

A Peace Nation Takes Up Arms

The Norwegian Engagement in Afghanistan

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Shot of multinational flags at
ISAF HQ in Kabul. Photo:
NATO Photos.

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Intra-alliance Analysis: Policies and Approaches of NATO Allies in Afghanistan

A CMI-PRIO study of the US, the UK, Germany and Norway

The growing difficulties facing the NATO mission in Afghanistan had by mid-decade led to increases in commitment and innovations in policy. Pressure on allies to make more robust military commitments mounted, coupled with policy innovations designed to meet the growing insurgency with more appropriate strategies and better use of resources. The 2006 Riga summit endorsement of a strategy that stressed the integration of military and civilian policy elements was an important step in this development. While the terminology and its implications differed (American policy-makers were already talking of 'counter-insurgency', while their European counterparts preferred 'comprehensive', 'integrated' or 'whole of government' approach), the Riga meeting signified a broadening as well as a deepening commitment of the alliance. In the years that followed, each NATO member and other allies struggled to adjust their policy to deal with often conflicting contexts and demands – a worsening situation on the ground, demands for alliance solidarity and awareness that NATO's prestige was on the line in Afghanistan, an increasingly critical public at home as casualties were rising, and growing concern over the economic costs of the war.

The papers in this series examine the strategies of four NATO members in this regard. Each case study first contextualizes their Afghanistan engagement in light of the broader foreign policy concerns of the country concerned, and then focuses on the development and adjustment of military strategy in relation to other components of the engagement. In this respect, special attention is given to the importance of realities on the ground in Afghanistan, organizational (NATO) interests, and domestic factors. The story is taken up to the NATO Lisbon summit meeting in November 2010, which marked the counter-point to Riga by announcing that security responsibility would be transferred to Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

What are the implications of this analysis for NATO's role in out-of-area, unconventional engagements? This question is addressed in a separate series of Policy Briefs presented as part of the project.

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Bergen and Oslo
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Astri Suhrke, CMI, and Kristian Berg Harpviken, PRIO.

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1. Introduction¹

What have been the main drivers of Norway's approach to the post-9/11 international engagement in Afghanistan? This paper considers two main types of driver. First, it examines the importance of threat to domestic security, including plans for, or actual, acts of terror as well as the perception of threat. Second, the paper assesses the importance of alliance dependence – the extent to which the country's basic security is seen to hinge on its role in the NATO alliance – and, in addition, domestic political cleavages and issues of self-identification; in the current context the emphasis will be on Norway's identity as a 'peace nation'. Furthermore, the specific operational environment in which Norway is engaged matters for policy change. Overall, for Norway, alliance considerations are the key impetus to the engagement. The post-9/11 engagement in Afghanistan has proved to be extremely challenging. Deep differences of opinion have threatened the consensus-based foreign policy tradition. Inherent tensions between a policy driven by Norway's perceived security needs and the country's profile as an impartial contributor to peaceful settlement of conflict worldwide have been brought to the fore.

In this paper, I shall first examine Norway's military engagement, before turning the lens to the civilian contributions – in both cases with a view to the mutual integration of efforts. I will then zoom in on the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Faryab, led by Norway since 2005. Next, I will discuss the key factors shaping Norway's policy over time.²

2. The military commitment

The terror attacks in the United States took place one day prior to Norway's parliamentary elections in 2001. Time did not allow 9/11 to become a factor in the elections, but the fact that the question of Norway's contribution to the war on terror sparked no controversy in the transition from one government to the next speaks volumes for the broad Norwegian consensus on security policy matters. The outgoing government was a minority government of the social democrat Labour party, led by Jens Stoltenberg. It was replaced by a coalition minority government led by Kjell Magne Bondevik, of centre right composition (consisting of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister's Christian Democratic Party).

The Norwegian government was fully behind Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the US-led war against the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda. By late November it had offered Norwegian military resources, including Special Forces, F-16 jet fighters and one Hercules C-130 transport aircraft with personnel.³ There was no precedent for deploying Norwegian military forces beyond Europe other than in peacekeeping operations. The rationale was made clear when Jan Petersen, the Conservative Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new government gave his first presentation on the Norwegian contribution to the parliament. The main justification for the Norwegian commitment

¹ I am grateful for research excellent research assistance by Halvor Berggrav and Øyvind Ofstad, as well as comments by Heather Elko McKibben. A shorter version of this analysis appears in an edited volume that compares the contributions, since 2001, of various countries in the international alliance: Kristian Berg Harpviken, "A Peace Nation in the War on Terror: The Norwegian Engagement in Afghanistan", in *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multinational Contributions to Reconstruction*, eds. Nik Hynes and Péter Marton (London: Routledge, 2011).

² A few notes on methodology are required. The author has followed Afghanistan closely since 1989. He has been commenting frequently on Afghanistan in the Norwegian media since 2001, and has followed the debate closely. This article is based on a number of interviews with key Norwegian actors (diplomats, military officers, politicians), a review of key government documents, as well as an examination of media reports. Admittedly, the documentation is often less than stringent (the polls, for example, rarely have consistent question formulations over time, as they are subcontracted by particular media with a view to responding to the agenda of the day).

³ Astri Suhrke, Kristian Berg Harpviken and Arne Strand, "Conflictual Peacebuilding: Afghanistan Two Years after Bonn" (CMI Report R 2004:4. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2004), 55-57.

was the same as that which had informed the country's security policy since the late 1940s: that full support to the United States and to NATO was essential for a reciprocal security guarantee.

The official justification for the operation has gone through significant changes over the decade that Norway has been engaged. Petersen (also cited above, placed the main emphasis in 2001 on the commitment to NATO:

For Norway as a NATO member, we are (. . .) obliged to assist the USA in the fight against international terrorism through the collective defence commitments codified in the Atlantic Pact. (. . .) Norway has a clear interest of its own in offering such assistance. The Article 5 guarantee has been the spine of the defence of Norway for more than 50 years – and will remain so in the future.⁴

Two years later after the intervention, in late 2003, when Petersen presents on the Norwegian contributions in Afghanistan and Iraq for the coming year, the role of the NATO commitment is less explicit:

The terror attacks in in USA in September 2001 demonstrated that the most serious threats against our common security now stems from international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. A decisive and joint effort is a critical in order to counter these new security threats. It is therefore important that also we take part in the efforts to maintain the broad coalition that was formed in the aftermath of the terror attacks in 2001.⁵

While the importance of joint international action figures centrally here, the NATO security guarantee does not, and the main justification here is the need to protect Norway (and its allies against terror.

