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Between self-interest and solidarity: Norway's return to UN peacekeeping?

John Karlsrud and Kari M. Osland

ABSTRACT

Norway has been a firm supporter of, and contributor to, UN peacekeeping operations. However, while increasing its financial support since the end of the Cold War, Norway has significantly downscaled its troop contributions to the UN, focusing on NATO operations. Rather than interpreting this as lessened interest in the UN, we point out that support and commitment cannot be measured solely in numbers of troops deployed. Norway's commitment to UN peacekeeping should be understood as part of its strategic culture, here read as a synthesis between self-interest and solidarity, and between the UN and NATO. This article details the institutional, political and material challenges and opportunities for renewed engagement in UN peacekeeping.

Introduction

Norway has contributed troops to UN peacekeeping operations since 1956, but since the mid-1990s, its engagement in peace operations has mainly been through NATO. However, in 2015, Prime Minister Erna Solberg announced the contribution of a C-130 transport plane to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the possible contribution of combat engineering troops from 2017/18.[1] In 2016, Norway led an initiative to sustain the provision of the C-130 transport plane through 2018.[2] This renewed engagement in UN peace operations is a result of a series of concomitant factors.

Norway enjoys strong public support for the UN and participation in UN peacekeeping operations. This support is linked to self-perceptions of Norway as a 'peace nation', contributing to and facilitating peace processes globally, acting in a self-less manner, unburdened by colonial history.[3] Norway's contributions to UN peacekeeping operations are generally perceived as value-driven, motivated by solidarity. In contrast, participation in NATO operations

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[1]Solberg, "Leader's Summit on Peacekeeping."
[2]Norway Mission to the UN, "New Norwegian led rotation in Mali."
[3]Skånland, "Norway is a peace nation."

has always been understood as more self-interested, maintaining transatlantic relations to ensure the security guarantee of the Alliance.

This article analyses Norwegian participation in UN peacekeeping operations and the rationales employed in deciding on participation. We study Norway's contributions to UN and NATO operations, especially since 1990, drawing on relevant literature and semi-structured interviews with ten officials at the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. We conclude that, for Norway, it is not a matter of choosing between the UN and NATO: there is strategic self-interest in supporting both organizations.

Conceptual clarifications: strategic culture, self-interest and solidarity

Culture is a set of rules, norms and expectations about the 'right' way to act. Culture structures the behaviour of actors and provides states and their officials with a set of ideas concerning 'right' behaviour. The literature on strategic culture has explained state actions on the basis of formative experiences of a state: the historical experiences of a state, its national character and geographic location, determine state action. Recently, there has been more emphasis on possible discrepancies between strategic culture and behaviour, as well as between stated and secret doctrine. We follow Neumann and Heikka's (2005) conceptualization of 'strategic culture', rejecting the artificial separation between doctrine and behaviour, or discourse and practice, and focusing on state practices and how strategic culture is formed in the dynamic interplay between strategic discourse and practice.[4]

The literature has offered various explanations of what spurs a country to participate (or not) in UN peacekeeping operations. Rationalist theory emphasizes self-interest, prestige and influence;[5] ideational theory has investigated questions around national identity and commitment to international peace and international norms.[6] The first explanation could be called 'prudent nationalist' and the second 'liberal internationalist',[7] we employ the terms *self-interest* and *solidarity*, respectively. Norway displays signs of both these categories, but the relative balance between them has shifted over the years. Moreover, the concepts are flexible and prone to change. Self-interest and solidarity are social constructions whose interpretation may shift according to the context and in the interplay with the practices these concepts are engaged to support.

[4]Neumann and Heikka, "Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice," 10.
[5]Neack, "UN Peace-keeping;" Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations*; Bellamy and Williams, "Introduction;" Bellamy and Williams, "Explaining the National Politics."
[6]Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations*; Bellamy and Williams, "Explaining the National Politics."
[7]Græger and Leira, "Norwegian Strategic Culture after World War II," 63.

