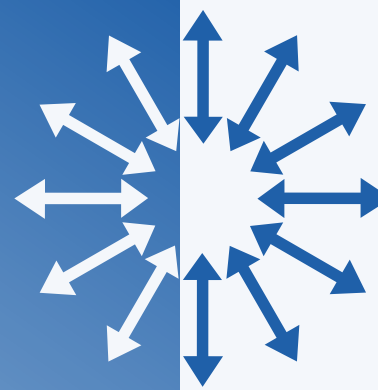


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Olav Riste

Facing the 21 century:

New and old dilemmas for Norwegian foreign policy

Olav Riste is Research Director at the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies as well as Adjunct Professor of International History at the Universities of Oslo and Bergen. This essay is based on the final chapter of his recently published book "Norwegian Foreign Relations – a History." The author here presents his personal reflections on some of the dilemmas, both old and new, that Norway faces in shaping a foreign and security policy for the new millennium. While the universal problem of security against terrorism naturally is on everybody's mind after the atrocious events of 11 September 2001, the essay looks beyond that to review the challenges that are peculiar to Norway, given her traditions and her place in the world.

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Published by: Den norske Atlanterhavskomite
Editor: Kjetil Sørli
Printer: Hegland Trykkeri AS, Flekkefjord
ISSN: 0802-6602

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Facing the 21 century: New and old dilemmas for Norwegian foreign policy

by Olav Riste

Introduction

Norwegians appear to be entering the new millennium with a considerable amount of confidence in their country's future. It is already one of the richest countries in the world, awash with the billions that keep pouring in from the exploitation of its oil and natural gas resources. Backstage looms another major source of wealth – the resources from the sea, now reaped not only from fishing in open waters but increasingly produced in fish farms along the coast. The demand for its products in the export markets seems insatiable. Critical voices may warn against over-confidence, pointing to the fact that the Norwegian economy remains that of a harvester of finite natural resources. They bemoan the low rate of investment in research and development, which could produce innovation and lay the groundwork for new industry based on 'hi-tech' and intelligence. They warn about the fate of Spain, whose gold and silver brought home by the 'conquistadores' was wasted on endless wars instead of being invested in the country's economic future, in the end leaving the country poorer than before. Yet their warnings seem to fall on deaf ears, or at least fail to create any sense of urgency.

Along with that confidence, which also means that at least half the population appear to view with equanimity the prospect of Norway remaining outside the European Union for the foreseeable future while one country after the other claims membership of the club, goes a curious lack of confidence in Norway's ability to influence the European Union from within. At the same time Norwegians continue to harbour strong convictions – sometimes verging on hubris - about their country's natural role and special mission as a global influence for peacemaking and human rights.

A recent analysis by a Norwegian political scientist¹ has succinctly described Norway's problem in relation to international integrative processes. As alluded to in the foreword to this book, and drawing on Robert A. Dahl's description² of a central dilemma confronting most small democratic countries, its essence is this: The smallness of the country means that there is little distance between the government and the governed, hence the citizen – individually or, increasingly, through professional organisations – has more influence on national decisions affecting his or her life situation. Yet that smallness also means that the country has relatively little influence over the international conditions that increasingly determine Norway's integrity and welfare. This conundrum is currently reflected in the dilemma Norway faces in relation to the European Union. If Norway remains outside the EU she may retain more of her internal self-government, but will have little influence on the external parameters for the country's integrity and prosperity. If the country draws closer to the EU it will increase its influence over the international conditions determining its own welfare and integrity. But it will at the same time reduce the individual Norwegian's influence on his or her situation and conditions of life. It is right and natural for a country to have ambitions to exert as much influence internationally as possible. But ambitions need to be related to a priority of interests, and be carefully calibrated to what is possible.

