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GETTING TO ZERO

Norway's Approach to NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture Review

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Introduction

The current Norwegian government believes that nuclear disarmament is a top priority issue and is initiating, as well as supporting, proposals that see non-proliferation in this context and include the ultimate objective of the total abolition of all nuclear weapons.¹ In NATO, Norway seeks to continue the initiative of developing and fostering openness and confidence building measures, particularly in relation to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.² Norway considers cooperation with international and

voluntary organisations, particularly the United Nations (UN) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), research institutions, and other non-governmental organisations especially important in creating global awareness and fostering a commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation. It explicitly highlights the importance of considering the humanitarian risks from the potential use of nuclear weapons to reinforce the norm against proliferation.³

This paper reviews Norway's contribution in the light of the debate within NATO, and suggests that there is more it could do to sensitively but assertively promote its vision of NATO's role in driving global nuclear disarmament.

¹ Ambassador Bente Angel Hansen, *Conference on Disarmament*, Geneva, 17th March, 2011. Last accessed 16th January 2012, <http://www.norway-geneva.org/unitednations/disarmament/Ambassador-Bente-Angell-Hansen-addressed-the-Conference-on-Disarmament/>

² Annual Budget of the Norwegian Government 2012, *Norwegian Ministry of Finance*. Last accessed 18th February 2012. <http://www.statsbudsjettet.no/Statsbudsjettet-2012/Statsbudsjettet-fra-A-til-A/Nedrustning-og-ikke-spredning/>

³ Jonas Gahr Støre, 'Disarmament and the Upcoming Conference for Non-Proliferation in New York', *Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 15th April, 2010. Last accessed 18th February 2012.

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_arter/utenriksministeren/2010/innledning_npt.html?id=601091

Norwegian Foreign Policies and Initiatives

NATO is seen as a cornerstone of Norway's security and defence, and the government is committed to helping ensure NATO is capable of facing current and future security challenges. This is seen as including the possible use of nuclear weapons, and alongside all NATO members Norway is part of the consensus that agreed in 2010 that 'as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance'.⁴ At the same time, Norway has refused to base nuclear weapons on its own territory, and believes that NATO should continually reduce the role of nuclear weapons in its posture and in international politics, working towards the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament.⁵

Norway has an international reputation for prioritising the disarmament process. Its delegation to the May 2010 NPT Review Conference was centrally involved in agreements on concrete steps towards non-proliferation and disarmament, a strong advocate for the NPT and for measures that tackle discriminatory approaches.⁶

Norway has also been taking the initiative to break the deadlock paralysing the Conference on Disarmament (CD), putting forward a resolution that

⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon*, 19th November, 2010. Last accessed 25th February, 2012.

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm

⁵ 'Platform for Governmental Cooperation between the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party 2005-2009', *Norwegian Government*. Last accessed 25th February 2012.

http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/SMK/Vedlegg/2005/re_gjeringsplattform_SoriaMoria.pdf

⁶ Jonas Gahr Støre, 'Disarmament and the Upcoming Conference for Non-Proliferation in New York'. Last accessed 18th February 2012.

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_artikler/utenriksministeren/2010/innledning_npt.html?id=601091

allowed for the option of an alternative route should the CD remain in deadlock.⁷

Norway has also sought novel means to overcome barriers to disarmament. Teaming up with the UK the two countries have been reporting on progress with their Initiative on Nuclear Warhead Dismantlement Verification, mapping out the possibilities for non-nuclear weapon states to monitor and verify disarmament.⁸ The scheme has been greeted with great interest by the international community.

Together with Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, and with the support of six other NATO members, Norway submitted a 'non-paper' outlining a series of steps that NATO and Russia could jointly take to enhance the transparency of U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear weapons (TNW). In addition to this, Norway, in conjunction with Poland, has stressed the necessity for establishing discussions on reducing the number of TNW in Europe. The Norwegian and Polish Foreign Ministers Jonas Gahr Støre and Radoslaw Sikorski, made a joint statement in which they suggested a 'step-by-step' approach to reduce the role of TNWs highlighting the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures.⁹

⁷ 'Answering Questions from the Norwegian Parliament Regarding the Ban against Nuclear Weapons', 29th September 2011, *Norwegian Government*. Last accessed 6th March 2012.

http://www.regjeringen.no/mobil/nb/dep/ud/aktuelt/svar_stortinget/sporretime/2011/svar_nedrustning.html?id=660166

⁸ 'Presentation on the UK-Norway Initiative on Nuclear Warhead Dismantlement Verification', *Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre*, May 2009. Last accessed 6th March 2012. https://whitehall-frontend-production.s3.amazonaws.com/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652/presentation_on_the_uk_norway_initiative_on_nuclear_warhead_dismantlement_verification.pdf

⁹ Wojciech Moskwa and David Stamp, 'Norway, Poland seek curbs on nuclear arms', *Reuters*, 9th April, 2010. Last accessed 10th March 2012.