With the centre-left government, the role of the NATO commitment would be played down, and so would the fight against terror. In November 2005, Jonas Gahr Støre, gave his first report to the parliament regarding Afghanistan and Iraq, with the following first lines:

Norwegian men and women in uniform have been serving for peace through the UN, NATO and the world community for more than 50 years. Just like other countries contribute to Norway's security, we make an effort to ensure that other countries and peoples will experience peace, hope and development. The main thrust of this policy has enjoyed broad consensus here in the parliaments. We may see this as in terms of a policy for international solidarity and redistribution. We, living in the country of opportunity – we who are so privileged – contribute so that opportunities can be opened up for those who are less privileged.⁶

The rest of the statement, while making reference to the importance of Norway as a reliable contributor (not least as a backdrop for the withdrawal from Iraq and from OEF in Afghanistan), places its main emphasis on development, security and good governance in the host countries. The language has changed, and the justification has been modified significantly with the new government.

⁴ Jan Petersen, "Mulige norske styrkebidrag til Afghanistan" (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 December 2001) [Author's translation].

⁵ Jan Petersen, "Norske bidrag til internasjonale operasjoner og samlet innsats i Afghanistan og Irak i 2004" (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 December 2003) [Author's translation].

⁶ Jonas Gahr Støre, "Redegjørelse om Norges engasjement i Afghanistan og Irak" (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Report to the Parliament, 9 November 2005) [Author's translation].

Over the next years, the main emphasis remains on Afghanistan's wellbeing, which is seen not only as a means to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a base for international terrorism, but also as a central objective. In 5 February 2008 (just 3 weeks after the attack on Hotel Serena in Kabul, where minister Støre and a large Norwegian delegation was present), Støre takes the 2001, pre-intervention, situation as his point of departure for his presentation:

Afghanistan was a country which – with the exception of some areas in the north – was ruled by a Taliban regime that shocked us all. It shocked us by daily violations of basic human rights (...) destruction of historical and religious monuments, attacking our shared world heritage. And not the least: It was a country that gradually became a free haven for foreign terrorist organizations – like Al Qaeda – of thereby a site where terror attacks in other counties were being planned.⁷

And, after a detailed account of Norway's efforts to overcome this, he concludes:

We are present militarily through ISAF to strengthen security in Afghanistan. We have to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a terrorist haven.

The NATO security guarantee, as a broader goal, however, is not referred to.

By 2011, the formulation of the primary goal is crystal clear, resonating well with US President Obama reformulation of US objectives after he took office two years earlier:

It is important to first say this: The goal of our engagement in Afghanistan, as it has been emphasized in numerous resolutions of the UN Security Council, is to contribute to prevent terror organizations from again finding a free haven from where to plan and execute large scale terror attacks. Statebuilding is not a goal in its own right. But, when we do pursue a comprehensive civilian engagement to promote economic growth, political rights, respect for human rights, sustainable institutions, this is rooted in the acknowledgement that these are important conditions for preventing Afghanistan from again becoming such a free haven.⁸

Preventing terrorism, which has always been part of the main justification for Norway's role, is now unequivocally the ultimate objective, with anything else being means to achieve that. The NATO commitment, so prominent in the 2001 justification by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Petersen, is barely detectable. The commitment to international collective action is there, but with the emphasis on the Security Council mandate and the need to further strengthen the UN.

The new centre-right government, in its early days, displayed a certain scepticism to Norway's peace engagement, and was the proponent of a US and NATO oriented security policy. If the Labour party had continued to hold office, there is no indication that its basic response would have been different, even though one could imagine nuances at the rhetorical level. The only critical voice in the parliament was that of the Socialist Left Party, which had been established as a breakaway faction of the Labour party in the early 1970s, opposition to Norway's membership in NATO being an existential point of divergence.

⁷ Jonas Gahr Støre, "Utenriksministerens redegjørelse for Stortinget om Afghanistan 5 Februar 2008" (Report to the Parliament. Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 February 2008) [Author's translation].

⁸ Jonas Gahr Støre, "Utenriksministerens redegjørelse om Afghanistan" (Report to the Parliament. Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 April 2011) [Author's translation].

Norway's contribution to the ISAF mission in Kabul started in early 2002, and was at first strikingly modest compared to its contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The mission basically included a transport control unit and an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team. By March 2003, Norway had deployed a Civil–Military Cooperation (CIMIC) unit, by August the same year a surgical hospital unit, and by November – in time for the Constitutional *loya jirga* – a company that would function as a Quick Reaction Force.

The US-led intervention in Iraq, starting on 20 March 2003, was deeply controversial in Norway. Already by mid-May, Norway had committed a company of engineers to the stabilization force in Iraq. The Norwegian unit would mainly engage in mine clearance and EOD. In total, some 150 soldiers were deployed. The government claimed that the contribution in Iraq was in the form of 'humanitarian soldiers' – a phrase that stirred considerable public debate, with both the NGO sector, media commentators and the political opposition being critical. By mid-2004, Labour demanded a withdrawal of all Norwegian military personnel from Iraq. The Norwegian elections in the fall of 2005 resulted in a new government, now a centre-left majority coalition – including the Socialist Left, the Centre Party and Labour, headed by Jens Stoltenberg.

In its inaugural statement, the Stoltenberg government announced full military withdrawal from Iraq and an end to participation in OEF in Afghanistan. This followed directly from what the government saw as foundational principles of Norwegian foreign policy, emphasizing an international order where the UN is at the lead, a continued commitment to NATO, and a central role in fighting poverty and environmental degradation. And, the new Prime Minister emphasized: 'Norway shall be a distinct peace nation'.⁹ One of the first tasks of the new Prime Minister was a telephone conversation with US President George W. Bush, receiving his greetings but also announcing a significant change of course. The Norwegian forces were out of Iraq by the end of 2005. Realizing that the Norwegian exit was not particularly welcome in Washington, it was commonly understood that there was a need to compensate through a significant increase in the commitment to ISAF in Afghanistan.

In the early years, under the Bondevik government, the bulk of the military's human resources went into OEF.¹⁰ Altogether this included four deployments of special forces with between 50 and 100 people in each round, one Hercules transport plane with personnel, an F-16 jet fighter deployment with four planes and personnel, as well as mine clearance units and staff officers. Financially, from 2001 to 2003, some 140 million NOK were used for ISAF, some 944 million NOK for OEF, with another 226 million NOK in shared costs.¹¹ By late 2003, however, the ISAF contribution started to increase significantly. Relying on the figures available by 15 March every year, the 2004 figure for Norwegian soldiers to Afghanistan is 257; in 2006 it stood at 635, and by 2008 at 517. Since then, the total contribution has fluctuated around 500, an increase from the 650 to 700 in the peak period from April 2008 to October 2009 when up to 150 special soldiers under ISAF command came in addition to the regular 500 plus (accurate figures for special forces are not reported).