An unwillingness or inability to assign clear priorities among the aims and means of Norwegian foreign policy remains a problem as the country enters the new millennium. It is possible to see this as a reflection of the history of

Norway's foreign relations. I have earlier identified three formative periods in the evolution of Norwegian foreign policy: 1905-1910, when the 'classic' Norwegian neutralism took shape; the inter-war period, when Norway wrapped herself in the mantle of a missionary for international law and disarmament; and the 1940s during which the country allied itself with great powers and became an active participant in international power politics. It is possible to see all three as different ways of overcoming that central dilemma: neutralism, as a means of building fences around the country's self-determination; the 'missionary impulse' as an attempt to influence the international environment from the outside; and active participation in power politics as the result of a determination to exert international influence from within. During the last three decades of the twentieth century it has been possible to preserve an uneasy coexistence among those three trends. Concern about 'self-determination' has kept Norway outside the EU, NATO membership has enabled an active participation in power politics, and the 'missionary impulse' has exerted itself through the country's 'ethical foreign policy'.

Two recent developments suggest that this triple juggling act may no longer be possible. Firstly, as decision-making in the European Economic Area becomes more and more of a one-way street, Norway's surrender of some of her sovereignty to the European Union is becoming a cumulative process. Secondly, and more important, recent European moves toward making the EU a major actor in the defence and security field have moved the goalposts as regards Norway's choices. While NATO – with the United States – remains the principal pillar of her security, Norway is now having to determine her relationship with the EU in the defence and security field as well. Gone are the days when Norway could be an associate member of the somewhat toothless Western European Union without this affecting her relationship with the EU.

Norwegian Security after the Cold War

“Europe and America in the 1980s: Must Norway choose?” Such was the provocative title of a high-powered conference held in Oslo in May 1981. Two central concerns served as the background for the contributions of the speakers at the conference. On the European stage there were worries about the foreign policy direction announced by President Ronald Reagan and his new administration. Lambasting the outgoing Carter administration for having weakened America’s strength and resolve to stand up against the Soviet ‘evil empire’, the Reagan administration vowed to make the United States and the western world strong again. Many Europeans, although shaken by the Soviet Union’s accelerated nuclear arms buildup as well as by the invasion of Afghanistan, saw Reagan’s take-over as portending a new Cold War and a renewal of the arms race. In Norway those worries were accentuated by the political turmoil surrounding NATO’s decision to install new mid-range nuclear missiles in Europe, as a counter to the proliferation of Soviet SS-20 missiles. The other concern, particular to Norway, was that trans-Atlantic policy splits might force her either to increase her dependence on the United States or move closer to Europe – or be left hanging in the middle, increasingly isolated.

Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, opening the conference, predictably rejected the choice implied in the conference title. “Norway cannot choose between ties to the Atlantic countries and ties to Europe. Our foreign policy must include both aspects.”³ She acknowledged that the reappraisal then taking place in Washington created uncertainty, but nevertheless emphasised Norway’s Atlantic orientation as the bottom line: “Only the United States has sufficient power to stand against the Soviet Union in northern Europe.”⁴ The Prime Minister thus reflected the primacy of security as the determinant of Norwegian foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Economic interests were important, as the repeated attempts to knock on Europe’s door had shown. But the security aspect was present on each occasion, both as a strong argument in favour of membership in the EC or EU, and as

perhaps the major area of concern after membership had been rejected: if consultation in NATO increasingly became a dialogue between Brussels and Washington, Norway risked becoming a supplicant without representation on either side. Then her 'No' to Europe would have relegated Norway to the margins of international politics also in the security sense.

During the 1980s there was, in Norway as in most European countries, a growing feeling of Cold War weariness. There was a sense that the arms race was becoming increasingly meaningless, with the thousands of nuclear warheads piling up on both sides of the Iron Curtain – a feeling that the Cold War was turning into a bilateral contest between the two super-powers, with their smaller allies being not much more than pawns in the big game. President Reagan's "Star Wars" programme contributed to that feeling. Mikhail Gorbachov, who took over power in the Kremlin in 1985, came to be seen as representing hopes for a change in the Soviet Union, and opinion polls in Norway suggested that the people regarded Reagan and the United States as the greater obstacle to détente. By 1989, however, the United States could with some justification declare victory for its policy of strength. The Soviet Union, collapsing under the economic burden of the arms race, was about to surrender its East European 'empire'. Two years later the Soviet Union dissolved itself. The Soviet threat, which since 1949 had been the glue that held NATO together, disappeared, and hopes were high that Eastern Europe, including Russia, was embarking on the road to democracy.

