

Norway's Whole-of-Government Approach and its Engagement with Afghanistan

Cedric de Coning, Helge Lurås,
Niels Nagelhus Schia and Ståle Ulriksen



Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
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Visiting address: C.J. Hambros plass 2 d
Address: P.O. Box 8159 Dep.
0033 Oslo
Norway
Internet: www.nupi.no
E-mail: pub@nupi.no
Fax: [+ 47] 22 36 21 82
Tel: [+ 47] 22 99 40 00

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Executive Summary

Norway has been a prominent supporter of the UN's Integrated Approach and has actively contributed to the development of NATO's Comprehensive Approach. Norway's own whole-of-government approach has, however, been limited to its engagement with Afghanistan.

There is already a growing body of literature on the whole-of-government approach. Surprisingly little has been written about Norway in this context. This report represents a first attempt at comprehensively explaining the Norwegian whole-of-government approach, as well as and analyzing its effectiveness to date.

In order to establish the basis for a comparative analysis, the first part of the report provides a brief introduction to the history of the whole-of-government approach. Amongst others, the report features short discussions of the approaches followed by Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The second part of the report examines Norway's whole-of-government approach within the Norwegian foreign and defence policy contexts. The report then explains the Norwegian approach as it applies to Afghanistan in general, and to the Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction Team in particular. The third part is a comparative analysis of the Norwegian approach, where the strengths and weaknesses of the Norwegian model is considered by contrasting it against some of the other country experiences introduced in part one.

The rationale for a national whole-of-government approach is greater effectiveness. It is driven by the assumption that a government's foreign engagements will have a more meaningful and sustainable impact when the various government departments involved pursue a common strategy, have a shared understanding of the problem, a common theory of change, and an agreed plan for implementing such a strategy.

We have found that Norway lacks a comprehensive strategy for engaging in fragile states in general, as well as a whole-of-government strategy for any particular country, including Afghanistan. The report recommends that Norway consider adopting a law, or high-level policy document, that make it a requirement for Norway to have a national whole-of-government policy towards every country where it is engaged in initiatives related to peacekeeping, peacebuilding or conflict resolution.

The report recommends that such Norwegian whole-of-government strategies be limited to the higher strategic level. This will provide space for operational and tactical flexibility so that the Norwegian government can pursue coherence with local and international strategic frameworks, while also remaining flexible to changes in the situation on the ground.

The report express concern about the negative effects a Norwegian whole-of-government approach might have on the special relationship between the Norwegian government and Norwegian civil society. The report recommends that a forum be established where Norwegian civil society and government can regularly engage each other on issues related to the country's international engagements, and its whole-of-government approach.

There is a significant fissure between policy commitments to an integrated or comprehensive approach, and the challenges of navigating the real-world dilemmas that decision-makers face when trying to coordinate multiple independent agencies. Despite the significant policy-level initiatives undertaken internationally, and in Norway, to facilitate an integrated or comprehensive approach, this coherence dilemma remains characteristic – not only of Norway's engagements – but indeed of most peace, stability and reconstruction operations today.

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1. Introduction

Peace and stability operations are managed more effectively when the interdependency and interconnectedness of the political, security, governance and development dimensions of these operations are recognized. On this point there is broad consensus, both internationally and in Norway. Various models have been developed, including the *Integrated Approach* and *Integrated Missions* concepts by the United Nations (see for instance Eide et al., 2005; de Coning, 2008), the *Comprehensive Approach* by the European Union (see Gross, 2008) and NATO (see Jakobsen, 2008), the *Effects-Based Approach to Operations* (EBAO) among NATO member states, including the United States (see NATO, 2007a & 2007b; Mann & Endersby, 2002; MNE, 2008), and a range of *Whole-of-Government* approaches, of which the best known is probably the original Canadian 3D (Diplomacy, Development and Defence) concept (see Patrick & Brown, 2007; OECD/DAC, 2006).

Norway has been a leading proponent of the UN integrated approach and an active supporter of NATO efforts to develop a comprehensive approach, including in Afghanistan where Norway leads a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). It would thus only be natural that others should expect Norway to have an advanced approach to integration, and that the international community would be interested in how Norway manages its own whole-of-government approach. It may seem odd, however, that many studies and reports that compare different whole-of-government approaches do not deal with the Norwegian model.¹ One reason could be that surprisingly little has been written about this, whether by the Norwegian government itself, or by the research community. It may well be the lack of available data that has resulted in Norway not being covered to the same extent as Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and others.

This report aims to address this shortcoming by describing how the Norwegian whole-of-government approach works, and by making a

The authors would like to express appreciation to all the respondents who granted insights and views, both in Norway and Afghanistan, as well as the Ministry of Defence for funding the research. The authors are all associated with the Department for Security and Conflict Management at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI).

¹ Neither of two of the most comprehensive and authoritative reviews (Patrick & Brown, *Greater than the Sum of its Parts? Assessing the 'Whole of Government' Approaches to Fragile States*, (2007), and the 2007 OECD/DAC report on *Whole of Government Approaches to Fragile States*) includes Norway. The countries covered by the studies are (those in bold are dealt with in both studies): **Australia**, Belgium, **Canada**, **France**, **Germany**, the Netherlands, **Sweden**, **the United Kingdom** and **the United States**.

first attempt at analysing its effectiveness. Norway's approach has been shaped by its intervention in Afghanistan – still the only intervention to which the model has been applied. It is thus natural for this study to focus extensively on how the Norwegian model has been applied in the context of Afghanistan.

