



Over the last decades, the Nordic countries have been less involved in UN operations and more involved in NATO-led out-of-area operations. The photo shows a military technician controlling an AMRAAM-missile attached to a Norwegian F-16 fighterplane during the Libyan war. Photo: Norwegian Armed Forces.

Sammendrag: Konfliktdekning og sikkerhetspolitisk orientering: En longitudinell studie av krigsdekning i Norge i et nordisk komparativt perspektiv. Denne artikkelen diskuterer nordisk forsvarssamarbeide i lys av økt deltagelse fra de nordiske landene en den globale krig mot terror. Den argumenterer for at den tradisjonelle lojaliteten til FN-charteret har blitt erstattet av lojalitet til USA og deltagelse i NATOs out-of-area operasjoner i land som Afghanistan og Libya. Mediene kritiseres for å svikte sin rolle som kritisk vaktbikkje i sikkerhetspolitiske spørsmål.

Emneord: krigsjournalistikk, Nordisk forsvarssamarbeid, NATOs out-of-area-politikk, USAs globale krig mot terror, Norge som fredsnasjon?

*This article was written autumn 2021, several months before the Russian invasion in Ukraine.

Fagfelleurdert

Conflict coverage and security policy orientation:

A longitudinal study of war coverage in Norway in a Nordic comparative perspective

Abstract: *This article discusses Nordic defence cooperation in light of the ongoing global war on terror. The article argues that Norwegian loyalty to the UN Charter and international law has been replaced by support for NATO out-of-area operations in countries like Afghanistan and Libya. The conclusion is that the Norwegian media fail to live up to their expected role of critical watchdog in questions of security policy.*

Keywords: *war journalism, Nordic defence cooperation, NATO out-of-area, US global war on terror, Norway as a peace nation?*



Rune Ottosen
Professor emeritus
Oslo Metropolitan University
rune@oslomet.no

Introduction*

Journalism in the New World Order was established as an international comparative research project to investigate how war and peace journalism developed after the collapse of communism. Together, my Swedish colleague Stig A. Nohrstedt and I have conducted comparative research projects on conflicts such as the Gulf War in 1991, the war in former Yugoslavia from 1999 onwards, the war in Afghanistan from 2002, the Iraq War in 2003, the Libya war in 2011 and finally the war in Syria from 2012. Through these projects we have been able to compare the coverage in Norwegian and Swedish media, and in some cases also other Nordic and European countries.¹ In our latest book *New Wars, New Media and New War Journalism* we analyse cases of Norwegian and Swedish press coverage, such as of the 2011 Libya War and examine

questions raised by the formulation of the resolution UN Security Council (SC 1973). The resolution authorized implementation of a no-fly zone to protect the civilian population but was misused by NATO for regime change.² The failure of the Norwegian and Swedish media to recognize the political and legal implications of such a widely dispersed diplomatic uncertainty after the collapse of the Libyan state, is one example of shortcomings by the media. As a result of this journalistic failure, the general public was left without necessary knowledge about both the international legal aspects of the NATO air operations. The following discussion draws upon the findings from these books and the empirical findings are available in the references. A part of the big picture that is not so much discussed in this article is Russia's increasingly aggressive behaviour, with the intervention in Georgia in 2008 and the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 as examples.

A Nordic model?

Nordic countries have often branded themselves under the positive image of the "Nordic model".

Norway has also framed itself as a “humanitarian great power”. In their foreign policies the Nordic countries have claimed loyalty to the UN charter.³ After 9/11 and the Global War on Terror, international politics changed dramatically, and new foreign and security policy alliances emerged. In the Scandinavian region, the previous division between NATO members (Denmark and Norway) and non-aligned countries (Finland and Sweden) gradually became less important and were supplanted by new patterns of cooperation. Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORCAPS) was established in 1998 as a body for cooperation among the Nordic countries participating in foreign military operations abroad. At that time in most cases this in all practical terms meant cooperation in UN peace keeping operations. NORCAPS was in 2009 integrated in the new body Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFECO.) NORDEFECO is not an organization but a network for cooperation in the field of defence cooperation and defence industry.