From UNTSO to MINUSMA

Norwegian participation in UN peacekeeping operations started early. In 1956, Norway sent troops to what is often cited as the first peacekeeping operation, the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO),[8] established as a military observation mission in 1948.[9] Since its inception, UNTSO has received 513 officers from Norway.[10]

Between 1960 and 1964, Norway contributed 1,173 troops to the UN Mission in Congo (ONUC).[11] In 1956, together with Denmark, it contributed the DANOR battalion as part of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) to monitor the cessation of hostilities after the Suez Crisis, and provided a total of 11,000 troops over the next ten years. The most significant and longest contribution was to Lebanon: 22,441 troops were deployed between 1978 and 1998, in three phases.[12] From 1992 to 1995, Norway participated in UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia with 2,762 troops.[13] In total, more than Norwegian 40,000 troops have been involved in UN peacekeeping operations.[14] At the peak in the early 1990s, more than 2,000 troops were participating in UN operations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Norway deployed around 1,000 soldiers a year to UN peace operations; in the last ten years, this has decreased to 60–70 officers.[15] Norwegian contributions have largely been reduced to tokenism,[16] providing military staff officers and observers. This trend may have been reversed with the above-mentioned contribution of a military C-130 transport plane to MINUSMA in January 2016, in addition to staff officers. These contributions follow the deployment of a small team of intelligence analysts to the MINUSMA All Source Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU). Norway's total contribution to MINUSMA was approximately 70 officers.[17] In addition, Norway had 16 military staff officers in UNMISS, 13 military observers in UNTSO, the first female Force Commander in a UN peacekeeping operation (Major General Kristin Lund) and 2 staff officers in UNFICYP.[18]

[8]Bellamy and Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 83.
[9]From 1947 to 1953, Norway contributed around 50,000 soldiers to what was known as 'Tysklandsbrigaden' ('the Germany brigade') which was under Norwegian jurisdiction and administration but under British command (Heier, Kjølberg and Rønnfeldt, eds., *Norge i internasjonale operasjoner*, 15).
[10]Norwegian Armed Forces, "UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO);" see also UN, "United Nations Truce Supervision Organization." Norway also provided the commanding officer of UNTSO from 1963 to 1970 (Lt. Gen. Odd Bull).
[11]Norwegian Armed Forces, "UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC)."
[12]1978–98; 2006–07; 2008–09, see Norwegian Armed Forces, "UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)." See also Leraand, "Fredsbevarende operasjoner."
[13]All data are from Norwegian Armed Forces, "I tjeneste for Norge."
[14]Ibid.
[15]Kjeksrud, "FNs fredsbevarende operasjoner," 143.
[16]Coleman, "Token Troop Contributions."
[17]Norwegian Armed Forces, "Internasjonale operasjoner."
[18]Ibid. and Norway Mission to the UN, "Peacekeeping operations."

Culturally, Norway's diminishing participation in UN peace operations has been paralleled by sustained support to the UN at the political level. This has resulted in a growing gap between the continued commitment to the UN at the political level, while the Norwegian Armed Forces has experienced a gradual loss of UN expertise, in terms of UN policy and doctrine, UN field operations and cooperation with non-NATO countries, as well as declining value of UN experience for officers wishing to advance their careers.

Formation of Norwegian strategic culture: a two-track approach?

To understand Norway's relationship with the UN, and UN peacekeeping operations in particular, we need to examine the formation of Norwegian strategic culture. In 1814, after 400 years of Danish rule, Norway was handed over to Sweden, regaining independence only in 1905. Norway was neutral during the First World War and until it was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1940. It was against this backdrop that Norway developed its armed forces after the Second World War. The main policy direction since then, independent of political parties in government, has been strong support to both the UN and NATO.[19] This is not mere rhetoric among the political elite: it constitutes an important part of Norwegian identity.[20]

A UN-led world order

Norway was among the founding states of the UN, and the fact that the first Secretary General was a Norwegian made Norway 'more inclined to support UN policies'.[21] Norway did not have a colonial legacy, it declared that it would pursue independent policies at the UN also after it joined the NATO alliance, and it demonstrated its ability to deploy troops rapidly – when the UN asked for troops for the first UNEF 1 operation, Norway had a 190-man strong contingent ready for deployment within 24 hours.[22] It was 'stated policy during most of the Cold War that Norway should supply a relatively high number of UN peace-keepers'.[23] Jakobsen holds that participation in UN peacekeeping operations also served to silence critical voices against Norway's NATO membership.[24]

[19]This contrasts with EU membership, a contentious issue between and within political parties in Norway. However, there is general cross-party support for participation in EU crisis management operations. Government of Norway, *Proposition of the Parliament No 42, 2003–2004*, para 3.6.1.
[20]Heier, Kjølberg and Rønnfeldt, eds., *Norge i internasjonale operasjoner*.
[21]Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations*, 17. See also Eknes, "The Nordic Countries and UN Peacekeeping," 65.
[22]Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations*, 18–9.
[23]Græger and Leira, "Norwegian Strategic Culture after World War II," 48.
[24]Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations*, 26.

