Norwegian special task forces in Kosovo, their deployment in Afghanistan has become a high profile issue both at home and abroad.¹⁵ As remarked by *The Wall Street Journal* (9 May 2003), little Norway has managed to take on a global role by means of its well-reputed special forces, which, according to the journal, draws a historical line back to the clandestine heavy water action undertaken by the Norwegian military resistance during World War II. To the extent that this comparison is accepted in the general Norwegian discourse, it is likely to strengthen the legitimacy of this kind of international participation in the future. Similarly, *The New York Times* (24 August 2003) wrote:

Small nations like Norway have been assuming disproportionately large roles in global affairs since 9/11 (...) [T]he evolving nature of conflict presents opportunities for Davids to fight alongside Goliaths, if they bring the right slingshot.

The Norwegian special task forces offer the kind of narrowly defined skills and the speed needed at the front line, such as mountain reconnaissance. But relevance and visibility on the international scene has its price, it seems. The deputy leader of *Al-Quaida* has encouraged all Moslems to undertake terrorist actions against the firms, permanent missions and embassies of four Western countries, including Norway (*Al-Jazeera*, 21 May 2003). The immediate reactions of surprise and confusion (that Norway must have been mistaken for Denmark, which participated in the war in Iraq) among Norwegian politicians were soon replaced by recognition that the new Norwegian role in international operations and the close relationship with the US had changed Norway's traditional image as peace-maker. In Iraq, Norwegian commandos are sometimes seen as American proxies: to the Iraqi people the difference between the American/British occupation force and the Norwegian engineer squadron that serves under British command may not be that obvious or relevant.

A 'Slimmer' Defence Structure

The Defence Study of 1990 and the Defence Commission of 1990 both called for heavy cuts in the structure, e.g. a reduction in the number of brigades (from 13 to 6), independent battalions (from 28 to 22), and so on. They also suggested the modernization of existing material.

However, the cuts were less a reflection of the new strategic picture than of the gap between the size of the defence structure and defence budgets, which existed even during the Cold War. While the new threats would require more mobile and flexible forces that could conduct joint operations, a large mobilization army still played the lead role in defence planning.

Furthermore, despite the increasing demand for troops that could be deployed in international operations, the cuts came at the operative end. The large command structure and defence administration remained almost untouched or even expanded (Ulriksen, 2002: 148). For instance, the adopted structure for 1994–98 never materialized because of the lack of resources and because the armed forces themselves never managed to implement the personnel cuts.

The push for defence reform continued, however, and in 2001 the government recommended that one-third of the bases (installations, garrisons, etc.) be closed, that military personnel be cut by one-fifth and that a more international and task-oriented defence was called for (*Government Proposal no. 45, 2000–01*).¹⁶ The adopted structure for the period 2002–05 could still mobilize some 125,000 men (Militærbalansen, 2001–02). Furthermore, the success of the Norwegian special task forces seems to have facilitated defence spending in a policy field which otherwise has been subject to profound cuts.¹⁷ *Government Proposal no. 42 (2003–04)* has furthered cuts on the personnel side and in the large logistics organizations.

Civil–Military Relations

In Norway, conscription still fills the function of anchoring the military in the people (*Government Proposal no. 55, 2001–02*).¹⁸ Today, however, less than 50 per cent of the eligible men actually serve in the armed forces (*Recommendation from the Defence Committee no. 234 (2003–04)*). The number of conscientious objectors has not increased much, but many more men are waived for ‘medical’ reasons. This situation has caused much worry in the Norwegian political and military leadership because it makes it difficult to find qualified recruits for international operations at relatively short notice and to get professional forces. As noted above, the principle of voluntary service in international operations other than Article 5 operations has been upheld. Only when recruitment cannot be satisfied by voluntary contracts is the Ministry of Defence empowered by the Law on service in international operations, 1 January 1999, to post officers hired after this date on duty abroad. This unsatisfactory situation, where the defence structure is restructured to meet the new tasks, whereas the personnel administration is mostly based on voluntary contracts and ad hoc solutions, is now being reformed (*Government Proposal no. 42, 2003–04*).

Second, it is regarded as unfair to those who serve in the armed forces that those who reject or for other reasons do not serve have the opportunity to start or continue their education or career instead. This unfairness, it is feared, could undermine the very idea of conscription as ensuring democracy and thus the legitimacy of the Norwegian popular defence.

Consequently, the WGRSC (2002) suggested several ways of making the completion of military service attractive (e.g. bonus arrangements, credits within the civilian educational system etc.), but so far only increased service allowance has been adopted (*Working Group on Raising the Status of Conscripts, 2002*). In order to make a military career more attractive, officers who have completed the initial service and the consequent one year of

stationing within the armed forces, or who have served for a certain period of time in international operations (and who are enrolled in the Task Force), will be offered education scholarships or even free education under certain conditions (*Militærfaglig utredning, 2003*).

Officer Education

Military schools serve as a valuable socialization arena where the 'true' military values and ideas of the role of the military in society are confirmed and passed on to new generations of officers.¹⁹ Advanced military education is offered at the Military Academies, the Staff College and the Defence College.