Since then the Nordic countries have been less involved in UN operations and more involved in NATO-led out-of-area operations with Afghanistan as the best example. The withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 was a major setback for NATO.

In 2007, the Norwegian newspaper *Nettavisen* asked the then head of the Norwegian defence forces, Sverre Diesen, whether he thought of a closer Nordic defence cooperation would lead to problems in NATO. Diesen responded that he did not consider it a problem for a NATO member like Norway and an EU member like Sweden to work closely together. He cited Sweden’s membership in NATO’s partner organisation Partnership for Peace (PfP) and stressed that Sweden was already in the process of adapting to NATO standards in a number of areas. When asked to elaborate on the issue of ‘common military doctrines’ he explained that while

Norway has not decided on a hierarchy of doctrines ... there are several documents offering guidelines at a national level. When we work together in an international context, in the UN, NATO, the EU, or in PfP, it is vital that one have a common doctrine



General Sverre Diesen. Photo: Stig Ove Voll.

which is decisive for the policy. Thus, it is logical and practical that Sweden and Norway jointly contribute to the development of this doctrine.⁴

Interestingly, Diesen did not comment on the fact that Norway and Sweden both contributed to the NATO-led ISAF force in Afghanistan. And neither he nor the journalist touched upon the historical fact that before Norway joined NATO Sweden had suggested a Nordic defence alliance as a possible alternative solution for Norway and Denmark. This suggestion played a major role in the public debate prior to Norway’s decision to join NATO in 1949.⁵

In the summer of 2008, the heads of defence in Sweden and Norway picked up the debate on Nordic defence cooperation again. This time they also invited their counterpart in Finland. In a joint article, Sverre Diesen, Håkan Syrén and Juhani Kaskela suggested a common Nordic defence system.⁶ They referred to an August 2007 article by Diesen and Syrén, noting that many of the suggestions had since been discussed further and that a joint report had been presented

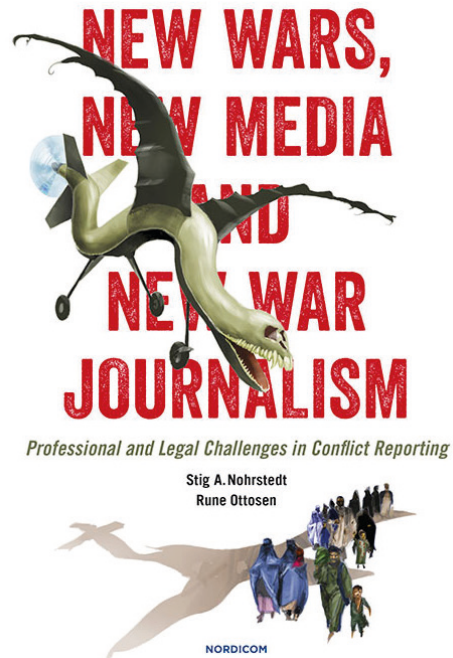
to the ministers of defence in Norway, Sweden, and Finland with 140 suggestions for mutual defence co-operation. Of these, they identified 40 points that they thought should be implemented immediately including “maritime surveillance; surveillance of the airspace; mutual land forces; common areas for practice; mutual Nordic bases for sea, air, and land support; medical support; and military education”. The article’s main argument was that the budget cuts experienced by the military forces in the three countries allowed for the option of either mutual co-operation or capacity reduction. The reason for these cutbacks is presented in a subtle manner. The ‘doxa’, to use Bourdieu’s term, for the obvious but not discussed⁷, regarding Nordic participation in the global war on terror, was hardly mentioned. The issue is only indirectly dealt with at the beginning of the article: “Most countries in the Euro-Atlantic area have gone through huge reorganisations to prepare their defence to deal with increasingly complex tasks nationally and internationally.” The change in the security orientation in the Nordic countries must also be analysed in the light of Vladimir Putin’s aggressive policy towards Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Conflict coverage in Swedish and Norwegian Media

In this article I will summarise previous empirical findings regarding the Norwegian and Swedish media coverage of some of the conflicts mentioned above.