For a small state like Norway, a strong, reliable multilateral system is seen as essential, and there has been considerable self-interest in preserving the existence and credibility of the UN, to maintain the international rule of law and create safeguards against great-power abuse: for instance, the UN Conventions on the Law of the Sea have been crucial for growth in Norway's fisheries and oil sector. Norway supports a 'UN-led world order', with the use of force anchored in the UN Charter; for Norway '[t]he UN is a crucial arena for developing common measures to address common threats'.[25]

Perceptions also matter. Countries such as the Netherlands, Japan, Norway and Sweden have been considered 'Good Samaritans', providing support to the UN as 'an alternative to great power hegemony'.[26] The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) characterizes Norwegian peace and reconciliation work this way:

> Norway pursues a stable, predictable policy in the areas of development assistance and peace work. This policy is based on a spirit of solidarity and a long-term perspective, and has been maintained by successive Norwegian governments […] Norway does not have a colonial past, and is often regarded as impartial and sincere, in that our engagement in peace efforts is not motivated by political or economic self-interest.[27]

The connection between Norwegian UN policy and the solidarity argument seems convincing. However, a strong and reliable multilateral system has also been of national importance. According to Parliamentary Proposition 33 (2011–12) 'Norway and the UN: Common Future, Common Solutions', Norway's support to the UN concerns both interests and values.[28] Perceptions of a distinction between value-driven and interest-driven foreign policy changed during the mid-1990s, when the value-driven policy was seen as part of the interest-driven.[29] One explanation for this shift was the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, resulting in a change in threat perceptions. Another related explanation concerned the 'humanitarian interventions' of the 1990s, where 'the use of military forces became a tool in the foreign-policy toolbox alongside humanitarian and development aid', although it was only with the defence plan adopted by the Norwegian Parliament in June 2001 that this shift was manifested in policy.[30]

In Norwegian foreign and security policy, there is a strong emphasis on the need for UN mandates in order to intervene militarily, which can be traced to

[25]Norway Mission to the UN, "GA: Norway's statement in the General Debate."
[26]Bellamy and Williams, "Explaining the National Politics," 9.
[27]Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "What characterizes Norway's peace and reconciliation work?"
[28]Government of Norway, *Meld. St. 33 (2011–2012)*.
[29]Lægreid, "Den 'nye' utenrikspolitikken."
[30]Græger, "From "forces for good" to "forces for status"?"

self-interest in a strong and reliable multilateral system. However, Norway also often presents this as an engagement devoid of self-interest.

US and NATO relations – collective defence

Norway's participation in UN peacekeeping operations cannot be understood in isolation from its participation in NATO operations. Norway was one of the signatory NATO states, in 1949. After the Second World War, Norwegian security policy focused on credible deterrence of the perceived Soviet threat, without provoking conflict. NATO membership, strong bilateral relations with the USA and credible NATO reinforcement plans were essential.[31] For the defence of Norway against existential threats, good relations with the USA have top priority, and NATO is seen as the chief instrument for securing US interest over time, as well as a way of crafting a more symmetrical transatlantic relationship within an organized framework. According to Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Børge Brende,

> Transatlantic relations will remain a key priority in – and foundation of – Norwegian foreign and security policy. The US is still the dominant global actor in political, economic and military terms, and US involvement will continue to be crucial for achieving progress on a range of international issues of great importance to Norway.[32]

Until the end of the Cold War, peace operations were not on the NATO agenda. The focus had been on '… ensuring the effective defence of NATO's territory against the threat posed by the Warsaw Pact, and our main activities therefore involved increasing readiness, developing plans, making preparations, and conducting exercises for possible Article 5 situations'.[33] This changed in the mid-1990s, due to the end of the Cold War, when NATO had to refocus and reinvent itself. This phase marked a significant shift in Norwegian strategic culture, from an emphasis on national defence to international operations.[34]

This coincided with the failure of the UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On 20 December 1995, the UN mission UNPROFOR was transitioned into NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR), mandated to implement the military annexes of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia.[35] On 20 December 1996, IFOR was replaced by NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR).