Greater effectiveness is the rationale for a national whole-of-government approach. It is driven by the assumption that a government's foreign engagements will have a more meaningful and sustainable impact when the various government departments involved in such an intervention pursue a common strategy, have a shared understanding of the problem, a common theory of change, and an agreed plan for implementing such a strategy. Such an approach should result in more efficient use of the resources made available by the government, regardless of the department or ministry through which those resources are channelled (Friis & Jarmyr, 2008:4). This rationale is extended from the national to the international context, or vice versa, and the logic is that the greater the coherence achieved among the different parts of the system, the more meaningful, effective and sustainable is the overall impact likely to be (de Coning, 2007:14).

In the first section, we introduce the whole-of-government approach. We consider the experiences of Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, using these cases as a comparative base against which we analyse the Norwegian model in the final section. In the second section, we consider Norway's whole-of-government approach. We contextualize the Norwegian model within its larger foreign and defence policy domain, and discuss the workings of the model itself. We then proceed to consider how the model has been applied in Afghanistan in general, and in the context of the Norwegian PRT in particular. In the third section we analyse the performance of the Norwegian model and compare it to the other international models discussed in section one. We conclude with a summary of the findings of this study and several recommendations on how Norway could consider improving its whole-of-government approach.

2. The Whole- of-Government Approach

Our understanding of international conflict management has become more subtle and nuanced, especially in the context of the lessons learned from the major systemic failures of the international interventions in Somalia, Rwanda and Srebrenica. It is now widely recognized, for instance in the highest-level policy statements of the United Nations, European Union and NATO, that managing conflict requires a multi-dimensional, comprehensive, system-wide or integrated approach. For instance: UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, referring to Afghanistan, has argued that what is needed is a ‘comprehensive approach including better governance, economic development such as a single financing mechanism, and when necessary appropriate military pressure’.² Similarly, the new NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, has stated that ‘we need a comprehensive approach, a reinforced interaction between our military efforts and our endeavours with regard to civil reconstruction.’³ And Norway’s Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, has recently declared: ‘Decades of experience have taught us this lesson: We need a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to peacekeeping; stronger emphasis on human security; better recognition of the links between security and development...’.⁴ One-dimensional or single-facet conflict management responses are now viewed as superficial and counterproductive, in that they address only some aspects of a wider system, and this tends to distort, shift or re-direct tensions in the system, rather than dealing with the root causes of the conflict in a coherent or comprehensive manner (de Coning, 2007:3).

The search for a more comprehensive or integrated approach should be understood in the context of an increasingly complex and interdependent international conflict management system. Since the early 1990s, the scope of the crises facing the international community is often of such a scale that no single agency, government or international organization can manage single-handed. In response, a wide

² *Gordon Brown Welcomes Pakistan’s President to Downing Street, Downing Street Press Release 28 August 2009*, <http://ukingeorgia.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/?view=News&id=20783367>, accessed on 14 September 2009.

³ *First NATO Press Conference, 3 August 2009*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_56776.htm, accessed on 14 September 2009.

⁴ Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, keynote speech delivered at NUPI on 6 October 2009 at a seminar on Violence and Protection in Africa.

range of agencies, governmental and non-governmental, and regional and international organizations have begun to develop specialized capacities aimed at managing different aspects of these emergencies. Together they have indeed succeeded in responding with a broad range of interlinked activities (de Coning, in Friis & Jarmyr, 2008:2).

This multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary response has been able to deal with some of the highly dynamic crisis environments reasonably well. In others, however, the degree to which the international conflict management system lacks coherence among the diverse international and local actors that make up the system has resulted in, *inter alia*, interagency rivalry, working at cross-purposes, competition for funding, duplication of effort and sub-optimal economies of scale (Fukuyama, 2004:40). All of these, taken together, have contributed to an overall poor success rate, measured in the sustainability of the systems that have emerged as a result of these international interventions. Research undertaken by Collier and colleagues (2003) has indicated that approximately half of all peace processes relapse within five years.⁵

In order to address these shortcomings and improve the overall success rate of the international conflict management system, various agencies, governments and organizations have started exploring, independently of each other, a range of models and mechanisms aimed at improving the overall coherence, cooperation and coordination of their conflict management systems. All these initiatives have a similar aim: to achieve greater harmonization and synchronization among the activities of the different international and local actors, and across the analysis, planning, implementation, management and evaluation aspects of the programme cycle. The goal is to bridge the security–development divide and to integrate the political, security, governance and development dimensions in order to ensure a system-wide response to any specific conflict system.

At the national level, several governments have been experimenting with improving the cooperation among their own ministries or departments, with a view to improving the management of various national challenges, but also specifically in the context of international operations. Such initiatives are now referred to as a *whole-of-government approaches*. We will summarize the experiences of Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, in order to develop a comparative base against which we can later compare the Norwegian approach.

⁵ See Collier et al., (2003), but note that the 50% relapse figure has been questioned by Suhrke & Samset, (2007), who argue that the Collier et al. finding is closer to 25%.

2.1 Canada

The Canadian government may not have been the first to develop a whole-of-government approach, but it was behind the '3D' (diplomacy, development and defence) concept, which has so succinctly captured the essence of the whole-of-government approach that it has become the most widely known shorthand for the whole-of-government approach. Canada has refined its original 3D concept and revised it in its interdepartmental 'International Policy Statement' of 2005.

In Canada, the Privy Council Office is responsible for ensuring that the Prime Minister's policies are reflected in the work of the cabinet and the civil service, and it thus performs a critical coordination role in government. The Foreign Affairs and National Security Committee is responsible for international policy coordination. Policy coordination among departments and agencies takes place through interdepartmental committees, working groups and task forces (OECD, 2007b:51).