⁹ Jens Stoltenberg, "Tiltredelseserklæring fra regjeringen Stoltenberg II, 19. oktober 2005" (Oslo: The Office of the Prime Minister, 2005) [Author's translation].

¹⁰ The figures for ISAF-forces (from late 2003 only) and for special forces (both OEF and ISAF, from 2001 onwards) are based on emails from Major Heidi Kristin Langvik-Hansen, press spokesperson for the Norwegian Chief of Defense (4 November 2010; 25 November 2010). Other figures, including the distinction between different designations (including the relative share committed to the PRT) are based on a variety of public sources.

¹¹ Astri Suhrke et al., *ibid.*, 66.

Table 1. Norwegian military expenditure on Afghanistan, 2002–2012 (million NOK)¹²

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*	2012*
Afghanistan	430	500	309	500	750	850	1,000	1,100	1,031	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
International operations	1,823	1,476	779	817	957	1,198	1,315	1,657	1,578	1,187	1,234
Afghanistan share of total	24%	34%	40%	61%	78%	71%	76%	66%	65%	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

By late 2002, the Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan was at a level where it surpassed that of any other Norwegian engagement abroad. It was by far the largest international deployment of Norwegian military personnel. Given Norway's offensive advocacy of UN-led operations, this remained an embarrassment, even more so for Stoltenberg's government. From 2006 to 2009, up to 95 per cent of Norwegian soldiers serving abroad were found in Afghanistan, where they operated under NATO command (albeit with a UN mandate).

In June 2011, the Defence medical service ('Forsvarets sanitet'), in response to a strong criticism in the media and by the political opposition, issued a report on injuries to Norwegian military personnel in Afghanistan.¹³ A total of 6,938 persons were reported to have served in Afghanistan from 2001-2010, bringing the total of work years to 4876 (many have made several tours). With a total of 16,000 people in the armed forces, out of which only an estimated 4,000 were under arms, the engagement in Afghanistan had become a strain on the forces and, by 2010, the concerns were mounting from both the officers' unions and the defence leadership. Altogether, by mid-2011, Norway has lost a total of nine soldiers in five different incidents. Two civilians have also been killed: an aid worker and a journalist.

Table 2. Norwegian injuries and casualties in Afghanistan 2001-2010¹⁴

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Deaths	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	5	9
Trauma	0	1	2	0	0	2	4	1	1	6	17
Other injury	0	1	13	37	80	93	149	153	195	201	922
SUM	0	2	15	38	80	95	155	154	197	212	948
<i>Deaths/injuries</i>											
Service years	1	61	110	403	541	715	829	908	713	595	4876
<i>Deaths/injuries pr service year</i>	0.00	0.03	0.14	0.09	0.15	0.13	0.19	0.17	0.28	0.36	0.19

¹² Figures from 2002-2010 are from national accounts, figures for 2011 and 2012 from the initial national budgets from those years. It is worth noting that these figures reflect only extraordinary funding linked to international deployments and, as such, reflect only a minor share of the real costs. Even a conservative estimate would include the salaries for the personnel that are deployed and the costs of operations-specific equipment (wear and tear, new purchases). A less conservative estimate, not wholly unreasonable given that international operations now form a major part of the rationale for the Norwegian defence, would be to include a significant share of the ordinary defence budget (NOK 39,248.6 million in the initial 2011 budget).

¹³ Forsvaret, "Skadde i Afghanistan, 2001-2010" (Oslo: Forsvarets sanitet, 2011).

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* Trauma is defined as "Physical trauma, an often serious and body altering physical injury, such as the removal of a limb." Upon publication of these figures, Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten disputed their correctness, finding that the numbers were too low. Injuries treated by other nations' medics are not included, and many early injuries were not reported. See <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article4164126.ece>. Norwegian 1st Lieutenant Colonel Siri Skare, who was killed when a violent demonstration overran the UNAMA office in Mazaar-e Sharif on 1 April 2011, is not included in the overview, as she was not part of the regular Norwegian contingent. See <http://mil.no/organisation/news/currentaffairs/Pages/Norwegian-officer-killed-in-Afghanistan.aspx>.

Norway's profile in the military operation in Afghanistan has been multifaceted, with both a soft and a sharp side. On the soft side counts the Norwegian contributions of transport planes, the offering of engineering capacities, as well as the leadership of a PRT located in one of Afghanistan's more peaceful areas. On the sharp side, Norway contributed fighter jets to OEF and has taken great pride in the capacity of its Special Forces which are reportedly in high demand within NATO. Similarly, the staffing of Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) with officers who train, live and fight alongside the Afghan National Army (ANA), at first sight a soft effort (in that it is capacity-building) is both high-risk and demanding. The multifaceted contribution has served Norway well in that various aspects of the effort have had potential appeal to different audiences, both in Norway and beyond. With the possible exception of Special Forces, though, Norway has not developed any clear niche capacity. As a share of the total international military presence in Afghanistan, Norway's contribution has fallen from some 1.5 percent at its peak in 2004 (300 out of 20,000) to some 0.3 percent in late 2010 (500 out of 150,000). The overall surge in troops from late 2009 has been paralleled with a slight reduction in the Norwegian contribution.

3. The civilian efforts

Although Afghanistan had been a stable recipient of Norwegian humanitarian aid throughout the 1980s and 1990s, there was a watershed in aid commitment following 9/11. The only Norwegian presence by September 2001 was the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC), which received roughly half of the Norwegian commitment, the other half going to the UN. By 2004, Afghanistan was designated one of Norway's development 'partner countries', in recognition that instability and capacity constraints imply an unprecedentedly high level of risk. Afghanistan entered the top three on the list of recipients of Norwegian aid. In the early years following 2001 a main emphasis of the Norwegian aid engagement was to contribute to the shift from humanitarian to development assistance, including the provision of transitional support for the new authorities.

A key Norwegian concern has been to maintain a clear distinction between military and civilian efforts.¹⁵ Small scale CIMIC projects run by the Norwegian military in Kabul in ISAF's early years – financed from the humanitarian budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but with the traditional mandate of 'winning hearts and minds' for the larger security force – were not deemed a success. In its early days, the Faryab PRT had some Norwegian funding to use at its discretion, but this was soon done away with.¹⁶ There were numerous accounts of misinformed aid, such as the story about the PRT's construction of a hospital in Maimana, filled with imported equipment that proved impossible to use and maintain locally, including an anaesthetic machine with a Norwegian language user manual only. Also, Norwegian NGOs were vocal in expressing their concerns over the military's role in aid provision. The net result was that, by 2008, the Norwegian approach was that military commanders, including those at the PRT, would have no authority over the allocation of aid.