More than the other European NATO member states, however, Norway had good reasons for seeing that the end of the Cold War was not "the end of history". Norwegians had lived for 45 years with the Soviet superpower as their next-door neighbour. During that time they had seen the Soviet North-western Military District develop from a desolate outpost to become the area of the highest concentration of military and especially naval hardware in the world. The Kola Peninsula, with its ice-free inlets and ports, had become the home of the Northern Fleet, which since 1960 contained the major part of the Soviet Union's powerful nuclear missile submarines – the greatest single

threat to NATO's Atlantic lines of communication and to North America.

During the 1990s the deterioration of Russia's conventional armed forces, the various arms reduction agreements that had been concluded, and the institution of democratic reform in Russia, meant the disappearance of the short-term and medium-term threat against the West. But Russian democracy is unstable, and Russia remains a power with an enormous arsenal of nuclear weapons. Norway also has an unresolved territorial dispute with Russia concerning jurisdiction in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean. In Norwegian eyes, while the threat might have disappeared, there remained a long-term uncertainty. Initially, therefore, Norway's expenditure on defence was not reduced to the same extent as that of most other European countries. This has now changed, as Norway has embarked on a major downsizing and restructuring of the defence establishment. How far that downsizing will go depends presumably on what direction Russian defence and security policy will take under President Putin: already there are indications of a certain reversal to Cold War thinking in Moscow, as evidenced by groundless allegations about Norwegian activities in the north being 'threats to their national security'.

Already during the 1980s Norway had begun to feel the need for more balance in her security relationships, partly stimulated by the widespread concern about the Reagan administration's more belligerent attitude towards the Soviet Union. While the 'alliance within the alliance' that the special relationship with the United States constituted was still important, there was a need to develop closer security and defence ties with the European NATO members. After 1972 all Norway's European NATO allies except Turkey and Iceland were members of the European Communities, including Norway's so to speak 'oldest ally', Great Britain. There seemed at least a long-term risk of Norway becoming sidelined into an exclusive reliance on an unequal partnership with the superpower on the other side of the Atlantic. This became a problem as the EU began making efforts towards foreign policy coordination through the EPC – the European Political Cooperation,

and then towards vitalising the Western European Union as the defence and security arm of Europe. As a non-member of the EU Norway had to settle for vague consultation arrangements with the EPC, and associate membership of the Western European Union. That was hardly satisfactory for a country that felt it had a lot to gain from, as well as to contribute to, the European security partnership. National security considerations were therefore an important factor as Norway began to assess the state of her foreign relations after the people in 1994 again had rejected membership of the EU.

The Evolution of NATO

A central question, for Norway as for the other European member states, was what would happen to NATO after the Soviet threat had gone. Some thought, and a few hoped, that NATO would simply fold or at least disintegrate. But a NATO summit meeting in London in 1990 showed an organisation with both the will and the ability to reform itself in order to meet new challenges. While the EU had barely begun to talk about a future inclusion of the new democracies of Eastern Europe, NATO moved quickly to establish a consultative relationship with the member states of the former Warsaw Pact as well as with the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, in the shape of NACC – the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. By 1994 NATO had moved one step further by instituting the Partnership for Peace, where all those countries could begin to cooperate with the Alliance about defence strategy, military planning, and participation in peacekeeping activities. NATO also moved towards closer cooperation with the Western European Union, and with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The greatest uncertainty about NATO's reforming process was its effect on relations with the Russian Federation. Although President Yeltsin and his government had moved towards cooperation with the various organs established under NATO auspices, and Russia subsequently was given special consideration through the establishment of a permanent joint council, many

quarters within the volatile political environment in Moscow were deeply sceptical. Norway, as the only NATO member with a common border with Russia, had from the beginning of the process stressed the need for an open dialogue with Russia on the broader problem of European security. Norway also took an early initiative for cooperation with Russia in the high north, through programmes to develop the Barents Euro-Arctic Region – an ambitious attempt to transcend borders that during the Cold War used to be impenetrable, and where security considerations are bound to remain a limiting factor for a long time.