The Military Academies form the basis of a future professional career and education in the armed forces and concentrate the education around operative knowledge, military theory, tactics, defence material, physical training, as well as the role of the armed forces in society. The Staff College teaches military thinking, military history and operations, including joint operations, as well as staff functions and the strategic and legal framework of the armed forces, and is a must for officers who aspire to positions at major and higher levels. The Defence College offers broader knowledge about security policy, the use of military force, the total defence concept and civilian-military relations to military and civilian leaders.

While the Norwegian military practice changed dramatically during the 1990s, the curriculum in military schools was still dominated by Cold War thinking as regards the role of the Norwegian armed forces. For example, the first course in international studies at the Land Force Military Academy was initiated in 1997. The lack of an updated curriculum reflected, first, the inherent opposition to a change of focus away from national, territorial defence, and, second, that military schools relied on their own military lecturers/instructors. The employment of civilian lecturers and the use of guest lecturers from the academic community is a new phenomenon. When the three staff colleges, one for each of the services, were merged in 1995, the school director wanted qualified guest lecturers (primarily political scientists and philosophers) who looked at things from a different angle and who could contribute to a deeper reflection about ethics and basic values among officers (Hellstrøm, 1995).

Traditionally, military schools and services in Norway have not deemed it useful to have officers with a civilian degree. More recently, however, the services have allowed their staff to take civilian Master's and PhD degrees in certain circumstances (e.g. that the officer serves additional duty). The air force, for instance, offers annual scholarships, preferably to studies in public and business administration, information technology, economics and languages. Studies in political and social science and history have been considered less favourable or irrelevant and did not qualify for scholarships. The army has been more reticent towards the idea of civilian education, even in the late 1990s. The generally poor degree of formalization of the study programmes and the fact that the initiative and formalities in rela-

tion to conducting civilian studies lie with each individual officer also mirror the low status of civilian education in the military services.

The Military Academies developed a fairly formalized study programme towards the end of the 1990s. The air force Military Academy offers two scholarships per year to officers who want to take a Master of Military Studies at the University of Glasgow. The Air Force Military Academy has thus managed to create a certain intellectual environment for academic analysis of security, defence policy and military issues. The Land Force Military Academy offers scholarships for War Studies at Master's and PhD level at King's College in London. Both programmes are based on study in Norway, but cover approximately four trips per year to the colleges.

As part of the ongoing defence reform the government has proposed that three years at the Military Academies should equal a civilian Bachelor degree and that another two years at the Staff College should equal a civilian Master's degree. This is also part of a general 'academicization' of public education that has taken place over the past couple of years (e.g. in the education of policemen and nurses). Within military education, this trend is pushed forward by several factors, such as the prestige linked to obtaining college competence, the need to adjust to military educational systems in other NATO countries, the new tasks demanded of the armed forces, the need for officers who can adapt to new trends in strategic thinking and leadership and to make Norway attractive for NATO exercises. However, research-based education is a precondition for institutions that want to offer Bachelor and Master's programmes. Because of the narrow academic tradition in military schools in Norway and because academic degrees have not been drivers for a military career, this is a major obstacle.

Apart from education, military schools also serve as important arenas for civilian–military social bonding. At the Defence College, one half of the students at the main course (6 months) and the total defence course (8 weeks), and three-quarters of the students at the information course (7–10 days) have usually been civil servants, journalists, politicians and occasionally also researchers. The Staff College normally has a handful of civilian students on its main course. In addition to the classes, both colleges arrange several study trips for the students within Norway and abroad. This offers a unique setting for socialization and social bonding between the military and civilian communities.

New Career Patterns

Promotional patterns changed during the 1990s, when the deployment of Norwegian forces to international operations rose dramatically. It was gradually recognized that competence earned during service in UN operations also had relevance for combat on Norwegian territory (*White Paper no. 46, 1993–94*: 8). Norwegian participation in the operations in Afghanistan and in Iraq has cemented this pattern. The change of focus has rendered irrelevant the competence and experience of the older generation of officers who were stationed in the Northern part of Norway and trained for fighting against an invasion on Norwegian territory during the Cold

War. International experience is now generally considered positive, even necessary, for a military career. Younger Norwegian officers now form part of a transnational officers' corps.

Procurement

The earlier patterns of procurement remained relatively stable. However, some difficult questions have been raised in recent years, not least in regard to the choice between European and American manufacturers. The tension has been most acute in relation to the new generation of fighter airplanes. Norway is taking part in the American Joint Strike Fighter programme, with a financial frame close to one billion Norwegian crowns for the period 2002–12, but is also involved in the Eurofighter programme. 'Project 7600: New fighter airplanes' will submit its recommendation to the MoD in 2008 (*Forsvarets forum*, 17/2003: 10). Since both fighter airplanes are considered equal in fulfilling Norwegian military needs, industrial and political concerns have become important. Norway has to balance between a European Union in which she is not a member and the traditional ally across the Atlantic.