[31] Heier, "Mellom beroligelse og avskrekking". Since 1 Oct. 2014, Norway's former Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, has served as NATO Secretary General. Whether this will mean an even stronger relationship between Norway and central NATO countries, the USA in particular, is to be expected but remains to be seen.
[32] Brende, "FM Brende's Foreign Policy Address".
[33] NATO, "NATO's operations 1949–present".
[34] Græger and Leira, "Norwegian Strategic Culture after World War II".
[35] IFOR consisted of 60,000 soldiers. OSCE, "The General Framework Agreement on Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

From 1999 and onwards, Norway contributed more than 6000 troops to NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR).[36]

From 2001, a new phase thus started that has lasted until today, involving several 'out-of-area' NATO operations, most prominently with ISAF in Afghanistan (2001–14), where Norway contributed more than 9,000 troops.[37] According to several studies on Norwegian participation in ISAF, the main reason was the reciprocity argument of supporting NATO so that the Alliance would support Norway if necessary.[38] Other out-of-area operations included smaller or shorter missions in Macedonia, Iraq and Libya.[39] In Iraq, Norway contributed about 400 troops from 2003 to 2005 (mostly as part of the Coalition of the Willing). In fact, Norway has contributed to all NATO's out-of-area operations since the end of the Cold War.[40]

NATO's new strategic concept (2010) brought renewed attention to the collective defence of Europe. For Norway this represents an important shift, given the US increased focus on Asia and the outspoken dissatisfaction regarding lack of burden-sharing between the USA and Europe, with 75% of the NATO expenses today covered by the USA.[41]

During the Cold War, the US political elite still appreciated the role of Norway during the Second World War. More importantly, there was also a shared understanding of the potential Soviet threat, and of Norway's strategic location in key Cold War scenarios. The current US political and military elites have a different orientation. As stated by Norwegian Minister of Defence, Ine Marie Eide Søreide, in 2014:

> The new generation of US policymakers does not necessarily have the same close historical ties to the transatlantic relationship developed during the decades of the Cold War. Nor do they have the same experience with NATO. Today you are more likely to meet officers and officials who have served in the Pacific or in the Middle East, rather than in Europe.[42]

[36]Norway also provided a full battalion and was given responsibility for security in three municipalities as well as providing security for KFOR headquarters.

[37]In Afghanistan, Norway led the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh from Sep. 2005 to 2012, providing about 270 troops at any given time. Norway also provided a C-130 transport aircraft (2002, 2012), Special Forces to Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF (more or less continuously deployed executing operational and training tasks), four F-16 fighter planes (2006), and a deployable field hospital to Mazar-e-Sharif (2006–07). See Government of Norway, "Kronologisk utvikling av det norske styrkebidraget i Afghanistan."

[38]Bøifot, "Det norske militære engasjementet i Afghanistan;" Oma, "Small States and Burden Sharing in Allied Operations Abroad." Norway turned down requests to contribute troops to allied operations only twice – for the US-led invasion in Iraq in 2003, due to the lack of a mandate from the UN Security Council, and a request to strengthen Norwegian contributions to ISAF in 2006, officially due to lack of available troops, but in reality due to deep internal differences in the coalition government at the time (Bjørgo, 'Fra FN til NATO'). However, in both instances Norway soon followed up with more contributions, wanting to be seen as willing to take a fair share of the burden in solidarity with Norway's allies (ibid.).

[39]NATO, "NATO operations and missions."

[40]Matlary, "Internasjonale styrkebidrag og allianseavhenigighet." pp

[41]NATO, "NATO's New Strategic Concept."

Hence, Norway cannot take the security guarantee for granted: it needs to remind NATO and the USA constantly about how vulnerable the Northern part of the Alliance is, and that resources must be invested. Therefore, enhancing interoperability between national forces through training and operations with allies is an important part. Participation in NATO operations also allows for advanced, and in some cases joint, capabilities to be developed. One such example is the Strategic Airlift Capability initiative where Norway shares 3 C-17 Globemaster III with 11 other nations.[43] Norway's cooperation with traditional partners such as the Netherlands and Sweden in the conceptualization and implementation of ASIFU in MINUSMA from 2013 and onwards, which was the first dedicated intelligence unit in a UN peacekeeping mission, could be seen as a promising step forward in the same direction within a UN framework. As will be shown, Norway values highly being able to cooperate with its NATO allies also when deploying to UN peacekeeping missions.

To sum up, NATO has long represented the cornerstone of the discourse element of Norwegian strategic culture, and there is a clear correlation between Norway's interest-based policy and its NATO membership. This is not a static relationship: not only has NATO shifted focus since the end of the Cold War, NATO has expanded and the USA has changed its strategic focus, making it even more important to engage the USA directly as a strategic partner for Norway.