With mounting criticism over the military operation, including its costs relative to the money devoted to civilian rebuilding, in early 2008 the government indicated that it would strive towards

¹⁵ Geert Gompelmann, "Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan's Faryab Province" (Boston: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, November 2010).

¹⁶ Cedric de Coning, Helge Lurås, Niels Nagelhus Schia and Ståle Ulriksen, "Norway's whole-of-government approach and its engagement with Afghanistan", *Security in Practice* 8-2009 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 2009).

'parity' between civilian and military expenditure. This ambition was not achieved, not even in 2008, yet parity remained in the discourse as the ideal distribution.

Apart from foreign affairs, development and defence, there are other state actors. Most importantly there is the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), engaged both in police training and prison reform. Police training has involved a handful of people; it was originally based in Kabul but has gradually been transferred to Faryab. Prison reform was an initiative inherited from the British in Faryab; staff have been housed at the PRT, operating with an independent leader heading a small team. By 2009, a civilian coordinator, who is meant to serve as the counterpart to the PRT military leader, was put in place, seeking to bring together the humanitarian, developmental, governance and justice elements in which Norway is engaged.

Table 3. Norwegian aid to Afghanistan, 2002-2010 (million NOK)¹⁷

<i>Sector</i>	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Governance	65.7	40.6	56.0	62.9	79.7	96.0	196.1	218.8	130.5	964.7
Economic development/ Trade	158.8	113.3	175.6	192.6	181.7	262.9	256.9	268.7	439.7	2,053.2
Education	15.5	13.0	17.3	6.9	31.6	16.3	38.1	83.0	16.5	240.5
Health/social	25.9	26.8	18.7	41.9	22.1	23.6	26.0	52.5	26.3	297.5
Environment/ Energy	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.7	9.4	1.0	2.6	1.8	22.9
Hum. aid	143.2	88.2	39.1	37.9	97.3	133.3	213.6	97.6	105.5	1,217.0
In Norway/ unspecified	75.9	203.8	148.7	42.7	31.8	11.6	4.8	4.7	6.1	567.7
Total	486.0	486.9	456.4	386.2	447.0	553.1	736.5	727.8	726.4	5,363.5

NGOs are conventionally seen as important partners to the Norwegian government. In 2002, the two organizations that were engaged in Afghanistan before 2001 were joined by two new organizations: the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and *Redd Barna* (i.e., Save the Children – Norway). NGOs were seen to be an essential component in a situation where the Afghan government would suffer from capacity problems in years to come. As the decision to take on the PRT in Faryab was taken, these organizations detected strong signals that their engagement in Faryab would be welcome. The NRC and NCA, neither of which had previous experience there, took up the challenge, and their Afghanistan budgets grew accordingly. A third organization, ACTED, headquartered in France, was already working in the region. It became an asset to the Norwegians, not the least in Ghormach, where it was virtually alone in being able to operate. One of the ways in which the sharp civil–military divisions were compensated for in Faryab was by making sure that NGOs had some financial flexibility when awarded their project funding, so that

¹⁷ Data from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, available at <http://www.norad.no/Norskbistanditall/Statistikkvisning>. The "In Norway/unspecified" row is largely accounted for by assistance to Afghan refugees in Norway.

they could later spend this on projects that the military PRT commander or the civilian advisors thought were important.

Norway has also engaged in a number of areas where it has aimed to pursue particular issues seen to be of high strategic importance, with a current focus on education, rural development and good governance. Norway was early in providing assistance, through what was then a newly established transition funding facility, for the running costs of the new Afghan administration, and has generally advocated that a major share of the funding is to go through government channels. Norway has had high ambitions, seeking to punch above its weight and impact on how others perform, but the extent to which it has succeeded is difficult to assess. When the decree from the January 2010 London Conference included a commitment to channel at least 50 per cent of donor funds through the government, this was seen as an endorsement of what Norway has long advocated. Also, from the vantage point of 2010, diplomats and aid workers would say that a key achievement has been the principled stand on civil–military cooperation.¹⁸

4. A ‘Norwegian model’ PRT?

The PRTs in Afghanistan were not only an effort to build security with a minimal commitment of troops and other resources; they also came to ‘epitomize the civil military approach in Afghanistan’.¹⁹ For Norway, the question of civil–military cooperation at the local level was controversial, with key actors on the military side calling for tight integration, while foreign affairs and the government favoured separation. Over time, the latter view won out and, by mid-2008, the PRT commander’s funding for civilian projects was brought to an end. What was referred to as the ‘Norwegian Model in Faryab’ was one where the PRT had no role in implementing aid projects.²⁰ This was an approach that Norway took further than any other alliance country.²¹ By implication, this also meant that the PRT was a security-focused entity which, in the absence of civilian authority over aid allocations, could not pursue a ‘whole-of-government’ ambition.²²

Norway first deployed troops to the British-led PRT in Maymana, the capital of Faryab Province, in 2004. At the time, there was no insurgency in the province.²³ The prevailing security problems relating to the local and regional warlords – including the rivalry between two of the country’s major groups, Jamiat-e Islami and Jonbesh-e Milli – had been relatively successfully managed through low-key interventions by the British. Norway took over command of the PRT on 1 September 2005. It had been clear for some time that Norway was lined up to take over a PRT, despite considerable scepticism both in political circles and among the diplomats.²⁴ The British were eager to move south, and put considerable force into their lobbying. At the same time, the Norwegians felt more comfortable working with the British than with most other countries

¹⁸ This is not a view generally shared among the military, particularly among those with field experience, who look to their colleagues from other countries who have assistance funds which they can use at their discretion.

¹⁹ Barbara Stapleton, “A means to what end? Why PRTs are peripheral to the bigger political challenges in Afghanistan”, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007): 1-49, 1.

²⁰ Government of Norway, “A strategy for comprehensive Norwegian civilian and military efforts in Faryab Province, Afghanistan” (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Justice and the Police, May 2009).

²¹ Geert Gompelmann, *ibid.*

²² Øyvind Ofstad, “The ‘Norwegian Whole-of-Government approach to Afghanistan post-2001’” (Master thesis, The School of International Service, Washington: American University).

²³ Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Co, 2009); Geert Gompelmann, *ibid.*; Sébastien Pennes, “L’insurrection Talibane: guerre économique ou idéologique?”, *Politique étrangère* 2 (2008), 345–58.