A new permanent interagency body, the 'Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force' (START), was established in September 2005, within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), mandated to coordinate interagency activities in conflict prevention, disaster response and post-conflict reconstruction (Patrick & Brown, 2007:56). START has an approved personnel roster of 75 personnel and its own fund, the Global Peace and Security Fund (GPSF), with an allocation of approximately C\$100million per year (Patrick & Brown, 2007:66). It has an interdepartmental Advisory Board that provides guidance; although it has some working-level staff from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of National Defence (DND), the management is provided by DFAIT (OECD, 2007b:51). An important initiative launched in 2007 requires Canada's embassies to lead an interdepartmental process aimed at developing an annual country engagement strategy, and this commitment is linked to the Ambassador's 'Performance Management Agreement' to ensure that there is an incentive for integration (OECD, 2007b:51).

The Canadian military uses the concepts 'Joint Interagency Multinational and Public' (JIMP) and 'Civil-Military Coordination' (CIMIC) to ensure that an integrated approach is ingrained among its members deployed to international missions (Rintakoski & Autti, 2008:123). Through START and other decision-making mechanisms, Canada has made concerted efforts to pursue a whole-of-government approach in its engagements, especially those with Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan. It has also played an active role in promoting an integrated approach

in multilateral forums such as the OECD and the UN (Patrick & Brown, 2007:57).

Despite these policy commitments, coordination processes and the establishment of START, Patrick & Brown (2007:57) find that Canada 'continues to struggle in achieving cross-departmental agreement on objectives and motivations for its interventions, as well as for designing and implementing country strategies.' START is sometimes viewed as being in competition with the line-function departments, which have ministerial authority, both in terms of formulating policy and directing funding. There is a danger that START may undermine coherence by sponsoring short-term stabilization initiatives that do not fit broader, longer-term funding commitments to institution-building (OECD, 2007b:51). Despite the policy commitment and the creation of START there seem to be insufficient incentives for departments to break out of their natural self-promoting and self-protecting bureaucratic behaviour, and insufficient professional rewards for individuals to make the effort to overcome the constraints of these departmental cultures. In addition, even when there is the will to do so, there is often not enough time for interdepartmental consultation and planning. The overall result is that, although whole-of-government integration in Canada is better today than it was before 2005, the system is still far less coherent and integrated than envisioned in the International Policy Statement (Patrick & Brown, 2007:57).

2.2 The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, coordination at the highest level takes place in the Council of Ministers, the Coordination Commission for International Affairs and the Cabinet Committee on European and International Affairs. There are coordination mechanisms in place for dealing specifically with the implementation of whole-of-government policies; these include the Steering Committee for Security Cooperation and Reconstruction, the Stability Fund (SF) Steering Committee, the Steering Committee for Military Operations, the Steering Committees on Police and Rule of Law, and the interministerial consultation committee on Civil–Military Cooperation (OECD, 2007:52). Many of the committees are chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and co-chaired by the Ministry of Defence or other relevant ministries. Additional mechanisms have been established in some country-specific cases. In the case of Sudan, for instance, a temporary task force has been established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, comprising the Africa Department, the Human Rights and Peacebuilding Department, the Security Policy Department and the Humanitarian Aid Division. The Sudan Task Force meets on a weekly basis. The Ministry of Defence attends regularly, and other departments join on an 'as needed' basis (OECD,

2007:52). The Sudan Task Force is responsible for policy formulation and implementation, and functions as a cross-departmental integrator, with direct links to the embassy in Khartoum, a Special Envoy for Sudan engaged in the Darfur talks and the top leadership in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2.3 Sweden

In Sweden, interdepartmental coherence and coordination in the context of a whole-of-government approach to international interventions is promoted at the macro-policy level by the *Policy on Global Development* (PGD, adopted in 2003), and at the implementation level with the *Joint Preparation Process*, which is required by law (OECD, 2007:53). Under the auspices of the PGD, which is a policy aimed at fighting poverty by promoting coherence, discussions take place among the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Justice, as well as the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and all other relevant agencies, with a view to jointly generating a multi-year *Development Cooperation Strategy* for each country that Sweden has a specific aid relationship with (Patrick & Brown, 2007:121). However, the OECD study has found that this process lacks a joint assessment component, and this often results in the various ministries contributing what they have to offer, instead of applying a demand-based approach to formulating strategy (OECD, 2007:53).

As a result of the PGD, Sweden's whole-of-government approach differs from most other models. It is not focused solely on international peace and security interventions, nor is it limited to engagement with fragile states, but encompasses the country's entire international cooperation and development policy. In addition, Sweden adopted a National Strategy for Swedish Participation in International Peace Support and Security Building Operations in March 2008, aimed specifically at increasing Swedish engagement in such operations, and in an integrated and combined way (Rintakoski & Autti, 2008:173). It is important to note, however, that Sweden's foreign policy directs the country to engage in international interventions in a multilateral context. In that context, the Swedish approach is to work 'through the EU to formulate a more coherent EU-wide development policy framework, including common country strategies and harmonized aid instruments and mechanisms' (Patrick & Brown, 2007: 116).

Recent examples of Swedish interventions that include the military are Sweden's engagements in Liberia and Afghanistan. In Liberia, it contributed a unit to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and development assistance through SIDA, as well as engaging politically through

a special envoy. A Swedish lessons-learned study found that Sweden ‘needs much better inter-ministerial coordination to ensure greater alignment of planning, objectives, and resources, as well as between military resources and foreign aid instruments’ (Patrick & Brown, 2007:124). In Afghanistan, the Swedish-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif includes, in addition to the military component, a political advisor from the Foreign Ministry, a development advisor from SIDA, and an advisor from the Swedish Police Board (Patrick & Brown, 2007:124). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for interagency coordination for international interventions; this coordination takes place at four levels: the ministerial, state secretary (deputy minister), policy director and desk officer levels.

According to Patrick & Brown (2007:119) Sweden’s consensual political culture, regular communication, mutual understanding and the modest size (especially of the Ministry of Defence) has created a situation where there is no need for new standing units to facilitate a whole-of-government approach. However, tensions do exist, especially between SIDA and the Foreign Ministry on the use of aid to achieve political aims rather than poverty alleviation (Patrick & Brown, 2007:119).