Journalism in the New World Order found a correlation between security political orientation and mainstream media framing of war and conflicts. Another finding was that the legal issues involved in war and conflict journalism are underreported. I will investigate how the differences between Norway’s security political orientation and that of other Nordic countries have influenced the coverage of foreign policy in the national media with the main focus on Norway.⁸

My hypothesis is that a country’s relationship to



New Wars, New Media and New War Journalism. Book cover, Nordicom.

the United States is a significant factor in how war and conflicts are framed. While the coverage in the early part of the period (1990s) was coloured by a difference in security policy orientation, with Norway and Denmark being NATO members and Sweden and Finland formally neutral, in more recent conflicts, such as the war in Libya in 2011, we find more similarities in both foreign policy orientation and media

coverage, but also indications of the persistence of Cold War self-censorship, to varying degrees, and security state restrictions on conflict journalism.⁹ In our latest work, Nohrstedt

and I discuss how the secrecy of Swedish-US cooperation and the secret cooperation between the intelligence services in Sweden, Norway and the United States is a part of the overall picture.¹⁰ For all practical purposes, the close relations between the CIA, the NSA, the US government and the security politi-

Journalism in the New World Order found a correlation between security political orientation and mainstream media framing of war and conflicts

cal agenda in both Sweden and Norway have been kept secret from the public.¹¹ Without all the facts on the table, it will be impossible to have a fair discussion about the media's role as the Fourth Estate in violent conflicts. As we suggested in 2017, sustainable conflict journalism must meet certain criteria:

1. *Promote free speech and access to public information within a context of changing legal and social norms;*
2. *Meet professional standards of quality, considering the special conditions of new wars;*
3. *Provide citizens with reliable, objective news from multiple sources;*
4. *Pursue editorial independence in well-managed enterprises;*
5. *Protect professional independence in relation to other institutions¹².*

Historical background

In this article I will discuss how a small state like Norway has dealt with the dilemma of honouring its declared policy of defending international law and human rights while keeping its closest ally, the superpower United States of America, happy. I will explore the hypothesis that the US policy of exceptionalism is a stronger force than the UN Charter and international law when it comes to making decisions about Norwegian security policy. A recent example is when President Joe Biden, only a few weeks into his presidency, ordered the bombing of Syria without a UN mandate. According to Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor of law at Notre Dame Law School, this was clearly a violation of international law.¹³ However, there was no reaction from the Norwegian government and no critical editorials in mainstream media. This was a clear contrast to the reaction when Russia broke international law with its annexation of Crimea in 2014. These events must also be analysed in connection with Russian military

intervention in Syria from 2015 after request from the Syrian government.

Over the last few years, Norwegian security policy has come to depend even more on a strong bilateral military cooperation between Norway and the United States.¹⁴ I have in my own research made the point that the Norwegian media has failed to play its expected role as watchdog when it comes to these issues.¹⁵ In his 2017 book *Fredsnasjonen Norge (Peace Nation Norway)* Kristoffer Egeberg reviewed all Norway's military operations abroad, from the 1960s onwards, with or without a UN mandate. For this project, he conducted in-depth interviews with all ministers of foreign affairs, heads of Norwegian defence forces and ministers of defence since the introduction of NATO's new out-of-area policy in 1999. In addition, he interviewed numerous leading politicians about their views on the 'new wars' outside Europe. In all this impressive empirical evidence, one key factor stands out as the most important reason for Norway's choice, over and over again, to take the crucial decision to send troops to other countries: Norwegian ministers' commitment to NATO membership and their fear of disappointing the US leadership.¹⁶ This is also the conclusion of the independent "Godalutvalget", mandated to evaluate the Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan. This government white paper from 2016 concluded that the Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014 contributed little to positive or peaceful development in that country and that the main reason for the Norwegian military presence there in 2001 was to accede to the request of the United States.¹⁷