The most contentious issue was NATO's decision that the eastern European states, some of which were openly clamouring for admission, might in due course become full members of the organisation. Many thought that decision was at least premature, and pointed to the newly established Partnership for Peace as the best vehicle for security and defence cooperation. Norway had early signalled a cautious attitude: while she understood the desire of those countries to obtain the same security as Norway and the other NATO members enjoyed, any enlargement process had to take time. The applicants would need time to adjust their military institutions and to build defence structures that would enable them to work with the well-established military organs of NATO. It was also necessary to avoid provoking Russia by seeming to establish new frontiers of conflict. On the other hand one risked alienating the new democracies by appearing to give Russia a veto on the manner in which they shaped their national security posture. Still Norway supported the principle of enlargement of NATO once the decision was made.

There was more disagreement about which countries to admit to membership. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic posed no particular problem. The difficulty centred on the Baltic States, which had reclaimed their status as independent nations after the break-up of the Soviet Union. They had from the start cultivated close relations with the Nordic countries, stressing common interests on account of smallness and regional closeness,

and many circles in Norway, with the encouragement of the United States, thought Scandinavia ought to take special responsibility for the security and welfare of the Baltic region. At the Madrid NATO Summit in July 1997, Norway's Prime Minister Thorbjørn Jagland was in the forefront of those who urged leaving the door open for the Baltic republics, even if they could not be included in the first enlargement "package". Since then, however, the question of their membership of NATO has receded behind various practical schemes for Baltic cooperation, instituted through a Council of Baltic Sea States where Norway is a member.

In the midst of all those institutional developments NATO had to step in to use its military strength in the former Yugoslavia. As the crisis in Yugoslavia became centred on the break-up of Bosnia, neither NATO – whose forces and command structures were still geared towards a major East-West conflict, nor the WEU – which had ambitions but no forces, were prepared for action. But when the UN Secretary General requested assistance to monitor compliance with UN sanctions against Yugoslavia, both organisations decided to set up naval forces in the Adriatic. From that time onwards NATO's involvement in Bosnia grew from supporting the United Nations Protection Force on the ground to taking control of the entire operation through IFOR – the Implementation Force – whose mission was to supervise the implementation of the Dayton Accords. Bosnia thus became NATO's first venture into operations "out-of-area" – outside the area originally defined in the Washington Treaty as NATO's area of responsibility. Within the limited means at her disposal – in particular her lack of a professional army – Norway has supported and participated in that process from the beginning.

The Kosovo crisis opened a new phase for NATO. After repeated and prolonged attempts to get former Yugoslavia to participate in a peaceful solution, including the failed attempt to put a stop to the violence by introducing a corps of OSCE observers on the ground, NATO began a bombing campaign to force the Serbian army to withdraw from Kosovo. Although the Norwegian government gave full support also to this action,

public opinion was somewhat more divided on the issue, especially after the targets for bombing were extended to include infrastructure of more indirect military importance inside Serbia itself. Many also questioned NATO's right to use military force without a direct and explicit mandate from the UN Security Council, and that debate merged with criticism of the so-called "New NATO". Taking their cue from the wording and alleged implications of NATO's new Strategic Concept, formalised at the Washington Summit in April 1999 which marked the Alliance's 50th anniversary, some claimed that this had transformed NATO from a defensive into an aggressive alliance with ambitions to play policeman to the whole world. The majority of the people, and the government, nevertheless supported the principle of outside intervention if necessary to prevent genocide or massive violations of human rights. Norwegian fighter aircraft took part in the air campaign, albeit in a supporting role, and an army battalion joined the land force sent to supervise the pacification of Kosovo - KFOR. At the dawn of the new millennium Norway was also preparing to organise battle-capable forces for future participation in actions of that nature.

Europe on the Move

NATO's actions in the former Yugoslavia on several occasions revealed dissent – mainly, and predictably, between the United States and France – over what should be the proper role of the Alliance. Behind the disagreements lay the clear and somewhat painful realisation that Europe was incapable of mounting any operation of the size required by the Kosovo emergency without massive assistance from the United States, and that the Americans consequently tended to assume command and control of the operation. This gave new impetus to the endeavour to create a more self-sufficient Europe in the military sense, but this time not inside NATO but alongside the Atlantic Alliance. What gave this new attempt more credibility than previous efforts was that Great Britain was prepared to join, and even take the lead. The first move in that direction was the St. Malo Declaration on European defence in December