2.4 The United Kingdom

The UK government’s ‘joined-up’ approach, initiated under the Blair administration, is a leading example of the emergence of the trend towards a whole-of-government approach at the national level. The Cabinet Office ensures that the Prime Minister and government’s strategic and foreign policy objectives are implemented in a coordinated way. Under the Cabinet Office, the Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID) provides part of the overarching structure and direction that guides the work of the different departments (Rintakoski & Autti, 2008:196). At the interdepartmental level, various cross-cutting groups facilitate policy coherence, among them the Afghan Strategy Group, the Sudan Unit and the Afghan Drugs Interdepartmental Unit.

In the UK, the government created a specialized interagency unit responsible for facilitating its whole-of-government approach in 2004. It was first called the *Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit* (PCRU), renamed the *Stabilization Unit* in 2008. It brings together the Ministry of Defence, the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. A key feature of the UK model is the creation of joint funding pools (OECD, 2007:54). These include the Stabilization Aid Fund, which is a pool amounting to GDP 269 million, jointly owned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office,

DFID and the Ministry of Defence and managed by the Stabilization Unit; and the Conflict Prevention Pool, worth GDP 327 million over three years (Rintakoski & Autti, 2008:197). In addition, the Stabilization Unit and the relevant departments are engaged in various efforts aimed at developing common concepts, policies, doctrines and tools. These initiatives have helped to promote the establishment of a greater sense of shared purpose among the departments.

The UK's overall whole-of-government approach to international interventions is directed by the National Security Strategy of March 2008, which is explicitly committed to an integrated civil–military approach. Specific campaigns also have their own strategies. However, Patrick & Brown (2007:10) found that, despite impressive efforts and innovations, effective whole-of-government approaches have remained elusive, 'hampered not only by conflicting mandates and cultures, but also by the lack of underlying consensus among departments on national objectives and the means to achieve them. The UK's record suggests that improved communication, common resource pools, and coordination mechanisms can improve policy response, but are no substitute for a clear, agreed-upon strategic framework reflecting common priorities.'

3. Norway's Whole-of-Government Approach

In order to understand the whole-of-government approach adopted by Norway, one needs to understand the developments that have shaped Norway's foreign and defence policies, as well as the unique role of Norwegian civil society. Each of these contexts will be explored in the next section. Thereafter we present in greater detail the Norwegian approach to Afghanistan – the only case in which a formal Norwegian whole-of-government approach has been applied.⁶ The way in which it has been organized will be analysed on the strategic (Oslo), operational (Kabul) and tactical (Faryab) levels.

3.1 The Norwegian Foreign Policy Context

According to Thune and Ulriksen (2002:7), there are three ways in which one can frame Norwegian foreign policy: essentialism, structuralism and pragmatism. The essentialist position holds that the nation's experiences (or its 'national essence') have been the major factor in shaping its foreign policy: in other words, there are aspects of Norwegian culture, shaped by its unique history, that inform the country's national and international policies. The structuralist position sees Norwegian foreign policy as a function of Norway's position in relation to others in the international community. This position is based on Norway's alliances and geopolitical positioning, and on its interests and values in the context of changes in the structure of international relations. Thune and Ulriksen go on to argue that neither the essentialist nor the structural frames can adequately explain Norway's foreign policy choices. In their view, Norwegian foreign policy can best be understood as a product of 'pragmatic idealism', which is based on the desire to 'maximize international influence'.

To a small country with limited resources like Norway, a whole-of-government approach will necessarily mean something other than for a big country with greater foreign policy 'reach'. The peculiar development of the international involvement in Afghanistan has, however, put Norway in a role where it might be able to play the part of a normally much bigger bilateral or multilateral actor. For the northwestern

⁶ Although a latecomer to whole-of-government approach, Norway has applied it in domestic reforms such as the merger of the unemployment service, the national pension and insurance system, and the social services in 2006 into what is now called NAV (Christensen & Læg Reid 2006:13).

Afghan province of Faryab – with around a million inhabitants – some, both Norwegians and others, do have the expectation (or ambition) that Norway as the lead NATO nation in the area could play the coordinating and indeed decisive international role normally expected of the United Nations. Faryab is a miniature playing ground where Norway could act out some whole-of-government traits – if it so wished. As we will see, there are several strains in Norway’s foreign and defence policy doctrines that militate against it assuming such a role. However, the PRT concept is a tactical whole-of-government application, and in the absence of other actors like the UN, Norway is, by default, contributing to the comprehensiveness and coherence of the international effort and its relations with local Afghan institutions in Faryab.

The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been present with only one or two staff members in Faryab. For a long time, only a local staff member was posted there. A few international NGOs have also been present, and on the police side the USA has been doing some training and mentoring. But the only actor with a comprehensive range of resources across the political, development, police and military dimensions has been Norway.

Such a unilateral approach is – in foreign policy terms – almost instinctively abhorrent to Norwegians. An early saying after Norway gained its independence in 1905 was: ‘the best foreign policy is to have no foreign policy’.⁷ Norway remained neutral during the First World War, but its non-foreign policy ambitions had their clear limitations. In 1940, Norway was occupied by Nazi Germany. Both militarily and economically, Norway’s dependence on the United States was overwhelming after the Second World War, because of Norway’s common border with Russia and the strategic waterways in the north. Some debate ensued in the postwar years, but Norway was firmly steered into NATO in 1949 by its dominant Labour Party.⁸ By multilateralizing at least some of its relations with the USA within the NATO umbrella, Norway could to mitigate the unequal power relations to some extent.