Norway and contemporary NATO

Although Norway is an active advocate for a world free of nuclear weapons, it has not been promoting unilateral disarmament for NATO. Rather it has attempted a 'balancing act' between deterrence, assurance, and disarmament.¹⁰ It sees its principal role as upholding commitments to NATO, maintaining Alliance cohesion, and considering its geostrategic position with prudence and caution. This entails wielding its soft power when dealing with Russia, whilst being mindful of its nuclear rhetoric.

During the Cold War, Norwegian strategic policy combined allegiance to NATO with a so-called 'policy-of-trust' towards the Soviet Union.¹¹ Today its policy balances a need for a good relationship with Russia to maintain stability in the High North and its relationship with Allies that may prefer a different approach. To this day, although NATO's strategic interest in the area seems to be in decline, Russia maintains a solid military presence and the nuclear dimension lingers.

Although it remains outside, the expansion of the European Union (EU) and its internal cooperation on military and security is a complicating factor for Norway. It has to find a way to meaningfully participate.

Transparency and diplomacy

Norway is multilateralist in its approach. Its rhetoric emphasises 'openness' and 'transparency' which it hopes in turn will lay the foundations for future

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/09/us-norway-poland-nuclear-idUSTRE6384GW20100409>

¹⁰ Rodney Kennedy-Minnot, 'U.S. Regional Force Application: The Maritime Strategy and its Effect on Nordic Stability', (Stanford, 1988), pp. 23-33.

¹¹ Viviane du Castel, 'The Barents Sea: Towards a new "great game"?', *French Institute of International Relations*, October 2005. Last accessed 15th March 2012. <http://www.ifri.org/files/ducastelenglish.pdf>

reductions.¹² The problem, however, is that it has little power to deliver concrete change in this arena, and has chosen a cautious route in attempting to gently persuade its allies of the need for change. Rather than clearly propose tangible or measurable objectives, it has stuck to abstract goals such as 'staking out the course for future work', 'an ambition of less dependency on nuclear weapons' or 'a world we are aspiring for'.¹³ In so doing it allows NATO's direction to be determined by the conservatives.

Considering both its geostrategic and diplomatic position, Norway could more actively facilitate dialogue between NATO and Russia.

Next up for Norway and NATO

NATO is currently debating its nuclear posture as part of the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, for discussion at the May 2012 Chicago summit. This could have an important bearing on the future direction for NATO – an Alliance bent on maintaining superior and comprehensive capabilities, or one that plays a proactive role in multilateral disarmament? Norway has been encouraging partners to consider realistic strategies for disarmament, and with Poland proposed a transparency initiative with the Russians. But there is no clear reason why Norway could not go further in proposing greater NATO transparency today over the numbers of warheads deployed in Europe and the states that host them, and equally importantly transparency over the purpose of deployment and the doctrine that governs them. Thanks to an ongoing debate in Europe, there is greater recognition that these warheads play little or no positive role in Europe's security, indeed are

¹² Foreign Political Statement, *Norwegian Government*, February 2012. Last accessed 20th March 2012.

http://www.regjeringen.no/se/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_artikler/utenriksministeren/2012/upol_1202.html?id=672235

¹³ A New Course for NATO, *Norwegian Government*, 20th November 2010. Last accessed 11th April 2012.

<http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/smk/pressemeldinger/2010/ny-kurs-for-nato.html?id=625351>

more a liability than an asset, but there is a danger that allies will skirt the problem and hope that it resolves itself. Tackling this issue more seriously would enable NATO to better open a dialogue with Russia around the future role of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, prior to any formal bilateral negotiations that the US Congress has already decreed should include these weapons.

What is likely to be Norway's position in the Chicago summit? Most likely it will be realistic about the expected outcome of the summit, and expect meagre change to NATO's nuclear policy. But it is essential that the foundation stones are laid for a new nuclear posture that explicitly moves on from TNW deployment, and Norway could hold the key.

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