Priorities and decision-making process concerning deployment

What of the practice dimension of strategic culture? Norwegian participation in peace operations requires on a decision by the government, as well as support from the majority in Parliament. The government will first consult internally to establish political, military and financial support, and then usually consult informally with key parliamentary leaders (as in the case of Libya in 2011). The normal procedure is for the government to consult Parliament in a (closed) meeting with the Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. If support is forthcoming, the government will move forward and formalize the decision.

The deployment of troops falls within the responsibility of the Minister of Defence. However, a decision by the government is in reality dependent on support of both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence. In coalition governments, the support of all coalition partners is a political requirement. In addition, the Chief of Defence has a key role;

[42]In a speech held at Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC, on 9 Jan. For the full text, see Søreide, "Writing NATO's Next Chapter."
[43]NATO, "Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC)."

if she/he pulls the red card for security reasons, deployment is highly unlikely.

Moreover, there appear to be no clearly defined criteria for when the procedure of formal government decision and parliamentary consultation is to be applied. For instance, we were told that 12 officers were sent to South Sudan while 15 were sent to Chad – only the latter, deployed as a team, needed government and parliamentary support. It is surprising to find no clear procedural criteria; if individual officers are exposed to the same security threats or risks as those deployed as a team, equal decision-making procedures should be expected.

Normally, there is a dialogue between the UN and Norwegian officials concerning what is realistic to ask for, before a formal request for contributions is issued. While there is a list detailing member-state capabilities, actual availability is constantly changing. That makes it more useful to have a direct dialogue when the resources are needed. In a few cases, the political level initiates a contribution, as with the US request concerning contributions to the coalition against the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq.

A decision to take part in UN peacekeeping operations entails balancing a wide range of factors – national and international. To understand why Norway chooses to participate or not, it is necessary to distinguish between strategic plans and what is actually done. Strategic plans may be assumed to have greater continuity compared to the reasoning behind participation in a particular operation. Long-term strategic plans since the Second World War (in the form of White Papers or government party political platforms), independent of which political parties are government, have underscored both NATO and the UN as cornerstones of Norway's foreign and security policy. The criteria for deciding on participation in peace operations are not codified, but we can indicate some consensus-based criteria.

The ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of defence

At the outset, we assumed the MFA traditionally favours UN operations, with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) more inclined towards NATO: whereas the MFA is set up to focus its attention on situations beyond Norway's borders (foreign policy), the MoD is set up to defend the country's borders (security and defence policy). Thus, we also assumed that what raises the status and prestige of Norway among partner countries and in the UN and NATO would be perceived differently within the MFA and the MoD. Further, we assumed that the principles involved regarding deployment to international operations would vary, reflecting a more self-interested approach in the MoD and a more solidarity-oriented approach in the MFA.

In order to explore these assumptions regarding the practice dimension of the strategic culture in these ministries, we interviewed a selection of MFA

and MoD civil servants. These were all persons with many years' experience in preparing background documents for the political leadership regarding decisions of deployment and participation in international operations.

The preliminary findings from our interviews indicated a lack of formal criteria on participation in UN peacekeeping, or any international operation.[44] This is somewhat surprising compared to other Western European countries, but is not uncommon in Norway. For instance, although Norway can be said to have a distinctive approach concerning peace and reconciliation efforts, the underlying principles are not codified in any White Paper, according to Foreign Minister Børge Brende.[45]

Secondly, we learned that there was some truth in our assumption that the MFA tends to favour UN operations, while the MoD is inclined to favour NATO operations. However, we should underline here the small number of people interviewed (only ten), so these are necessarily rough generalizations.

Third, the MFA does not appear to use more solidarity-oriented principles than spokespersons in the MoD. The criteria listed, and their prioritization, proved remarkably consistent. According to our interviewees, the criteria (listed below as questions) are followed in practice:[46]

(1) Is the request in line with Norwegian security policy interests?
(2) Is the request anchored in a UN Security Council mandate?
(3) What operational credibility does the mission in question enjoy, and will it be able to respond to the operational needs of the Norwegian contribution?
(4) How serious is the crisis in question (threats to international security, immediate threats to civilians in the country concerned, etc.)?
(5) Who requested Norwegian contributions (representatives of the country in question, if so, position or opposition; allies, the UN, EU, NATO, OSCE, non-allied countries, etc.)?
(6) Which other countries are contributing troops?
(7) What capabilities are required?
(8) What resources are available?
(9) Does Norway already have an engagement in the country in question?
(10) Is there sufficient political support for participation in the operation?