The Norwegian foreign policy elite after the Second World War were not acting rashly. They saw Norway as surrounded by stronger powers in a Hobbesian world of international anarchy. Its territorial waters were highly attractive; and in any bilateral competition, Norway

⁷ This was also stated by the first Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jørgen Løvland, in 1905

⁸ The increasingly polarized postwar situation between East and West forced Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen to take sides in security and foreign politics. Gerhardsen was supported by the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament), where there were only 13 votes against Norway’s joining NATO, which also formalized the relationship with the USA and the ‘Western’ world.

would lose out if it had no allies, or if contentious issues could not be resolved within a framework of international law and multilateral institutions based on the nation state as the principal, sovereign and equal unit.⁹ It was only natural that Norway should become a firm adherent of the UN and of all kinds of international bodies and regulations, with a few exceptions. Most notably, Norwegians have twice voted against joining what is today the EU, but that does not constitute an anomaly. Joining the EU, as it has been framed in the Norwegian debate, would be about losing national sovereignty. In that sense, fears revolved on how Norway's small population would drown in a big Europe, whereas in NATO and the UN each state has more or less the same influence, no matter the size of its population. Or, at least, such equality is enshrined in the founding documents, although in practice other factors serve to make some states more powerful than others.¹⁰ On the other hand, despite formally standing outside the EU, Norway has been one of the most active states in adapting to its regulations, and has sought whenever possible to participate in EU European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) missions in the Balkans as well as in Africa.

Thus, acting alone is something that is done only in exceptional cases – as in certain peace negotiations, where Norway's unique image and non-threatening posture has given it a comparative advantage. The motivation here has often been one of 'maximizing international influence', combined with altruism. An important point for Norway is further to maximize this influence mainly within a multilateral framework. Negotiating peace also fits well with the perceptions many Norwegians have of their country. Norway as an international peacemaker is a win–win situation. However, acting as a muscular arbiter in the distant province of Faryab is much harder to reconcile with Norwegian self-perceptions. Norway's role there would more readily appear to be one of supplanting a multilateral institution (i.e. the UN) and not complementing it.

3.2 Norwegian Defence Policy Context

Norway, along with the other Nordic countries, was among the major troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations until the early 1990s. All the same, such military contributions were marginal to the Norwegian armed forces, in terms of doctrine, structure and indeed as a part of the forces' *raison d'être*. The Norwegian military identity, or defence tradition, was built on a vision of the armed forces as repre-

⁹ As such, the UN, NATO, EU and the relationship with the USA have in many ways served as defining parameters for Norwegian foreign policy. (See for instance Leira et al., 2007:39; Neumann, 2003; Egeland 1988.)

¹⁰ The UN Security Council with its five veto powers is such an apparent factor of inequality within the United Nations.

senting the nation in the defence of the homeland (Græger 2007 & 2009, Ulriksen, 2002). Operations abroad were only marginal to this identity and role. Indeed, Norwegian military history since the 17th century was systematically presented as defence of Norwegian territory and autonomy. Participation in operations abroad was rarely mentioned in the literature.

Service in UN peacekeeping operations was not considered important or particularly helpful for the career of professional officers in the Norwegian army until around 1995, when NATO's SFOR relieved the UN's UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This shift in the emphasis put on missions abroad came about partly because SFOR was a NATO operation and not a UN-led force. Whereas UN operations were seen as being about politics and peace, NATO operations had the prestige of being 'real soldiering'.

In 1998, Norway withdrew from the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon after 30 years. Eleven years were to pass before Norway returned to UN peacekeeping – as of 2009, Norway is contributing a field hospital to the UN mission in Chad (MINURCAT). The decision to stop contributing troops to the UN mission in Lebanon was made after a bitter struggle between the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces on one side, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other. At issue was the control of Norwegian military participation in international operations (Ulriksen, 2007a). In 2002, a major structural change in practice converted the defining tasks of the Norwegian armed forces from territorial defence to contributions to NATO operations abroad (Ulriksen, 2007b).

Norwegian participation in UN peacekeeping operations was applauded as a 'citizen in uniform' approach that combined military and civilian skills and attitudes. The troops, former conscripts, were drafted from the reserves and included trained craftsmen and experienced men (troops were mostly male) from many civilian professions. In a sense, these units were ideal for the Lebanon-type peacekeeping operations where the military, apart from ceasefire observation and patrolling, mainly supported community development. Troops were given only a few weeks of military refresher training prior to deployment, and were thus not trained as coherent military fighting units – that was not their mandated task. Nor was it conceivable within the geo-political context at that time that the mandate of UNMIL would suddenly change.

Since 1995, and especially since 2001/2002, Norway has increasingly deployed combat-ready military units prepared for battle. This has been paralleled by greatly heightened military professionalism in the

armed forces. Norwegian armed forces rarely undertake community development or Civil–Military Cooperation (CIMIC) projects now: indeed, they are more or less forbidden to do tasks defined as ‘civilian’. The diversified skills and the perhaps more easygoing nature of the ‘citizen in uniform’ forces have been replaced by a strong focus on highly specialized security and combat skills. Such a transformation may have been both unavoidable and necessary, given the greater risk and far more frequent combat involved in current operations, for instance as part of the International Stabilization Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

The Norwegian military’s own preference for concentrating on purely military tasks has fitted well with the growing emphasis internationally on protecting humanitarian space and de-linking the military from activities that can be confused with humanitarian action. At any rate, whatever the direct causes, the Norwegian armed forces no longer have the dedicated capability nor do they desire mandates that require them to undertake or support humanitarian, governance or development tasks. The Norwegian PRT in Afghanistan, for instance, works for co-located, and at best loosely coordinated, civil–military relations, rather than integrated civil *and* military operations. Norway’s whole-of-government approach in Afghanistan thus needs to be understood, from a Norwegian military perspective at least, as an alternative to the old approach to CIMIC, where the military was directly involved in community development initiatives. The new Norwegian approach has conceptualized military and civilian agencies as working side by side, each in its own distinct professional role, but together contributing to a comprehensive approach to the overall objectives of the mission. At least, that was the idea.