²⁴ Astri Suhrke *et al.*, *ibid.*, 73

leading PRTs. The focus on security functions, as well as the conflict management efforts, resonated well with Norwegian ideals. Similarly, it seemed attractive to work closely with the Germans, who were heading Regional Control-North (RC-N). At a time when fighting in the south was escalating rather dramatically, while the north remained relatively quiet, the south became associated with aggressive international warfare in the Norwegian debate, and restraining Norwegian forces to the north was a convenient compromise for the new government. Somewhat ironically, the north-south distinction took on a life of its own and remained a reference in the domestic debate long after the insurgency had spread to the north.

The first serious incident in Faryab happened in March 2006. As part of the wave of ‘cartoon’ protests, a crowd gathered outside the PRT headquarters in the centre of Maymana, the provincial capital. The protest evolved into an attack on the base, with stone-throwing, firing of shotguns and a few hand grenades. PRT soldiers fought back, but were only saved as jetfighters came in at low altitude, scaring the crowd into dispersal.²⁵ Investigations pointed in the direction of Jonbesh, who seemed have used the opportunity to stir unrest directed at the PRT in order to send a warning against interference in local matters. The response to the incident is an interesting illustration of how local factors – in this case closely linked to the security of the Norwegian forces – bring about adjustments to the approach (albeit not necessarily of the overall commitment).²⁶ The ‘cartoon’ incident led to a decision to build a new base outside the city, despite the realization that this also meant increased alienation from the local population (the base inherited from the British – an old bank building in the city centre – was seen to be too exposed). The military capacity of the PRT was significantly upgraded. There was an increase in Norwegian development funds earmarked for Faryab. Finally, the stark reminder that Norwegian forces could be under threat, as well as the assistance of ANA forces in the aftermath of the incident, brought about a new enthusiasm for permanent ANA presence in the province.²⁷ This led to the decision to construct a base for an Afghan brigade in Maymana, and eventually laid the basis for the virtual merger, by late 2010, of the OMLT training effort and the PRT.

By early 2007, the mode of operations in the north had shifted towards more large-scale operations, led by RC-N but largely executed by the PRTs. At the same time, security started to deteriorate seriously with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) seemingly placed to hit the PRT staff on patrol, and with a few shootouts. A bomb placed on a donkey went off in Maymana, killing one Finnish and injuring two Norwegian soldiers, all attached to the PRT. In November an IED killed one Norwegian soldier and seriously injured another. There was a sense on the Norwegian side that, while security was starting to deteriorate in the north, there was an exclusive focus on the most troubled areas in the south. The Policy Action Group, bringing together key international and Afghan actors, was set up to ensure tighter integration and improved focus on the south. The Norwegian Ambassador lobbied for a similar creation focusing on the north, but found little support among key allies. The Germans were reluctant to admit that the situation in the north was deteriorating, while the Americans were reluctant to relax the focus on the south.

By late 2007, it was clear that the risks to the Norwegian military were on the rise, and there were concerns about the capacity of RC-N to offer support in an emergency. A decision to pull out of the Quick Reaction Force at RC-N in Mazar-e Sharif, which was Norwegian at the time, intensified the concerns. Hence, in its plans for 2008, the Ministry of Defence announced a reinforcement of the PRT with an infantry unit of 100 personnel, as well as a helicopter unit for

²⁵ Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (New York/London: Columbia/Hurst, 2011).

²⁶ Touko Piiparinen, “A clash of mindsets? An insider’s account of Provincial Reconstruction Teams”, *International Peacekeeping* 14 (2007): 143–57.

²⁷ Trond Martin Flatemo, “Norsk konseptutvikling i Provincial Reconstruction Team Meymahne” (Masters thesis, The Norwegian Defense University College, Oslo, 2008).

medical evacuation purposes.²⁸ The strong signalling of increasing risk to the lives of Norwegian soldiers met with considerable understanding among the larger public. The government, cognizant of its responsibility for the soldiers and constantly reminded of how Norwegian losses stirred critical debate on the home arena, was generous in allocating resources. Yet, many insiders thought that the balance was now tilting disproportionately towards spending resources for force protection, not least with the standby helicopter medical evacuation capacity. One seasoned insider to the decision-making process interviewed for this paper dryly remarked that it seemed that a disproportionate share of the resources for PRT Maymana was going into 'cutting each other's hair'.

At the time when the first soldier in Maymana was killed in late 2007, there was already an intensive effort under way by the Norwegians to expand their area of operation to include Ghormach district, across the province border in Badghis to the west, from where it was believed that most of the attacks were executed.²⁹ Ghormach is fairly inaccessible from other areas of Badghis and was barely on the radar of the Spanish PRT, based in Qala-e Nau, the provincial capital. One factor that weighed in heavily were the plans for constructing a road that would eventually connect Maymana with Herat in the far northwest, and a Chinese company that was contracted to do the job faced security challenges. Nonetheless, the Ghormach initiative faced resistance by the Germans at RC-N. The provincial governor was also reluctant, concerned that scarce resources would be spread even more thinly. On the Norwegian side also there were many who were hesitant. Proponents talked about threats in Faryab stemming from Ghormach, hence there was a need 'to remove the evil at the root'.³⁰ Sceptics argued that this would be nothing but 'stirring up a hornet's nest'. The proponents got the upper hand, and the Norwegians launched a major lobbying effort, overcoming German reluctance. The PRT area of operation was expanded from 1 January 2009 and, over the next two years, the Norwegians confronted security challenges of an entirely new magnitude.

In response to the deterioration in security and a more offensive ISAF military posture in the north, Norway increasingly prioritized the training of security forces, through the so-called Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs). These are teams of experienced officers who conduct 'on-the-job training' through integrating with an Afghan National Army (ANA) unit – living, training, operating and fighting alongside their Afghan colleagues. By early November 2010, Norway was staffing two OMLTs. One is at battalion level, has been moving around and was stationed in the unruly Ghormach until mid- December 2010. The other is at brigade level, and was moved from Mazar-e Sharif to Maymana in the summer of 2010. The fact that the ANA brigade in this extended region is now stationed in Maymana has been warmly welcomed by the Norwegians. In fact, this was an essential prerequisite when the Norwegian Minister of Defence, on 14 October 2010, stated that the security responsibility for Faryab would be handed over to Afghan forces in 2011, perhaps as the first province to follow Kabul.³¹ The OMLT efforts are now becoming an integral part of the PRT, which now sees mentoring and partnering as its main focus.

The ANA build-up, however, came simultaneously with another development – namely the considerable US military build-up in the province. A US light artillery battalion, under the pretext of police training, established itself over the summer. Gradually, it has become clear that the

²⁸ Ministry of Defence, "Norske styrkebidrag til Afghanistan" (Press release 6 November 2007, Ministry of Defence, Oslo).