Conclusions

During the Cold War, Norwegian military doctrines were mostly a blueprint of NATO doctrines without a national strategic umbrella. However, the practices of international operations led to a turnaround in military practice and thinking in Norway. Within the armed forces, conscription is increasingly being seen as a burden, and professional, highly trained soldiers as the future. National politicians, however, are reticent about the idea of giving up conscription, even though the system has been hollowed out by the practice of letting a majority of young men off. Another essential factor in this respect is the importance of regional politics. Politicians have been lukewarm to internationalization of the armed forces, since this will entail a reduction in the number of national bases and installations. Not to be forgotten are the traditional Norwegian values attached to the 'people's army', and the scepticism towards a professional army. A complete change to a professional army focused on international operations would imply radical norm transplantation (Farrell, 2001). The Norwegian case of the 1990s indicates that such radical change might not hinge on an external shock, not at least as traditionally envisaged. The process whereby the new norms have been transplanted seems to lie between the ideal types for incremental and radical change, but the only possible shock in the period has been the realization that Norway is no longer a central cog in the defence of the NATO area. One indication of the turn of the tide is the argument, furthered by carriers of the alternative representation, that the military have now over-learned their lesson. Thus, the tension between globalization and localization continues and it remains to be seen whether this will be superseded by a tension between allegiance to

the US, on the one hand, and a closer relationship with Europe, on the other.

Notes

A previous version of this article was presented at the annual conference of the International Studies Association, Portland, Oregon, USA on 25 February to 1 March 2003.

1. A Norwegian F-16 dropped two bombs over Afghanistan on 27 January 2003.
2. As Finnemore (2003: 10) points out, the meaning of 'humanitarian intervention' has evolved from the nineteenth-century practice within Europe, i.e. to intervene militarily to rescue one's own citizens in other states, to the protection of citizens of other states in those states (white Christians in the nineteenth and non-white non-Christians in the twentieth century), which today is referred to as 'responses to complex emergencies'.
3. 'For a small country it is of vital importance that international norms and international principles of law are upheld. An active international engagement denotes Norway's contribution to this.' *White Paper no. 22 (1997–98)*: 35.
4. MPs from both conservative and socialist parties referred to the human rights atrocities committed by the Serbs against the Albanians in Kosovo to justify a military intervention (*Parliamentary Proceedings, 1998–99*).
5. In the parliamentary debate on Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq of 17 December 2003, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister all stressed that the military interventions Norway participated in should be anchored in international law and preferably led by the UN or by NATO (available at: <http://www.stortinget.no/stid/2003/midl/s031217-02.htm>). In a situation where an explicit UNSC mandate is blocked, concerns about the political and military legitimacy of an intervention should be decisive (*Government Proposal no. 42, 2003–2004*: 36).
6. Jan Egeland, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (14.02.92 – 25.10.96), accelerated the Norwegian peace-making practices, and these in turn reaffirmed the centrality of peace-making in Norwegian foreign policy discourse.
7. It might be more precise to label these discourses 'liberal internationalist' and 'prudential nationalist', respectively, and to argue that all Norwegian thinking on international affairs has been decisively influenced by a national-liberal synthesis. For the purpose of recognition, we retain the terms idealist and realist here, though in inverted commas.
8. In the case of full national war mobilization the force could amount to 435,000, including civilian reserves. *Ibid.*
9. The Norwegian parliament is one of few (if not the only) where politicians are seated according to electoral district, rather than party affiliation, which indicates the strong ties between the MPs and their region of origin.
10. This paragraph draws heavily on Græger (2002: 70).
11. *Folkebladet*, 19 August 2003: 11. It should be noted that she made these promises during a visit to the region by the Labour party fraction of the committee just before the municipal election campaign.
12. *Government Proposal no. 42 (2003–2004)*: 80; *Recommendation* from the Defence Committee, no. 234 (2003–04).
13. For instance, Holtsmark (1996) refers to the work of Neumann and Ulriksen (1995) as 'an alarmingly haphazard way of dealing with the empirical and

methodological basis of political science and history' (p. 98) and 'an excessive use of fashionable and diffuse concepts' (p. 114).

14. See *Recommendation* from the Chief of Defence (www.mil.no/fst/mfu); *Government Proposal no. 42 (2003–2004)*: 76; *Recommendation* from the Defence Committee, no. 234 (2003–04).

15. The number of special task forces involved was kept secret by the Norwegian authorities; however, they were listed on the home pages of the US State Department and of *Jane's Defence Weekly* (approx. 70 troops).

16. See also the changes adopted by Parliament (*Recommendation* no. 342, 2000–01).

17. The total financial frame for the period, based on the agreement between the Labour Party and the government coalition parties of 2002, is 118 billion Norwegian crowns.

18. However, in an opinion poll of June 2003, 53 per cent of Norwegians below the age of 36 years favoured professional troops/career officers rather than conscription, whereas for the population as a whole the percentage is 42 (available at www.mil.no/fst/mfu).

19. Military schools also emphasize the uniqueness of officership and its conduct, attitudes, traditions and ethics. This 'corps d'esprit' is a result of the so-called 'hidden curriculum'.

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