3.3 The Role of Civil Society in Norway’s Foreign Policy, Development and Humanitarian Interventions

Norway has developed an informal and flexible cooperation model between state and non-state actors. This is especially the case in the development and humanitarian context, where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, research institutions and non-governmental aid organizations cooperate in a symbiotic relationship as extensions of Norwegian influence (Tvedt, 2003). Similar descriptions can be made of state and non-state collaboration in other Nordic countries, but Norway in particular has become identified with this model. This is due to the intentionality and normative character this relationship has come to represent, as well as the scope and influence of Norway in especially the humanitarian and development world, thanks to its sizeable ‘funding footprint’. In addition to the close cooperation between authorities, development and humanitarian NGOs, and academic institutions, this

unique relationship is also characterized by small-state advantages, and a long-term perspective (Norwegian MFA, 2008). The first component – the close cooperation between civil society and the Norwegian government – is highlighted as the main advantage of this special relationship.

What then is the role of Norwegian civil society in the country's whole-of-government approach? One argument is that the two approaches involve different levels: the whole-of-government approach is about harmonizing the various policies and approaches of government departments and agencies, while the special relationship with civil society has focused on leveraging the role of Norwegian NGOs and academic institutions in the execution of policy. This does not mean that Norwegian civil society has no role to play in influencing government policy, but rather that this does not take place by formally incorporating civil society into governmental coordination mechanisms.

One aspect that needs special consideration concerns the implications of the fact that the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made it an explicit goal and policy to make use of Norwegian NGOs, often as implementing partners in the development, humanitarian, research and capacity building fields, in its foreign policy actions. In a political and security-oriented whole-of-government context, as in Afghanistan, this may result in Norwegian non-governmental partners being perceived as being an integral part of, or at least indirectly serving, the same goals as those identified and pursued through the Norwegian whole-of-government approach.

This special relationship between civil society and the government has developed in the context of many development, humanitarian, research and capacity-building initiatives over the years. Norway's whole-of-government approach, which combines development with security, governance and political objectives, has thus far taken shape only in the context of its recent intervention in Afghanistan. Although special attention needs to be given to the independence of Norway's civil society, it should also be recognized that this dilemma is, as yet, limited to Afghanistan.

In the Afghanistan context, the prominent role of the military in the whole-of-government approach is likely to have had an impact on the special relationship that traditionally existed between the government and its NGO partners. The prominent role of the Norwegian military in Afghanistan may have led Norwegian NGOs to prefer to take on a more independent identity there – independent from the Norwegian government – than has been generally the case. If so, this would be

because of concerns that close association with the Norwegian government, and thus Norway's military participation in Afghanistan as part of NATO, could impact negatively on their perceived neutrality and impartiality. This is likely to have been the case for those NGOs, mostly in the humanitarian domain, for which neutrality and impartiality are core principles.

As a small state, Norway has in the past not been negatively associated with pursuing major-power national interests. This has made it easier for its NGOs and research institutions to be closely linked to the Norwegian government without being accused of losing their non-governmental status. This special identity has also made it easier for other humanitarian agencies to engage with Norwegian institutions and to receive Norwegian funding. Norway has always been seen as a strong supporter of the United Nations, and many Norwegian NGOs work closely with the UN, often as implementing partners of its agencies. In Afghanistan, however, Norway's identity has become more complex, because its military role there is undertaken as part of the NATO ISAF mission. Norway's military role in Afghanistan is a complex mix of a nationally identified PRT, an association with NATO that is emphasized at the operational level, and an association, at the strategic level, with the USA and the post-9/11 campaign against international terrorism. Norway has become prominently associated with NATO and the broader Western coalition, and that erodes much of the small-state advantage it could otherwise have had in Afghanistan. This position also negatively affects the degree to which it is possible, in the Afghanistan context, to maintain the special relationship between Norwegian NGOs and the Norwegian government.

3.4 Norwegian Policy Coordination on Afghanistan

Before the 2005 general elections, the Norwegian government had focused its efforts on Iraq, and as a result the Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan was fragmented and characterized by *ad hoc* initiatives. The new post-2005 Labour coalition government, which replaced a Centre/Conservative coalition, decided to shift its focus to UN and NATO operations, and to limit its exposure to the coalition operation in Iraq.¹¹ The new government decided to expand the use of its armed forces in international operations, but emphasized that this should only be in international operations undertaken under the UN charter, with a UN mandate and in accordance with international law.

Less than two months after the election, the new foreign minister publicly expressed the need to narrow and specialize Norwegian efforts in international engagements as an explicit goal, combined with the de-

¹¹ The Labour coalition government was re-elected in 2009.

sire to improve the UN and its abilities to lead complex operations. This meant strengthening Norway's efforts towards the UN, and UN operations, and to a greater extent channelling the country's stakes in international engagements through the UN (Norwegian MFA, 2005). Consequently, the new government chose not to extend the Norwegian engagement in the US-led operation 'Enduring Freedom' in Iraq, in order to shift the focus of the country's international engagement to the operation in Afghanistan. As a result of these policy changes, Norway became a more substantial actor in Afghanistan from 2005 onwards. Additionally it decided to adopt a whole-of-government approach to Afghanistan by creating coordination mechanisms between the ministries and constructing new interdepartmental arenas, such as the Afghanistan Forum, for policymaking.

The State Secretary for Defence, Espen Barth Eide, was formerly the head of the Department of International Politics at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI); in that capacity he led a research team that produced a report on the UN's Integrated Missions approach (Eide et al., 2005). On the basis of his knowledge of UN integration efforts, and the whole-of-government initiatives of countries like Canada and the UK, Eide took the lead in initiating the Afghanistan Forum as an attempt to establish a Norwegian whole-of-government approach. The Afghanistan Forum involves meetings, at the level of state secretary (similar to deputy minister), that bring together all the ministries engaged in one form or another in Afghanistan, to enable them to pursue a Norwegian whole-of-government approach towards Afghanistan.