1998, by which Great Britain joined with France in calling for the development of a separate European capability to act with military force. The St. Malo initiative was undoubtedly a bit of a surprise to many Norwegians, who tended to believe that they could rely on the British to ensure that NATO, and the trans-Atlantic connection, remained the principal instrument for the handling of major crises in the Euro-Atlantic area. Norway and Great Britain had also shared fears that moves toward a separate European defence organisation, usually promoted by France, would drive a wedge between Europe and the United States. When Norway still gave the initiative a guarded welcome, the explanation can be found in a sense that, with Britain on board and the other EU countries nodding with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the bandwagon was becoming unstoppable. The choice was then between being sidelined, or joining in order to seek the best possible solution for Norway's own involvement. On the side of NATO, the Washington Summit in April 1999 officially welcomed the initiatives for a stronger European role, and pledged its cooperation. The St. Malo initiative has since been followed up by the Cologne European Council in June 1999, where NATO's Secretary General Solana was appointed as "Mr. CFSP" to coordinate EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Then, at the Helsinki Summit in December that year a decision was made that Europe should by the year 2003 be able to mount a force of 50-60 000 men within sixty days, and to maintain that force in operation for at least one year – requiring a total of at least 200 000 available forces. The purpose was to enable the EU to act in crises "where NATO as a whole is not engaged".

The further development of such a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) lies in the future while this is being written. Uncertainties abound about Europe's ability to translate its plans into practice. As the former Political Director of the WEU, Alyson Bailes, has recently explained, the policy decisions leave a lot of practical matters to be decided.⁵ And as is often said, "the devil is in the details". In the meantime it is important to have a clear understanding of the motivation behind the new European initiatives.

They have a history that goes a long way back. The desire for a strong European pillar as a counterweight to American strength is as old as NATO itself. France wanted it for political reasons, in order to escape from US dominance. But that aim has consistently proved elusive, even after Europe became rich enough to bear comparison with the United States, and therefore presumably rich enough to support a more independent conventional military capability. Kosovo again showed how much Europe lagged behind the United States. For precision bombs, for intelligence capability (especially, but not only, in the field of satellites), for electronic warfare, and for “strategic lift” (the ability to transport forces and equipment on a large scale and at short notice), in all those fields the Americans proved to be miles ahead of the Europeans. Even for troops on the ground an American force was needed. Possibly even more important as a motivation was the realisation, after Bosnia and Kosovo, that there are many other essential aspects to security than the military factor which is NATO’s principal asset. A military occupation can ‘freeze’ an explosive situation, but cannot by itself provide a solution to the deeper causes of misery and violence. Diplomatic and political efforts, humanitarian assistance, democracy building, and economic aid, are prominent among the instruments that are essential to an indivisible security package. The European Union has enormous potentials in all those fields, if it can get its act together. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, established at the Sarajevo Summit in July 1999 at the initiative of the EU, calls for just such a “comprehensive and coherent approach to the region”.

On the face of it, there is much to be said for a European capability to act independently of the Americans in crises of European origin. There is no denying the uneasiness felt in most European countries about recent trends in US foreign and security policy. If the new Republican administration succeeds in developing a National Missile Defence into something reminiscent of the Reagan administration’s “Star Wars” this may, in addition to creating a crisis in relations with Russia, contribute to a long feared ‘de-coupling’ of America from its European allies. Only this time it would have been caused