²⁹ Ståle Ulriksen, "Norway's political test in Faryab, Afghanistan: how to lead?" (Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Centre, July 2010).

³⁰ Nick Allen, *Embed: With the World's Armies in Afghanistan*. (Stroud: The History Press Ltd., 2010), 206.

³¹ Grete Faremo, "Vi er i Afghanistan for å bidra til å skape fred" (Presentation to PRT-16 prior to deployment, 1 November 2010, Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Setermoen).

police training is, at best, a minor part of what the new US forces do. As in most other parts of the north, where various NATO alliance partners have been responsible for security, the new US military presence is aimed at countering the insurgents more aggressively. To the extent that there has never been a distinct Norwegian footprint in Faryab, it has now come to an end. This is simply stated as an unfortunate fact of life, even by Norwegian officers who are resentful of many elements of the Norwegian approach. At the same time, being interviewed in mid-2010, many expressed a concern that a more aggressive US military approach will stir further unrest, and hence make the handover to ANA more difficult.

The new US presence in the province enabled Norway to decide to pull Norwegian forces out of Ghormach, where they maintained a Forward Operating Base.³² This was widely seen as an admission that the Norwegian initiative had been counterproductive, stirring further unrest among various groups only loosely connected to the Taliban and helping the insurgents to justify their local build-up.³³

How prominent was Faryab and the PRT in Norway's engagement in Afghanistan? In terms of military resources, it consumed perhaps half, if not more, of Norway's resources in the period from 2005 to 2010.³⁴ In terms of civilian assistance, the working principle has been to earmark some 20 per cent of Norwegian assistance to the PRT. This, however, does not include funding that goes to the government, which is later directed to projects in Faryab. In the domestic debate on the Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan, the centrality of Faryab went well beyond its relative share of resources. Faryab literally became Afghanistan's 'Little Norway'. When Faryab's governor visited Norway in late June 2010, he published an op-ed in *Aftenposten*, the leading national newspaper, where he left little doubt about Norway's centrality: 'In consultation with the Norwegian embassy, I have identified three important areas which should be the central focus for development efforts in the coming years: Agriculture, education and good governance.'³⁵ Shafaq's foci were identical to those laid out in the Norwegian Faryab strategy.³⁶

There has been considerable criticism of Norway's approach to civil-military coordination in Faryab – and specifically of the document entitled 'A Strategy for Comprehensive Norwegian Civilian and Military Effort'³⁷ – on the grounds that the approach in Faryab is not a comprehensive approach.³⁸ The activities in Faryab are fragmented, it is said, as there is no unified command and no authority over civilian funds at the PRT level. Undoubtedly, the Norwegian approach is distinct and, as one can see when other actors come into the same territory with a different approach, it is also vulnerable. This has been most notable since mid-2010, when the US build-up in the province included staff from USAID and other US government agencies, which were more than willing to respond to civilian priorities set by the Norwegian military. The critique referred to above links the weak local integration with a strong Norwegian tradition of humanitarianism and peacemaking, as well as to a particular naivety – by civilians and military alike – that prevents a fundamentally political analysis of what one does. But

³² Grete Faremo, *ibid.*

³³ Ståle Ulriksen, *ibid.*

³⁴ Again, there are many ways to calculate this. Significant parts of the Norwegian military presence – including the Norwegian Aeromedical Detachment (a helicopter ambulance unit based in Faryab), the staff at ISAF headquarters in Kabul as well as at Regional Command-North, and Norway's engagement in Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams – are fully or partly linked to its PRT role.

³⁵ Abdul Haq Shafaq, "Ingen raske løsninger", *Aftenposten*, 28 June 2010. [Author's translation]

³⁶ Government of Norway, *ibid.*

³⁷ Government of Norway, *ibid.*

³⁸ Cedric de Coning et al., *ibid.*; Karsten Friis and Sanaa Rehman (2010) "Nordic approaches to whole of government – in Afghanistan and beyond", *Security in Practice* 6-2010 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), 2010).

this is not the whole story. Undoubtedly, there is a long tradition behind the Norwegian separation between military and civilian efforts, and the response has been convenient both in facing a critical public and in addressing strains within the coalition governments. Yet, the insistence on separation has also been guided by the conviction that Afghan statebuilding hinges on government control over resources and decisions, and that development priorities informed by security concerns are not effective. This conviction was widely shared – by most development workers, many diplomats, and a fair share of politicians – and was simultaneously well suited to address domestic political concerns.

Norway's institutionalization of comprehensive planning was limited to the home capital, Oslo. In Afghanistan, the limits to integration were not visible only at the PRT level. The same was the case at the Kabul level, where the embassy was the main actor. The embassy's authority over aid allocation has expanded considerably, but its influence over military resources – which, in formal terms, are handed over to the command of NATO and ISAF – was limited. In real terms, the Norwegian military, in Faryab and elsewhere, had more intense contact with its superiors in Norway than with its formal superiors within the structure on the ground, which bears testimony to the near existential character of the military deployment. In Oslo, however, coordination was close. An Afghanistan Forum was established in 2005, consisting of five state secretaries (i.e., Deputy Ministers): for Defence, Development, Foreign Affairs, Justice and the Prime Minister's office.³⁹ The five travelled to Afghanistan together, and they met at irregular intervals. The forum was also represented in high-level meetings of bureaucrats. Conveniently, the state secretary forum included politicians from all three parties in the Stoltenberg governments, and it became not only a coordination forum but also a workshop for hammering out necessary compromises and creative solutions to the inherent political tensions. What was effectively a whole-of-government forum established for the Afghan operation had, by late 2010, not resulted in any initiative to establish a similar body for Norway's engagement in conflict and crisis situations elsewhere.

5. Shaping Norway's approach

Having laid out the evolution of the Norwegian post-9/11 engagement in Afghanistan, it is now time to take a step back and examine what have been the key factors shaping its policy. I will here be examining the 'threat level' and 'alliance dependence', the main foci of this edited volume. I will also be examining two other types of factor – namely the specificity of the operational environment in the areas of Afghanistan where Norway is engaged, as well as domestic factors (historical, institutional, political) where I will, in particular, emphasize Norway's profile as a peace nation.