From an international perspective this initiative can be seen as a national application of the Norwegian call for more integrated and comprehensive UN and NATO operations. From the national perspective, the Afghanistan Forum can be understood as an initiative to strengthen Norway's engagement in Afghanistan. Before 2005, Norway's engagement in Afghanistan had been characterized by its sense of duty towards its allies, but with the Afghanistan Forum Norway wanted to adopt a new coordinated approach based on a comprehensive understanding and a common strategy for its involvement in Afghanistan. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who noted, 'there has been a desire to fulfil political goals before the ability to deliver is achieved', and that many of the actors and organizations represented in Afghanistan have acquired 'a strong sense of ownership to their contribution'.

In its present form, the Afghanistan Forum consists of the state secretaries from the MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), MoD (Ministry of Defence), MoJ (Ministry of Justice) and the Office of the Prime Min-

ister.¹² The Norwegian Embassy in Kabul is the Forum's Afghanistan base, with staff from MFA and two persons from the MoD. The Forum meets at both the political level and the bureaucratic level, as the meetings of the state secretaries are supported by corresponding meetings at the ministry level. The bureaucratic level prepares the work of the political level. The meetings at the political level are chaired by the State Secretary of the MFA, and the Forum has a designated secretariat in the Afghanistan and Pakistan Section of the MFA.

The frequency of these meetings has depended largely on the need for policy attention, since the meetings are aimed at preparing the government to make decisions ('R-notater') on Afghanistan. 'R-notater' is short for *Regjeringsnotater*: 'government notes'. All matters requiring a formal decision by the government must be submitted in the form of a 'R-notat', and presented at one of the two weekly government meetings, where binding political decisions are taken. The 'R-notat' includes a presentation of the case, an overview of issues considered by the ministry, the minister's point of view and a recommendation for action (Norwegian Office of the Prime Minister, 2003: 15).

The Afghanistan Forum is an opportunity for all the ministries to update and be updated on recent developments in Afghanistan. Apart from being the catalyst for the preparation of 'R-notater', the main ambition is to bring all the relevant actors at the different levels together. The Forum is meant to serve as a decision-making pipeline on Afghanistan related issues. Policy considerations are prepared at the bureaucratic level, addressed at the Secretary of State level, where recommended actions are formulated, and then submitted to the executive political level for final approval and issuing. The Forum is thus meant to create a process whereby the different perspectives from the various ministries are integrated and shaped into one coherent government approach. A good example is the development and consideration of the Faryab strategy, which was discussed at a Forum meeting in March 2009.

On the other hand, the Forum also exposes the differences among the ministries in a way that sometimes causes tension and leads representatives to take defensive positions. However, in the longer run such coordination mechanisms may act to build understanding and respect for the mandates, roles and work cultures of the relevant ministries. This also seems to be the case, as there appears to be a conscious effort to learn more about the different roles of the various ministries. Staff from the MFA and MoJ has been participating more actively in

¹² In addition to its interdepartmental nature, this composition also ensures that the three political parties of the governing coalition are represented.

military exercises, and each new six-month Norwegian PRT contingent now receives, in addition to their six-month long preparation training, a one-day seminar before deployment where representatives of the various ministries brief the soldiers on the role and approach of their ministry in Afghanistan. Various Norwegian NGOs are also typically invited to give presentations on their work in Afghanistan at this pre-deployment seminar.¹³ An important effect of the Afghanistan Forum, and the Norwegian whole-of-government approach in general, is that it has created a process that facilitates ongoing attention on Afghanistan, at all levels of the bureaucratic and political hierarchy, and across all the relevant ministries.

3.5 Norwegian Policy Implementation in Afghanistan

No country operates in a vacuum in Afghanistan. There are a great many international actors present in the country; and there are also certain structural preconditions for this engagement, such as the organization of the NATO military activities in Afghanistan in PRTs.

Most of the major international actors are engaged in Afghanistan. These include organizations like the UN, NATO, OSCE and EU, and countries like the USA, China, Iran, Russia, India and Pakistan – to mention only a few. The international intervention in Afghanistan has been authorized by the UN Security Council, and currently more than 100,000 international soldiers from more than 40 different countries are deployed in Afghanistan.¹⁴ The foundation for Norway's engagement in Afghanistan is the UN mandate, as per UN Security Council resolutions 1386 and 1510, as well as various framework agreements like the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Afghanistan Compact, the Paris Declaration, and the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board structure (JCMB).

Through the Afghanistan Compact and the ANDS, the multilateral and bilateral donor community has sought to align its support around Afghan needs and in support of Afghan institutions. However, the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), and prominent critics, have pointed out that the bulk of the international support does not flow through the government, but rather through NGOs and IOs (See for instance Ghani & Lockhart, 2008). There are in essence three different channels for Norwegian aid to Afghanistan. One goes directly to GIROA at the national level. A second goes through IOs

¹³ This seminar includes presentations both from the military and civilian sector, dealing with issues such as gender perspectives, prison projects, the involvement of the judiciary, Norwegian military plans and strategies for the near future, and the organization of NGO work and role in Afghanistan.

¹⁴ US troops under Operation Enduring Freedom number approx 30,000; total US troops were in October 67,700. See also ISAF's Facts and Figures : <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf>

and NGOs operating in several parts and sectors in Afghanistan. And a third is tied directly to the PRT in Meymaneh and is specifically linked to Faryab province.