by US policies and not by European resentments of their 'big brother'. Greater independence for Europe is also desirable for other reasons. There is much force in the argument that it really should not be necessary for the rich countries of Western Europe to call in the United States to help them contain and solve security problems which do not directly threaten American interests. Ideally, therefore, NATO and the European Union should work out arrangements whereby Europe, with the understanding of NATO and with assistance as required from NATO's well-established facilities, could handle crises in its own back yard. But in order to achieve that, two requirements have to be fulfilled. First, those arrangements need to be worked out in a spirit of cooperation with the United States, without the tinge of anti-Americanism that accompanied some earlier attempts by France to assert European independence. Second, the Europeans have to spend more – much more – on their armed forces. In 1999 the European NATO members spent on average 2,3 per cent of their Gross National Product on defence, compared to 3,1 per cent for the United States. (The figure for Norway conforms to the European average.)⁶ Will the peoples of Europe accept such a burden? In theory, of course, an integrated European multi-national effort might produce results where present combinations of separate national capabilities have failed. But there is good reason for expressing some doubts about Europe's ability to match American capabilities, even in the narrow area of rapid-reaction peacekeeping, and at least within the time limit that the EU has set for itself. There is an additional question to be pondered by the EU countries as well as by NATO as a whole: what sort of future crises will the European armed forces be expected to deal with? The debate going on, about the need to get rid of Cold War thinking about East-West problems, and instead concentrate on developing capabilities to deal with future crises of a different kind, is it perhaps another example of the proverbial tendency to prepare for yesterday's war? Is it really likely that other areas in Europe's neighbourhood will explode, like Yugoslavia has done? Also, since the Kosovo operation will need a very large military effort for many years to come in order to maintain peace in that

area, will Europe be able to deal with any additional major crisis at the same time? Has not the uncertain success of peace enforcement operations, in the former Yugoslavia as well as in Africa, all but removed western willingness to intervene and get embroiled in similar situations in the future?

The process of devising new structures beside or instead of existing ones is under way. Changes are necessary to meet new post-Cold War challenges, described in NATO's new Strategic Concept as "oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction." That document, approved in April 1999, also draws attention to "risks of a wider nature, including acts of terrorism, sabotage and organised crime" that affect the Alliance's security interests. But it is also necessary to remember what the Strategic Concept says about the longer term: "Notwithstanding positive developments in the strategic environment and the fact that large-scale conventional aggression against the Alliance is highly unlikely, the possibility of such a threat emerging over the longer term exists." Some tend to dismiss this latter concern as a relic of the Cold War. But perhaps we should remind ourselves that it took only six years for Germany to turn its more or less disarmed Weimar democracy into the militarily powerful and aggressive dictatorship which in 1939 started the Second World War. And it took longer than that for the western powers to rearm in order to meet that new threat.

Norway, NATO and the ESDI

One of the problems mentioned by Alyson Bailes in the article just referred to, and possibly the hardest, will be to give a proper role in the new arrangement for the non-EU Europeans – which is where Norway comes in. But not only Norway – also Turkey and the new Eastern European NATO members Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. As Alyson Bailes notes, those countries 'have expertise, regional standing, and concrete military assets which the EU would be well advised to exploit at the stage of building its policies as well as carrying out specific actions.' Norway, for one, is clearly

prepared to contribute to such an independent European capability for military action. A programme is under way to establish army, air force and naval units which at short notice stand ready to participate in both so-called “Article 5” operations – self-defence of NATO territory – and other international peace operations - so-called “non-Article 5 operations”. Even if it is not a question of large forces from such a small population, they will be capable forces. Those forces could also be made available for action under EU auspices. As this is being written, however, the suggested arrangements for bringing non-members of the EU into the ESDI process stop short of allowing them access to the final decision-making. The EU’s bottom line still seems to be one of insisting on “full respect for the autonomy of EU decision-making.” In a newspaper article on 8 January 2001 Norway’s former Defence Minister Bjørn Tore Godal appears to have accepted that Norway will not be able to take part in the EU’s military, operational decision-making. “But in spite of those limitations we cannot afford to remain entirely outside the evolving defence and security cooperation in Europe.” He also suggested one major reason why Norway cannot afford this:

Norway is today militarily much less exposed than during the Cold War, but is still important from a strategic point of view. Our enormous ocean areas with their rich natural resources underscore that situation. The situation will still be such that we can be subjected to political or military pressure, and it is not given that NATO’s military backing will be relevant in all such eventualities.⁷

In the meantime, however, the defence of Norway continues to depend on NATO. With a population of only 4,5 million she has to defend an area larger than Italy. The distances are enormous: Southern Europeans wishing to visit the North Cape are always surprised to discover that when they get to Oslo they have covered only half the distance. Norway also has responsibility

for economic zones at sea that cover an area six to seven times that of her mainland territory. In addition she has to consider how to protect and defend installations at sea which provide an increasing share of Europe's resources of petroleum and natural gas. For all this Norway needs cooperation and assistance from allied countries. Norway looks to NATO as the principal forum for trans-Atlantic consultations in all matters affecting the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Norway therefore has to hope that the development of a European Security and Defence Identity will proceed in close cooperation with NATO and the United States, avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