The historical significance of the Gulf War

The spring of 2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the Gulf War in 1991, a historical event in many respects, and a significant event for those who are preoccupied with international law, the UN and the role of the media. Coverage of the conflict was a breakthrough

The hypothesis is that the US policy of exceptionalism is a stronger force than the UN Charter and international law when it comes to making decisions about Norwegian security policy

for new media technology with 24/7 direct broadcasting through satellites, although CNN was the only company with this technology available. In practice, this monopoly gave CNN the power to define the global news agenda. At the same time, the Pentagon succeeded in controlling independent reporting on the conflict through a pool system for journalists, with censorship of all reporting from the battlefield and daily press briefings at the press centre in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Media Studies professor George Gerbner regarded this event as a kind of boiling point, which "is reached when the power to create a crisis merges with the power to direct the movie about it".¹⁸ During the Gulf War images of laser-guided weapons hitting buildings precisely were repeatedly shown on television distracting from the fact that 92 per cent of the bombs dropped were traditional 'dumb bombs' from B-52 planes, which caused harm and thousands of deaths among the Iraqi civilian population.¹⁹ At the time the United States had a UN Security Council mandate to lead a coalition of willing nations to force the invading troops of Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait 'by all necessary means'. Included in the coalition were Arab countries like Syria and Egypt. Osama Bin Laden was furious over the fact that Muslim countries were fighting another Muslim country and declared war through the al-Qaeda because of the US military presence in Saudi Arabia in 1996. The rest, as they say, is history.

The US and their allied forces from the UK remained in Iraqi air territory after the mission of the UN mandate was fulfilled until the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003. They implemented a no-fly zone with the declared purpose of protecting the Kurds from future attacks from Saddam Hussein's air force. This no-fly zone served as a bridge to the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States and a new coalition of the willing. The chaos that followed essentially paved the ground for ISIS to become part of the endless war on terror.²⁰

As a small NATO country, Norway played a limited role in the Gulf War in 1991, by sending the naval ship *Andenes* to patrol the Persian Gulf area. Since 1999, when NATO changed its policy from being a traditional defence alliance whose main purpose was to protect Europe to a new out-of-area strategy, Norway has participated in most of NATO's out-of-area operations. The new NATO out-of-area doctrine was introduced with the bombing of former Yugoslavia in 1999 without a UN mandate, for which Norway provided support functions from the air, was the first test case for the new strategy.²¹

International law vs. US exceptionalism

In his brilliant and important book *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*, Philippe Sands begins in Nuremberg. At the end of Second World War, for the first time in history, national leaders were indicted for their murderous acts before an international court. Interestingly, although US lawyers pushed for a strong international framework during the Nuremberg process, the United States has not been willing to commit itself to the International Criminal Court (ICC). On the contrary, US has threatened members of the court with sanctions if they pursue the investigation of US war crimes in Afghanistan.²²

The reason for Norway's lack of willingness to ratify the ban of wars of aggression is probably the fear of being held accountable for its participation in the United States' endless global war on terror with the bombing of Libya in 2011 and the intervention of Syria by Norwegian Special forces in May 2017 as the most recent examples.²³ It should be noted here that the late professor of law Ståle Eskeland already in 2011 published the book *Den mest alvorlige forbrytelse (The most serious crime)* in which he argued that Norway could be prosecuted by the ICC for illegal warfare and war crimes in former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya.²⁴

In January 2021, after a lengthy and expensive

Coverage of the Gulf War was a breakthrough for new media technology with 24/7 direct broadcasting through satellites, although CNN was the only company with this technology available

campaign, Norway won a seat on the UN Security Council alongside Kenya and Ireland, among other countries. Norway promoted its candidacy with the narrative its role as a peacemaker that prioritised efforts to strengthen the protection of civilians, including children, and to promote the role of women.²⁵ I will argue that this is false advertising and claim to the contrary that Norway has undermined international law by supporting and participating in NATO's out-of-area operations in countries like Libya and Syria.