Several MoD respondents emphasized differences between the UN and NATO as regards command and control, and hence, also the security of own troops. In order to protect civilians, protection of own troops was a

[44]Interviews conducted in the MoD and the MFA 26 and 27 Aug. 2015, 7 Jan. 2016, and 10, 17 and 19 Feb. 2016.
[45]Brende, "Norway's guiding principles for peace and reconciliation."
[46]This is the full list of criteria mentioned. All respondents answered the same regarding for items 1–5, although in varying order of priority, while only some mentioned points 6–10.

prerequisite. According to our interviewees, the UN is improving here, but it will take time to convey this message to MoD officials and armed forces with limited UN experience. One interviewee said that it might appear that Norway has lost its ability *not* to be in the driver's seat – a skill necessary for taking part in UN operations. This is due to attention on NATO operations and the constant focus on interoperability within NATO, especially vis-à-vis the USA.

In principle, there seems to be an understanding in the MoD that resources should be concentrated in fewer locations, whereas the MFA is more inclined to disperse resources – indicating that representation is seen as a value in itself. This is probably related to the primary focus of the MFA being on foreign policy while the primary focus of the MoD is on security and defence policy. However, other MFA respondents stressed the importance of focusing and prioritizing Norwegian resources in general (not only military resources) to a few, selected places where Norway's contributions can make a critical difference.

Obstacles to a return to UN peacekeeping

During the 1990s, Norwegian participation in UN peacekeeping operations was sharply reduced, from over 1,800 personnel in 1994, to almost zero by 1998.[47] Basically, there were four main reasons: first, greater engagement with NATO; second, the downsizing and reorganization of the Norwegian Armed Forces; third, fewer geopolitical interests in the new UN missions in Africa; and fourth, the failures of the UN in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda. Furthermore, there are several potential obstacles – political, military and cultural – to an increase in Norwegian troop contributions to UN peacekeeping.

At the policy level, there is a perceived and perhaps real lack of cooperation possibilities with like-minded Western nations to continue to develop partnerships that have been established and/or strengthened over the past 15 years. There is also a perceived lack of operations with sufficiently direct impact on Norwegian security interests, although this is changing as current and future operations like those in Mali, Libya and Syria are more directly tied to concerns about migration, violent extremism and terrorism.

From a military perspective, the combined impact of deployments to NATO and coalition operations on capability and doctrinal development in the period from 2000 until today can hardly be overstated. Norway has updated and professionalized its defence forces to a very high level – so high that, according to military officials, the forces can now conduct fully interoperable exercises with only a handful of other countries with similar levels of technological expertise and equipment.

[47] Kjeksrud, "Peacekeeping Contributor Profile: Norway."

Culturally, the Norwegian defence forces have essentially lost the institutional knowledge they once had about UN peacekeeping, and there is now significant lack of confidence in various aspects of UN operations, like command and control, CASEVAC and MEDEVAC arrangements, logistics, intelligence and communications. Re-engaging with UN peacekeeping will require moving outside Norway's perceived comfort zone, even when co-deploying with other Western countries. Combined with the current scarcity of capabilities and resources, there are considerable obstacles to consistent re-engagement with UN peacekeeping operations.

In addition, come doubts as to where Norway can still take the security guarantee for granted. A new generation of politicians and policy-makers are now dominant in the USA. They do not necessarily share common memories of Cold War conditions, and tend to redirect resources to Asia – and they are dissatisfied with the lack of burden-sharing within NATO. That is why Norway keeps reminding NATO, and the USA in particular, how vulnerable the Northern part of the Alliance is, and that resources need to be oriented and invested towards that end. Thus, lack of resources, the traditionally low US involvement in UN peacekeeping operations, the absence of direct connection between what happens in UN operations and Norwegian security interests, as well as a continued lack of confidence, are all obstacles to greater Norwegian engagement in UN peacekeeping operations.