The dual basis for Norwegian security – Atlantic and European – hence remains essentially as Gro Harlem Brundtland expressed it in 1981, and as Johan Jørgen Holst stated it twelve years later:

Norway needs both an Atlantic and a European framework for its security policy. It is not a question of 'either-or', but of 'both-and'. [...] In a period where the states of the European Union will have to take on more of the responsibilities and burdens of the defence of Europe, it is important that Norway preserves that double anchor.⁸

Holst's hope was then of course that Norway would join the EU and thus take part in the process whereby Europe undertook to build a common defence policy. The Foreign Minister in the Labour government which took over in March 2000, Thorbjørn Jagland, has not concealed his preference for Norwegian EU membership. At least for the time being, however, the government appears to have resigned itself to the kind of consultative status in the formation of a European defence identity that is implied in the quoted statement by former Defence Minister Godal.

Further Norwegian Dilemmas

For Norway the deeper significance of the European Security and Defence

Identity is the fusion of the two central dilemmas: the choice between Europe and America, for national security, and between membership and non-membership of the EU, for political and economic reasons. As this is being written there is little sign of the big national debate that such fundamental foreign policy choices at the threshold of the new millennium call for. A kind of answer is provided in the government's report to the Storting on Norway and Europe, submitted on the eve of the first year of the 'real' new millennium. Introducing the report former Foreign Minister Jagland characterised it as "a response to the fact that there have been important developments in Europe since the beginning of the 1990s", and that it is "intended to lay the groundwork for a broad debate on these developments so that the parties in the Storting can formulate their views on how they can be dealt with." But he also stressed that "it is not a report that is either for or against EU membership".⁹ The likelihood is therefore that the deep divisions both within and between the parties as well as in public opinion will remain and that, consequently, any referendum will in the foreseeable future produce a negative answer.

The current and somewhat low-key foreign policy discourse may be illustrated by, on the one hand, the title of a pamphlet posing the worrying question "What now, Little Norway?" On the other hand there is the assertion, from the authoritative source of a recent State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, that Norway is a "humanitarian great power" and "a heavy player in international efforts for peace and security". It is perhaps easy to dismiss both the "worriers" and the "spin doctors" as being wide of the mark. But the perception gap between them suggests that Norway still has some distance to cover before she is ready to assign clear and explicit priorities among the divergent paths that have led her to where she stands today: the neutralist path, the missionary path, and the path of binding commitments.

This is not a new problem: In 1989 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a major report to the Storting which is sometimes referred to as "the bible" of Norwegian foreign policy.¹⁰ Its title was "Development trends

in the international society and their effects on Norwegian foreign policy”. In a chapter on the aims and means of Norwegian foreign policy the government there attempted nothing less than a re-definition of the national interest. The task of the Foreign Ministry, the report said, should be “to promote Norway’s interests in its foreign relations, including both our particular interests and the interests we share with other countries.”¹¹ That statement was then followed by a detailed enumeration of a long series of national, regional and global foreign policy interests and aims, without any apparent attempt to assign any kind of priority among them. A slight reservation appeared as regards Norway’s ability to exert an influence on global concerns. In order to have “real influence” Norway must here “*concentrate her efforts* to areas where our interests are considerable or where we have particular experience, traditions, competence, or resources.”¹² But that admonition was then followed by a list of “areas for special effort” which included just about every good cause.

As of today Norwegians’ fears of a loss of political ‘self-determination’ prevent Norway from joining the EU, while the country’s binding commitments remain with NATO. That seems to leave what I have chosen to call the ‘missionary impulse’ as a kind of common ground. There is of course nothing wrong with wishing to play the mediator and peacemaker: it cannot do much harm, and could conceivably in a few cases do some good. But when a small country like Norway assumes a high profile foreign policy, it is important to make sure that there is a proper balance between shadow and substance. Grand ambitions need an underpinning of actual achievements. Moreover, a high profile needs to be reflected also in regard to essential national interests. Norway, however, celebrated the arrival of the new millennium with two foreign policy initiatives, neither of which had any bearing on her dilemmas or indeed on her national interests. One was the campaign for membership of the UN Security Council, the other was the establishment of a new section for “peace, conciliation, and democracy-building” in the Foreign Ministry. The ultimately successful campaign for a seat on the Security Council has moreover created expectations about Norway’s

role that seem likely to backfire when the realities of power politics come home to roost.