Information warfare and public relations

War journalism should be seen in the larger context of interorganisational relations.²⁶ Business communities and the state have both, in recent decades, increasingly invested in public relations and spin-doctors to influence the media agenda and, in a wider sense, the public discourse.²⁷ Through information subsidies and use of PR campaigns the mainstream media to a large extent reflect the thinking of the military-industrial complex. Guy Golan in his work on agenda-indexing argues that topics related to security policy is more vulnerable to PR-campaigns than other topic because of lack of competence and resources to fact-checking in the newsroom. Since the financial crisis in 2009 cut-backs in staff has reduced the quality of independent journalism in the area of national security.²⁸ There is a research paradigm in the field of war journalism studies, of which of which Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* in 1988 as a well-known example, that emphasises the dependency of media coverage on dominant political elites, authorities, and pressure groups and that is still relevant although it has also been criticised and modified.²⁹ This is not the place to elaborate on this debate, except to mention that agenda-setting and public opinion-building are not exclusively controlled top-down. A part of the broader picture is also the propaganda machine and PSY-OPS operation by the US military and NATO.³⁰ The US invasion in Iraq was justified with the false claim that

Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. PSYOPS unites are part of any modern war efforts. The purpose is to create confusion among soldiers "on the other side" and create orchestrated media events such as the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad during the US invasion in 2003. The media portrayed (as planned) this as an act of joy expressed by the Iraqi population. In reality it was a well orchestrated event organised by a PSY-OPS unite in the US Army³¹.

The Gulf War and beyond

As stated above, it is reasonable to regard the 1990–91 Gulf War as a conflict with paradigmatic importance as a global event in the era of globalisation after the end of the Cold War, not least because of the consequences for war journalism of the political changes and the development of new media, in particular satellite TV news channels such as CNN. Early studies compared the reporting of the Gulf War in several countries' media to investigate whether war journalism was becoming increasingly homogenised and Americanised.³² The project *Journalism in the New World Order*, for example, applied a number of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to examine whether America's powerful position as the only remaining superpower after 1989 implied that its war propaganda had a substantial impact on the European media's news reporting. The results added some nuance to the conflicting claims in the globalisation debate. For example, it was shown how the American propaganda disseminated from the White House (including the depiction of the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein as a new Hitler) was widely displayed immediately in the US media but only somewhat later in the European media.³³

Findings from our later study of the 2003 Iraq War suggested that the Gulf War's significance as a global media event influencing subsequent conflicts was underestimated. Indeed, in our study of the Gulf War published in 2001, we suggested that this war

Golan argues that topics related to security policy is more vulnerable to PR-campaigns than other topics because of lack of competence and resources to factchecking in the newsroom



Norwegian forces in Afghanistan. Photo: Norwegian Armed Forces.

“[would] haunt us for decades and perhaps centuries to come”. The reason for such a prediction was that the Gulf War was at once a confrontation between the Muslim world and the West and a conflict between the international community (represented by the so-called UN/US alliance) and Iraq. Among many Muslims the war was regarded as an attack on the Muslim nation (al-Umah). The split between the general public in the Muslim world and the West and their allies in some Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia can be understood as a breeding ground for radical Islamist groups and terror organisations such as al-Qaeda. Thus, the Gulf War was an important background for the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ in Afghanistan and Iraq. In contradiction to Jean Baudrillard’s assertion that the Gulf War ‘never happened’,³⁴ we suggest, rather, that the Gulf War never ended, as evidenced by the continuation of lawless military violence including the no-fly zone at the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the war in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq in 2003,

the Libyan War in 2011 and military attacks on Syria from 2012.