5.1. Threat to Norway

Norway's most recent exposure to a security threat of an existential nature was during World War II, when Norway was invaded by Germany on 9 April 1940. In the public discourse on the international terrorist threat and the repressive regime of the Taliban (the two are often not distinguished) reference has been made to the spectre of '9th of April', and surviving resistance fighters have expressed their sympathy with soldiers at the frontline in Afghanistan. More significantly, however, is the historic argument that Norway's security has been safeguarded by

³⁹ A main force in the forum, Espen Barth Eide, came to the government in 2005 from a position as a researcher at the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), where he had led a study on the Comprehensive Approach (see Espen Barth Eide, Anja Therese Kaspersen, Randolph Kent and Karen von Hippel, "Report on integrated missions: practical perspectives and recommendations", Independent Study for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group, Oslo: Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, 2005). Eide was a State Secretary for Defence in both of Stoltenberg's coalition governments, but shifted to Foreign Affairs in summer 2010.

the United States (and the NATO alliance) since World War II, and that it therefore has a duty to act in solidarity, a manifestation of the strong emphasis put on the alliance.

There have been no incidents of internationally planned terror acts on Norwegian soil in recent times (the attack on the government headquarters in Oslo and the Worker Youth Organization camp at Utøya on 22 July 2011, was planned and executed by a Norwegian citizen, apparently on his own). What is probably the most dramatic incident is the attempt, on 11 October 1993, on the life of William Nygaard, who was the Norwegian publisher for Salman Rushdie's book *Satanic Verses*. The case has not been solved, but even if it occasionally comes up in the Norwegian media it does not stir strong emotions. A different, but more recent, case is that of Mullah Krekar, a former leader of the Iraqi-Kurdish group Ansar al-Islam, a radical Islamist entity that actively fought the authorities of the Kurdish autonomous areas in 2001–2003. Krekar came to Norway in 1991, was given asylum and spent extensive periods in Iraq while his family lived in Oslo. His statements, in which he calls for the bringing about of an Islamic *kalifate*, have been widely circulated. Krekar was sought by the United States in the aftermath of the 2003 intervention and he was placed on the UN terror list in late 2006. While Krekar is seen as a possible threat to Norwegian security, the authorities have abstained from handing him over to the Iraqis, recognizing that he may face the death penalty.

In terms of an internationally rooted terror threat in Norway, the most dramatic case is the revelation that three men resident in Norway – of Chinese Uighur, Iraqi Kurdish and Uzbek origin – were planning a terrorist act. During interrogation, different targets were referred to, including the Danish daily *Jyllandsposten* (which has been under constant threat since publishing the cartoons in 2005) and the Chinese Embassy in Oslo. The arrests were widely seen as finite evidence that Norway was not immune from international terrorism.

The broad public is concerned about terror. A poll conducted by Respons for the daily *Aftenposten* in November 2010 found that 11 per cent were very concerned about a terror attack on Norwegian territory, 33 per cent were somewhat concerned, 46 per cent were only marginally concerned, and 9 per cent not at all (only 1 per cent had not made up their mind).⁴⁰ This adds up to 44 per cent who expressed a serious concern about terror, even though the same poll found that only 15 per cent said the terror threat affected their propensity to travel. More importantly, a concern for terror does not necessarily mean a conviction that partaking in the war in Afghanistan makes Norway safer. Another poll, published by *Verdens Gang* (VG) in June 2010, found that 36 per cent thought the military participation in Afghanistan made Norway more susceptible to terror attacks, another 45 per cent thought it made no difference, while only 6 per cent thought it made Norway safer.⁴¹

The public scepticism reported in the VG poll is quite remarkable, given that Norwegian politicians have consistently emphasized the argument that the military operations in Afghanistan will safeguard the world – and Norway – from terror attacks. In his Afghanistan account for the Norwegian parliament in February 2010, for example, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre concluded as follows:

(...) the main strategic objective for the presence of Norway and our allies in Afghanistan is to prevent the country from again becoming a base for international terrorism, to

⁴⁰ Anbjørg Bakken, Signe Dons, and Tone Tveøy Strøm-Gundersen, "En av to er redd for terror i Norge", *Aftenposten*, 21 November 2010.

⁴¹ Andreas Nielsen, Frank Ertesvåg and Espen Braata, "Afghanistan er en hengemyr", *Verdens Gang*, 30 June 2010.

contribute to stability in the region and to social and economic development in Afghanistan.⁴²

The distance between public opinion and mainstream political views can be interpreted in different ways. In this context, it seems that there is a strong conviction among the majority of Norwegian politicians that the Afghan engagement is pivotal to the country's security, but first and foremost because acting in solidarity is necessary to maintain the NATO security guarantee that continues to be seen as pivotal to Norway.

5.2. Alliance dependence

As an immediate reflection of the US response to the 9/11 terror attacks, Afghanistan went from a peripheral recipient of Norwegian assistance to being the primary addressee for civilian and military resources. This dramatic turnaround in foreign policy focus can only be understood on the basis of alliance dependence. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Petersen (quoted at the beginning), made this clear in his presentation to parliament in early December 2001: 'The Article 5 guarantee has been the spine of the defence of Norway for more than 50 years – and will remain so in the future.' NATO's security guarantee has been seen, in the whole post World War II era, as the foundation for Norway's security. The emphasis on the NATO security guarantee, while clear in 2001, has become - at best - peripheral in government justifications for Norway's engagement. This, of course, says little about its real importance.

While the end of the Cold War changed the threat picture – and probably also the premises on which NATO allies would come to the rescue – there has been no comprehensive reassessment of NATO solidarity as a main pillar. This is the case also for the current government, which has worked hard within NATO in the recent 'Strategic Concept' process to ensure less emphasis on out-of-area engagements. As was seen when Norway pulled out of Iraq in 2005, there are limits to solidarity. The Norwegian polity at large was unwilling to support what was effectively seen as an illegitimate occupation. Nonetheless, the immediate follow-on to the withdrawal was to do the utmost to limit the damage by further escalating the Afghan commitment.

When Norway was asked, in 2004, to join the PRT circuit, we see an interesting example of selective solidarity. Norway decided to deploy to Faryab, despite no former exposure to the province. A location in the north was tempting because of the relative calm. Yet, when Faryab was chosen, this was because of a preference for collaborating with the British (who commanded the PRT at the time). Not only are the British an important actor within NATO and traditionally a key ally of Norway, they also cultivated a security-focused PRT approach that matched Norwegian worries about military-led assistance. Similarly, when the Germans were at the helm of RC-N, this contributed in the same direction.