Opportunities for a return to UN peacekeeping

Refugee flows from the Sahel to the Middle East, and violent extremism on the rise in many of the same countries, provide a strong rationale for contributing capabilities to UN peacekeeping operations, as well as engaging in dialogue on how to update UN capabilities and doctrines to face these new realities. The USA has taken the lead in this process through the Leaders Summits arranged during the UN General Assembly – the 2015 summit chaired by President Barack Obama. Concurrently, there is a critical mass of European countries participating in the MINUSMA mission in Mali, which enables Norway to work together with its closest NATO allies also in a UN peacekeeping setting.

Anchored in the continued policy of Norwegian support to a UN-led world order, and in strong popular support for the UN, the centre–left government (2005–13) had an explicit goal of increasing the participation of Norwegian troops in UN operations.[48] One of the five strategic goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces from that period was to 'contribute to peace, stability, and the further development of a global UN-led legal system'.[49] It succeeded in e.g. deploying to the UNPREDEP preventive

[48]Government of Norway, "Soria Moria declaration 2005–2009;" Government of Norway, "Soria Moria declaration II 2009–2013";

force in Macedonia (341 troops), naval vessels to UNIFIL (about 100 troops), a field hospital for one year to MINURCAT in Chad (382 troops), staff officers to UNMIS in Sudan (164), staff officers to UNMISS in South Sudan (89) and intelligence analysts, engineers and the C-130 transport aircraft to MINUSMA in Mali (47 troops).[50] However, the total numbers involved in these deployments were still low compared to NATO contributions over the past two decades with about 21,000 troops contributed to NATO operations and less than 2,000 troops contributed to UN peacekeeping operations.[51]

The trend since the mid-1990s, of providing mostly token contributions to UN peacekeeping in the form of military staff officers and observers, has provided Norway with a seat at the table and possibilities for joining discussions on how to improve the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping. Norway has been active here, providing significant funding to institutions such as the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, the Center on International Cooperation at New York University and the International Peace Institute. These institutions, as well as others that receive funding from Norway, have undertaken policy-oriented research and supported various policy processes, including the Capstone Doctrine, the Protection of Civilians (PoC), gender and the civilian dimension of peacekeeping.[52]

The current conservative government, composed of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party, decided to scale up contributions, apparently due to the US initiative that resulted in a peacekeeping summit in September 2015.[53] The same government had singled out three areas of particular interest: the Middle East/Iraq/UNDOF, South Sudan and Mali/Sahel. In the Middle East, Norway has historically played a mediator role between Palestine and Israel. This area is also of particular relevance because of the potentially severe consequences a lack of stabilization would entail globally: hence, also the USA has a particular interest in this region. Regarding South Sudan, Norway has played a supportive role towards its independence, not least through Norwegian Church Aid. The crisis in Mali/Sahel has been one of the few UN missions to make Norwegian headlines. In this connection, and for the first time ever, the right-wing Progress Party argued for UN engagement, due to what it perceives as a connection between radical Islam and

[49]Government of Norway, *Coherent for development?*

[50]All data are from Norwegian Armed Forces, "I tjeneste for Norge."

[51]Ibid. Norway contributed 22,441 troops to Lebanon from 1978 to 2008, but the bulk of these were deployed before 1996.

[52]Jakobsen argues that the Nordic countries have been contributors to the development of the civilian dimension of multidimensional peacekeeping that has evolved since the end of the Cold War era. For more, see Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations*, 3.

[53]Interview with Norwegian MFA official. At the summit, Norway announced that it was replacing the contribution of analysts to the MINUSMA ASIFU with a C-130 military transport aircraft in 2016, and was considering providing combat engineers with counter-IED capability in 2017 (International Peace Institute, 'Country Pledges at the World Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping').

Norwegian security.[54] It is likely that future UN peacekeeping missions will be deployed in countries more directly related to Norwegian security interests, such as Libya and Syria, which are linked to challenges regarding migration, violent extremism and terrorism. A significant factor is also Norway's expressed intention to run for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for 2020–22. In the run-up, it is likely that Norway will increase its troop contribution to UN peace operations.

At the military and operational level, MINUSMA has showed indications that, given a significant mass of troops, Western countries can have an impact on command and control, CASEVAC/MEDEVAC and other critical issues. However, this is likely to be on a mission-by-mission basis, rather than leading to institutional change that could impact on all UN peacekeeping operations. With like-minded countries contributing their assets, select missions can be expected to be more high-tech and compatible with the requirements of Norwegian troops in areas such as intelligence, communications and MEDEVAC/CASEVAC.