In retrospect, the 1990-91 Gulf War will perhaps remain the most unified cross-national coverage of a single conflict because of the dominant position of CNN. Many countries with weak national news services gave in and at times simply broadcast the CNN version.³⁵ This will never happen again because the monopoly was broken when other players entered the market: BBC World, Fox Television and other global channels, Russian, Chinese, and French among them. Now, there are at least 40 global channels competing for the attention of viewers. Al Jazeera was established as an Arabic satellite station in 1996 partly as a reaction in the Arab world to the fact that a US channel had hegemony over the news coverage during the Gulf War.³⁶

Afghanistan and beyond

In Sweden, the traditional opposition to membership in NATO grew in the period 2008–12 and has,

by the time of writing, returned to the same level as in the mid-1990s. Since 2012 there has been a balance between negative and positive views on the matter. But the picture is not entirely clear since the same study reports that 61 per cent of the population say they want Sweden to remain militarily non-aligned.³⁷ Between 2008 and 2012, Swedish opinion on military engagement in Afghanistan changed from ambivalence to clear resistance – that is, support for withdrawal.³⁸

In Norway, a number of polls from 2007 to 2010 showed a fluctuating majority supporting the Norwegian forces in Afghanistan, but a significant minority of 32 to 37 per cent opposing Norwegian military presence. A survey published by the newspaper *VG* in August 2010 showed a majority in favour of pulling troops out (49 per cent) compared to the 36 per cent who supported the presence of Norwegian forces.³⁹

Since there seems to be unity among politicians in the Nordic region that their countries should support the United States in the ‘global war on terror’, they apparently try to avoid public debate on the issue by treating it as a topic ‘beyond discussion’.

Norway had a military presence in Afghanistan for 20 years. Both with special forces in the US led Operation Enduring Freedom, which lacked a UN mandate, and as part of NATO’s ISAF Operation. The US had a UN mandate in Security Council resolution 1368 to punish the perpetrators from 9/11. However, the Norwegian professor of international law, Geir Ulfstein, has pointed out that there was no UN mandate for a lasting military presence for many years⁴⁰. The withdrawal of all foreign forces and return of the Taliban to power in August 2021 was another proof of the failure, like the collapse of Iraq after the war in 2003.

WikiLeaks and Julian Assange

Grave war crimes committed by US troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq in 2010 have been documented. The Afghan War documents leak, also called the Afghan War Diary, was the disclosure of a collection of internal US military logs of the War in Afghanistan, published by WikiLeaks on 25 July 2010. The content of around 75,000 documents was published over several weeks in cooperation with major news



Julian Assange. Photo: David G Silvers. Cancillería del Ecuador.

outlets such as The New York Times. Major war crimes were revealed, including information on the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. None of the perpetrators of these crimes have been punished, but the whistleblowers have. Messenger and whistleblower Chelsea Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison (later reduced to seven years by Barack Obama). WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been in prison since he was forced out of his asylum arrangement in the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2019 and imprisoned in Belmarsh, a high security prison in the UK, while fighting extradition to the US on charges under the Espionage Act from 1917 with a potential for 175 years in prison. A British court ruled in 2021 that he could not be extradited for health reasons, acknowledging that there was a high risk of his committing suicide due to mental illness and poor prison conditions in the US, but apart from that took the side of the US government on all the principal issues concerning the legal protection of freedom of speech and protection of whistleblowers. Assange remains in prison after being denied

bail and may still be extradited. Nils Melzer, the UN special rapporteur for torture, produced evidence of psychological torture and in the book *Fallet Julian Assange (The Julian Assange Case)* presented evidence that the British and Swedish juridical authorities conspired to keep the case of alleged sexual misconduct against two women going until 2017, when it was dropped without any charges.⁴¹ Melzer has now initiated a campaign directed towards the ICC requesting a preliminary investigation of an alleged crime against humanity for the psychological torture of Assange. The Norwegian government, which is partly responsible for the warfare in Afghanistan, has done nothing to defend Assange's human rights despite an appeal from the Norwegian UNESCO commission to the Norwegian foreign minister and a demand that the US drop all charges.⁴²