At a deeper level still, Norway's current dilemma in her relations with the European Union reflects a dichotomy that has been present throughout the twentieth century, formulated but not perceived in Foreign Minister Løvland's 1905 programme of combining political isolationism with economic internationalism. National self-determination was a necessary and self-evident political goal for a nation that had just broken away from a union with another state. However, as the English historian Alfred Cobban wrote a long time ago, "[In] the economic world self-determination is an irrelevant conception." At least for a country like Norway, with an exceptionally heavy dependence on foreign trade in the broadest sense of the term, this has always been true, and has become even more so in the era of liberalisation and even globalisation of the international economy. This has created a long-standing contradiction between what has been termed "the country's political exclusiveness and the openness of its economy."¹³

Until now those two strands of foreign policy have been able to maintain an uneasy coexistence, translated into a series of 'special arrangements' but stopping short of full membership of international organisations that are likely to impinge on the country's political self-determination. However, a close look at the 1990s suggests that this has been a decade of yet another formative period, in which the economy has gradually replaced national security as the principal determinant of Norwegian foreign relations. Through the instrument of the treaty for the European Economic Area, EEA, Norway achieved the status of an insider in the EU's internal market, albeit remaining a non-member of the Union in the political sense. (It is no mere coincidence that the primacy of economic concerns also has reinforced a long-term trend, noticeable since the 1970s, whereby Germany has replaced Great Britain as Norway's principal partner among the major European powers.)

The EEA was, on the face of it, accepted by a wide majority of parliamentarians – 130 in favour, 35 against – as a satisfactory arrangement

of Norway's economic relations with Europe. In fact, those who had rather seen Norway as a full member of the EU have continued to regret Norway's absences from the closed circles where decisions are made which inevitably affect the country. Those who are against membership, on the other hand, would either have preferred a simple trade agreement, or regard the EEA arrangement as a lesser evil. In either case they remain unconvinced that the status of an outsider in fact means a net loss of national sovereignty, through the obligation to adopt a long series of regulations and obligations decided in forums where Norway has no voice. Integration by way of the EEA has become acceptable because it has taken care of Norway's economic needs. Opting for an economic arrangement of the country's relationship with Europe, while remaining aloof from the political integration that membership of the EU would constitute, has for a time preserved the uneasy balance between an open economy and the aversion against political commitment. Norway's relationship with the European Union will however present new challenges in the years to come, as the EU increasingly looks to add to its largely economic brief that most touchy element of self-determination, namely foreign and security policy.

Notes

¹ Torbjørn L. Knutsen, in Torbjørn L. Knutsen, Gunnar M. Sørbo, Svein Gjerdåker (ed.s), *Norges Utenrikspolitikk* (2nd Edition, Oslo 1997) p. 41.

² Robert A. Dahl, "A Democratic Dilemma", in *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. XXX (1994) No. 2 pp. 23-34.

³ *NUPI Rapport* No. 54, May 1981, p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵ Alyson J.K. Bailes, "NATO's European Pillar: The European Security and Defence Identity." In *Defence Analysis* Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 305-322.

⁶ Figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2000-2001* (Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Oxford 2000).

⁷ Bjørn Tore Godal, "Internasjonal forsvarsinnsats". In *Dagbladet* 8 January 2001.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Address to "Den polytekniske forening" 2 February 1993, p. 15.

⁹ Foreign Ministry Press release 1 December 2000.

¹⁰ *Stortingsmelding* No. 11 (1989-90): "Om utviklingstrekk i det internasjonale samfunn og virkninger for norsk utenrikspolitikk".

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 45.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 50. See also the discussion by Geir Lundestad in his essay "Lange linjer i norsk utenrikspolitikk" in *Internasjonal Politikk* Vol. 57 (1999) No. 2.

¹³ Torbjørn L. Knutsen, op.cit. p. 25.

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