In some ways it is surprising that NATO solidarity remains so robust in the encounter with dramatic shifts in security challenges. One of the ways in which solidarity is sustained is through the building of strong transnational networks of bureaucrats and military officers. Such networks prove to be robust, despite significant day-to-day friction. This was highlighted in December 2010 when leaked diplomatic cables from the US Embassy in Oslo revealed that top bureaucrats within the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs volunteered information (about the attitudes of key

⁴² Jonas Gahr Støre, "Redegjørelse om utviklingen i Afghanistan og Norges sivile og militære engasjement i landet" (Report to the Parliament, 9 February 2010, Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs). [Author's translation]

politicians and disagreements within the cabinet) and discussed ways in which they and US actors could affect the political agenda and reverse decisions that had already been taken.⁴³

5.3. Afghan ground realities

The large differences across Afghanistan – particularly when it comes to the level of insurgent mobilization – have impacted upon Norwegian decision-making in important ways. Specific ground realities were unimportant for Norway’s overall commitment. They affected localization only in the most general sense, as when a PRT in the calmer north was preferable, which was largely reflective of domestic sensitivity to the loss of soldiers and to the more aggressive mode of warfare pursued in the south. Even the decision to expand the area of operations for the Faryab PRT to include the neighbouring Ghormach district, evidently in response to a specific threat, can only be understood if we appreciate that this was a situation which – while conflictual within army ranks – favoured those who thought sharper action was required in order to be seen as a credible ally within the alliance.

But, even though ground realities are not the chief drivers of policy formulation, events and processes within the areas of operation triggered specific responses that came to shape the Norwegian approach in an important way. One example of this is the early 2006 ‘cartoon incident’ in Maymana, which convinced Norwegian military leaders of the utility of a heavy ANA presence, hence initiating the construction of a base which later prompted the location of an ANA brigade, ultimately opening the door for folding the Norwegian-led training teams into the PRT from late 2010. But even in this case, ground realities alone are not sufficient for understanding policy development, as the chief reason that the transformation of the PRT into a training enterprise was the US military build-up in the province, effectively undermining the ‘Norwegian Model’. The US build-up, somewhat ironically, also allowed Norway to pull out of the main hot spots, including Ghormach, where the risk of more casualties – always a trigger for domestic debate – seemed overwhelming.

5.4. The ‘peace nation’

Norway has a long tradition of supporting international legal and institutional order, of generous assistance programs, and of direct involvement for peace and reconciliation in various conflicts around the world. This is a profile that, allowing for certain nuances, has broad support across the Norwegian political spectrum.⁴⁴ The so-called ‘Norwegian Model in Faryab’, an adaptation of the PRT concept with a strict division of labor between the military and civilian parts, is best understood in this context. Ida Dommersnes argues, with reference to the highly different debates in Norway and Denmark, that ‘the PRT concept allows for multiple narratives of the same effort.’⁴⁵ The ambiguity of the concept, however, does not only allow divergent narratives between nations, it also allows multiple narratives to coexist within the same nation. To Norway, this ambiguity has proved pivotal to managing the inherent tensions in the Afghanistan engagement. The debate is multifaceted, open, with little prospect of a conclusion, and allows for the coexistence of sharply contending positions.

⁴³ Kristoffer Rønneberg, Lars Akerhaug, Anbjørg Bakken, Per Anders Johansen, Alf Endre Magnussen, Christiane Jordheim Larsen, Andreas Bakke Foss and Lars Inge Staveland, “Embetsmenn advarte mot topp-politikere”, *Aftenposten*, 15 December 2010.

⁴⁴ Øystein Haga Skånland, “‘Norway is a peace nation’: a discourse analytic reading of the Norwegian peace engagement”, *Cooperation and Conflict* 45 (2010): 34–54.

⁴⁵ Ida Dommersnes, “Bringing war home: the use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams by Norway and Denmark to construct strategic narratives for their domestic audiences”, *Security Policy Library* 1 (2011) (Oslo: The Norwegian Atlantic Committee), 1.

If we sharpen the focus to examine Norway's peace engagement policy directly, one of the standard qualities that Norway's government takes pride in is disinterestedness. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, in June 2010 highlighted this as one of the trademarks of Norway: 'There is our perceived impartiality and low degree of self-interest. This is because we do not have a past as a colonial power, or political and economic interests that could cast doubts on our political engagement.'⁴⁶ Afghanistan is explicitly listed as a core country for Norway's peace engagement, alongside the Balkans, the Middle East, Sudan and Sri Lanka, to mention some. The question is whether Norway's role in the armed conflict in Afghanistan is compatible with a peace engagement role.⁴⁷ Even more fundamentally, Norway's claim to impartiality may be questioned by significant parts of the population in the Islamic part of the world, and beyond, who see the war in Afghanistan as an expression of a war on Islam.

The dilemma between alliance loyalty and impartiality is not new, but pre-9/11 it was manageable. In fact, previous listings of the Norwegian comparative advantage as a 'peace nation' included its close relationship to the United States. In recent years, a new response has emerged. The justification for the peace engagement has shifted from idealism to interests. Or, more precisely, the earlier emphasis on values and moral commitment has been replaced by the argument that there is no tension between ideals and interest. It is in Norway's best interest to play an active role in the peace domain, both instrumentally (it secures Norway; it opens up access to the main international players) and idealistically (it fulfils value based objectives; it strengthens the impact of 'Norwegian values'). This is a redefinition that is criticized by idealists and realists alike. Ultimately, it introduces an ambiguity that veils the inherent tensions between an ethically-based peace policy and an interest-based security policy. Ultimately, therefore, it is not only that Norway's profile explains its approach to Afghanistan. The challenges of Afghanistan have also contributed to a redefinition of Norway's general approach to peace and reconciliation and, perhaps, also to its credibility as a peacemaker.

⁴⁶ Jonas Gahr Støre, "Norway's conflict resolution efforts – are they of any avail?" (Speech held at the Oslo House of Literature 11 June 2010, Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

⁴⁷ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Inger Skjelsbæk, "Tilslørt fredspolitik", *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 27 (2010): 379–88.

A Peace Nation Takes Up Arms

The Norwegian Engagement in Afghanistan

The Norwegian government was fully behind the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the US-led war against the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda initiated in October 2001. By late November the government had offered Norwegian military resources, including Special Forces, F-16 jet fighters and one Hercules C-130 transport aircraft with personnel. There was no precedent for deploying Norwegian military forces beyond Europe other than in peace-keeping operations. The rationale was made clear when Jan Petersen, the Conservative

Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new government gave his first presentation on the Norwegian contribution to the parliament. The main justification for the Norwegian commitment was the same as that which had informed the country's security policy since the late 1940s: that full support to the United States and to NATO was essential for a reciprocal security guarantee. The official justification for the operation has gone through significant changes over the decade that Norway has been engaged, however.

This paper is part of a series that examines the strategies of four NATO members in Afghanistan: The US, the UK, Germany and Norway. Each case study first contextualises their Afghanistan engagement in light of the broader foreign policy concerns of the country concerned, and then focuses on the development and adjustment of military strategy in relation to other components of the engagement. In this respect, special attention is given to the importance of realities on the ground in Afghanistan, organisational (NATO) interests, and domestic factors.