In both Norway and Sweden, the media have largely failed to shed a critical light on the legal aspects of Norwegian and Swedish military presence in Afghanistan.⁴³ However, there are exceptions: Newspapers like *Ny Tid* and *Klassekampen* have been alternative voices in the coverage of NATO's warfare in Afghanistan and Libya. The freelance journalist, Anders Sømme Hammer, settled in Kabul in 2007 and for several years produced critical investigative reporting on the ground in Afghanistan.⁴⁴

The bombing of Libya

The Libyan War of 2011 differs from the previously mentioned wars in that the US did not take the lead in the mobilisation for military intervention. Instead, France assumed the leadership role. The so-called Arab Spring reached Gaddafi's dictatorship when an armed uprising began in the eastern part of Libya bordering Egypt. In a consensus, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution (SC Resolution 1973) that encouraged the parties to avoid violence against civilians and provided member states with the right to intervene for humanitarian action, notably in the form of a no-fly zone that could be maintained even with recourse to military means.⁴⁵ However UN security council solution 1973 had clear restrictions and did not allow military occupation, troops on Libyan soil, or military intervention for regime change.⁴⁶ There

are two sides to the development of international law during the timespan we are dealing with here: On the one hand, there is the principle of responsibility to protect (R2P) adopted by the UN to safeguard civilian populations from genocide and to avoid situations like the terrible Rwandan massacres of 1994, an important step forward for the protection of human rights and security. On the other hand, we have seen this very principle being misused as a pretext for regime changes, as in Libya in 2011.⁴⁷ The misuse of R2P in Libya can in the long run have been damage to the need for real humanitarian intervention when needed, like during the genocide in Rwanda.⁴⁸

Norway's false image as a peace nation

I will give six arguments against the claim that Norway deserves the title 'peace nation':

1. *As the NATO member that dropped the most bombs (588) over Libya in 2011 Norway contributed to the chaos and the failed state that now exists. The UN mandate through resolution 1973 authorized a no-fly zone over Lybia to protect civilians from Gaddafi. As we know, this operation was hijacked and turned into a NATO war for regime change.*
2. *Norwegian special forces took part in an illegal crossing of the Syrian border in May 2017 to support Islamists known to be behind human rights violations.*⁴⁹
3. *Norway has refused to sign the UN treaty to ban nuclear arms (TPNW).*
4. *As already mentioned, Norway also has undermined the International Criminal Court by refusing to ratify an amendment that adds the crime of aggression to the International Criminal Court.*
5. *Edward Snowden revealed a bilateral cooperation between Norwegian military intelligence and US intelligence. As a part of this cooperation, Norwegian radar facilities assist in US illegal drone warfare.*⁵⁰
6. *Norway is increasingly taking part in the US military exercises in North Norway and in all practical terms supports the United States' new aggressive military strategy towards Russia. In February 2021, for the first times in 25 years Norway allowed US B-1 bombers, which play a crucial role in US nuclear strategy, to be stationed on Norwegian soil. This said, this change in*

policy must also be seen in the light of: Russia's more aggressive exercise patterns in the North Atlantic and Arctic area.