On a more worrisome note, increased engagement has tested the willingness and appropriateness of the UN to engage in activities resembling counter-terrorism operations, where the UN High-level Panel drew the line.[55] Western member-states want the UN to be more relevant – but this may also push the UN to take on tasks beyond what it is mandated and set up to do. Troops from Western countries come to Mali with more than a decade of experience from network-centric counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, and may have preconceived ideas about how to deal with problems on the ground. This is not only a technical challenge: it is also a cultural challenge, where ideas about how to best address conflicts and their roots confront each other.

Conclusions and options for the future

We have sought to deconstruct the simplified dichotomy between self-interest and idealism and show how the meaning and content of these concepts can develop according to changing circumstances. We have explained how Norway's strategic culture is shaped in a dynamic interplay between strategic discourse and practice. While we note the strong correlation between the UN and solidarity-based motivations on the one hand, and NATO and motivations based on self-interest, on the other, we have also seen how a strong and predictable multilateral system is in Norway's self-interest, making the picture more nuanced. We have also seen that the concepts of solidarity

[54]Bjørgo, "Fra FN til NATO."
[55]UN, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*.

and self-interest are mutually constitutive, and form the building blocks of the Norwegian strategic culture.

Some aspects of Norway's strategic culture remain intact, in both discourse and practice. The self-interest/solidarity nexus remains the central motivation for Norwegian participation in UN peacekeeping and other international deployment; the USA and NATO continue to be perceived as Norway's primary security guarantees; and the UN is still seen as the primary arena and actor for promoting a reliable multilateral system. However, while NATO remains the most relevant framework where Norway can demonstrate its commitment to the USA, the USA keeps moving upwards on the priority ladder for Norway.

Although singled out as an area where Norwegian troops should be deployed in UN peace operations, Africa has historically not been considered important by the Norwegian defence forces. With the new strategic concept of NATO focusing on defence of the Alliance and troops returning home from Afghanistan, the Norwegian defence forces are likely to remain focused on the High North and on maintaining the NATO alliance in the years to come. However, through the deployment to Afghanistan, these forces are becoming more operationally oriented, creating a push factor for continued engagement in international peace operations. This trend opens the door for Norway to agree to limited contributions to the UN in the absence of NATO alternatives.

The perceived dichotomy in Norway, between contributing to NATO and UN operations, may be abating as NATO countries return their troops from Afghanistan and political capital may be gained from the USA by contributing to UN peace operations. Given Norway's emphasis on relations with the USA, there is reason to believe that the engagement in Mali has been significantly strengthened by the US initiative to bring more troop contributors to UN peacekeeping. Furthermore, the increased engagement – not only on the part of Norway, but also other Western states such as Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden in Mali, as of Finland and Ireland in Lebanon – has led to increased pressure for reform of UN operations in areas such as command and control, troop protection, casualty and medical evacuation, and the capacity to conduct intelligence-led operations.[56] Nevertheless, any reforms will probably be on a mission-by-mission basis, where Western troop contributors jointly manage to force through change as a criterion for their participation.

As shown above, the decline in Norwegian troop contributions to UN peace operations in recent decades is due to multiple factors, national and international, not a deliberate decision *not* to contribute. While intentions to participate in UN peacekeeping may be manifested in policy documents and plans, actual need for deployment is event-driven and therefore

[56]Karlsrud and Smith, *Europe's Return to UN Peacekeeping in Africa?*

unpredictable. The criteria applied for deciding to participate are generally the same in the bureaucracies of the MFA and the MoD, although the MFA seems to favour UN peace operations while the MoD tends towards NATO operations. More research is needed here, but we note that these criteria are not formally codified, and decision-making procedures seem to differ when individual officers are sent out compared to those deployed as a team, although actual figures may be the same.

For Norway, it is not a matter of choosing *between* the UN and NATO: Norway has strategic interests in continuing to support both. Nevertheless, transatlantic ties take precedence, and what is important for the USA and/or for NATO is important for Norway. This dichotomy, with the US pressure for increased engagement in UN peace operations, may no longer be valid. If so, the consequence could be greater Norwegian participation in UN peacekeeping in the future. However, even with stronger self-interest reasons for deciding to commit capabilities and troops to UN peace operations, if push comes to shove, Norway will probably prefer NATO operations to UN ones. As one Norwegian officer put it: the Norwegian military establishment is a 'supertanker' that takes considerable time to turn towards UN peace operations; and 'as soon as a NATO operation is possible, the wind will turn again.'[57]

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[57]Norwegian defence official, 27 Aug. 2015.

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