One of the reasons why there is little room for optimism about Norway's future role in the Security Council is that we have been there before. Norway also held a seat in UN Security Council 20 years ago (2001–2002). During this period, Norway oversaw the sanctions against Iraq. The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) concluded in a report that the international sanctions imposed on Iraq since 1991 constitute in themselves a series of systematic violations of human rights.⁵¹

The reason why I am quite pessimistic about the Norwegian media's ability to be a critical watchdog now that the country has joined the Security Council is the experience from the performance of the Norwegian media 20 years ago. In a master's thesis, Tom Erik Thoresen analysed the Norwegian media coverage of the Norwegian Security Council membership in the period 2001–2002. He found that the narrative in the media uncritically supported Norway's self-image as a 'good-doer'. The Norwegian ambassador to UN at the time, Ole Peter Kolby, said he was surprised that he had not received *one* critical question from Norwegian journalists regarding Norway's role in the controversial sanctions programme against Iraq. Why should it be any different this time around?⁵²

Norway must now be expected to address the ongoing sanctions against North Korea as part of its responsibility in the Security Council. Norwegian media kept silent about the illegal invasion of Syria by Norwegian special forces from UN bases in Jordan in May 2017.⁵³

Conclusion

Behind the rhetoric of Nordic defence cooperation is the reality that in the last 40 years the Nordic countries have increasingly been involved in the US-led so-called global war on terror. Norway has moved away from its traditional defence policy to enable its special forces to take part in the United States' endless wars in the Middle East. Behind newspeak about continuity in Norway's defence and security

policy Norway has strengthened bilateral military ties to the United States.⁵⁴ All the Nordic countries are now involved in military exercises on the border area with Russia. Both NATO members like Denmark and Norway and non-NATO members like Finland and Sweden are basing their defence policy on US military support in the name of Nordic defence cooperation. The media have with few exceptions been unable to create a public discourse about the long-term consequences of this change of policy. The main focus in the coverage has been on the increased Russian aggression in Ukraine which of course also is a threat to European security.

Notes

- 1 Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001, 2004, 2014, 2015.
- 2 Ulfstein, 2019.
- 3 Tvedt 2003, Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2015.
- 4 As quoted in Nohrstedt and Ottosen 2014: 100.
- 5 Furre 1991.
- 6 Aftenposten June 18, 2008.
- 7 Lippe 1991.
- 8 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2001.
- 9 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2014.
- 10 Nohrstedt & Ottoen 2021.
- 11 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2021.
- 12 Quoted in Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2017:215
- 13 NTB (Norwegian News Agency) February 26, 2021.
- 14 Heier 2019.
- 15 Ottosen 1994, 2008, 2013, 2019, 2019b, 2021.
- 16 Egeberg 2017.
- 17 NOU 2016: 8.
- 18 Gerbner 1992: 244.
- 19 Stambler and Walker 1991.
- 20 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2017.
- 21 Ottosen 2019.
- 22 Sands 2016.
- 23 Ottosen 2021.
- 24 Eskeland 2011.
- 25 Regjeringen.no, 2020.
- 26 Dinan & Miller 2007.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Golan 2011.
- 29 Or e.g. Hallin 1986.
- 30 NATO 2007.
- 31 Ottosen 2009.
- 32 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2001 and Kempf & Luostarinen 2002
- 33 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2001.
- 34 Baudrillard 1991
- 35 Wicks & Walker 1993
- 36 Thussu 2007

- 37 Berndtsson et al. 2020.
 38 Ydén & Berndtsson 2013: 625.
 39 Eide & Ottosen 2013: 24.
 40 Ulfstein 2003, 2008.
 41 Melzer 2021.
 42 Ottosen 2020, UNESCO 2021.
 43 Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2014.
 44 See also his book *Drømmekrigen* (The dream war).
 45 Ottosen, Slaatta & Øfsti 2013.
 46 Ulfstein 2019.
 47 Tunander 2012.
 48 Lippe 2019.
 49 Ottosen 2019b.
 50 Skille, NRK 2019.
 51 FIDH 2002.
 52 Thoresen 2014.
 53 Ottosen 2019.
 54 Heier 2019.

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