3.6 The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Model

All the countries whose whole-of-government approaches were introduced earlier in this report are deployed in Afghanistan, and all participate in, or lead, a specific PRT. The PRT concept is an applied tactical-level whole-of-government approach. Each PRT is encouraged to include, in addition to its security (military) element, political advisors, development advisors, police and or rule-of-law advisors, as well as any others (like governance, gender, counter-narcotics advisors, etc.), as appropriate, depending on the local context of each PRT. The PRT concept thus provides for the combined deployment of experts in several fields and from a range of government agencies, with the expectation that their co-location will result in improved whole-of-government coordination. The end-result is expected to have a more system-wide or multi-dimensional impact on the stabilization and reconstruction goals and objectives of the international intervention, within each PRT's area of operation.

The US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) coalition established 'Humanitarian Liaison Cells' in 2002. These were small military camps staffed with US military civil affairs specialists, spread across the regions of Afghanistan with assessment and implementation tasks related to humanitarian and reconstruction needs. These cells evolved into what are now known as PRTs, and they became subordinated within the ISAF chain of command structure. Although initially meant as an interim measure, the PRTs have proved resilient, and there are currently 26 of them in Afghanistan.¹⁵ The idea was broad and ambitious: the PRTs were to assist the central Afghan government in extending its authority, and to enable security sector reform and reconstruction.

Although the initial PRTs were military organizations, most countries, in the context of the emerging whole-of-government doctrine, have since placed political, developmental and police advisors in their PRTs. As these PRTs developed independently at first, and as NATO provides for a large degree of national discretion, each country that established a PRT was able to determine the composition, goals, activities and funding for its own PRT. As a result, most of the 26 PRTs are slightly differently organized and each has its own national character. They all have a protection (military) component, but the degree to

¹⁵ ISAF's Facts and Figures:
http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf

which they include civilians, and undertake the originally envisaged reconstruction, governance and security sector reform tasks, differs widely (Perito, 2005; Eronen, 2008). The PRTs are now better coordinated among themselves than they were in the beginning, and they are now part of the overall NATO command and control arrangements.

Norway is the lead nation for the PRT in Meymaneh, in Faryab province in the northwest of Afghanistan. Norway was joined by Finland, and later also by Latvia and Iceland. Norway has had this lead role since September 2005, when it took over from the UK. The PRT Meymaneh is organized into two pillars: a civilian group with between 10 and 20 members, and a military component of around 400 soldiers, including 100 from Latvia.¹⁶ The PRT is led by a Norwegian Lieutenant Colonel, and it falls under the command of the ISAF Regional Command North (RC North).

The PRT is tasked with promoting security and good governance, and facilitating development and reconstruction, in close cooperation with the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Support functions for the PRT are provided by the Norwegian National Contingent Command (NCC) and the Norwegian National Support Element (NSE) in Mazar-e Sharif. The NCC acts as a link between the Norwegian units in Afghanistan and the Norwegian National Joint Headquarters.

The PRT in Meymaneh maintains a clear distinction between the civilian and military pillars, but they are co-located. In fact, all the civilians have offices in the same building and on the same floor as the PRT commander. The 'civilian PRT' consisted, in May 2009, of around 15 personnel, including a political advisor, three development advisors (from Norway, Iceland and Latvia), and police and prison advisors. The five Norwegian police officers deployed in Faryab in September 2009 were all seconded to the EU police mission (EUPOL-A).

There is no overall leadership of the civilian part of the PRT. The police and prison advisors each had a head of contingent, but that only amounted to one person being the supervisor of another one. From the summer of 2009 a civilian coordinator has been in place, with supervisory responsibility over the Norwegian development and political advisors.¹⁷ The civilian coordinator is not responsible for the police and

¹⁶ The number of civilians varies somewhat from contingent to contingent. For example, more Norwegian police officers came in the autumn of 2009 as part of an expanded EUPOL presence.

¹⁷ As of October 2009 the Civilian Coordinator is responsible for one political advisor and three development advisors (one Norwegian, one seconded from Iceland and one from USAID integrated in the Norwegian team). The Civilian Coordinator reports to the MFA via the Norwegian Ambassador in Kabul, but also through formal national lines of report-

prison advisors, and none of the civilians is answerable to the PRT commander on issues other than security and conduct within the camp.

There are no Kabul (operational level) or Meymaneh (tactical level) whole-of-government fora equivalent to the strategic or political-level Afghanistan Forum in Oslo. The military part of the PRT reports directly through the NCC in Mazar-e Sharif to the Norwegian National Joint Headquarters, with no presence at the embassy in Kabul. The military attaché at the embassy has other functions and is not part of the chain of command of the PRT.

Although there is no formal whole-of-government forum, the military team, and the police, prisons, political and development advisors participate in a range of meetings aimed at ensuring that their work is well coordinated. However, if professional disagreements erupt, and it is normal that they do from time to time, it is up to the ability of the personnel on the ground to resolve these issues amicably. The Norwegian PRT has no formal procedures for de-conflicting issues in Meymaneh. In fact, as of April 2009, the political advisor did not have a written job description, even though the post had existed since 2005.¹⁸ If individuals are unable to resolve their differences, they have to work the issues up their respective chains of command.

Ultimately, the first joint decision-making level is the Afghanistan Forum in Oslo. This is not conducive to unity of effort and expeditious problem-solving. Current and past PRT personnel interviewed for this report indicated that cooperation fluctuated from contingent to contingent, depending on the personalities involved. Whereas the military PRT undergoes six months of joint preparation prior to departure for Afghanistan in order to establish a unified force, the civilians rotate separately from the military, often staying for 12 months or more in theatre, and are not involved in the military's joint preparation period.

Military personnel complained that the civilian side was understaffed and that some of the civilians were 'dogmatic', because they did not allow the soldiers to do simple 'hearts and minds' projects.¹⁹ Civilians in turn complained that the soldiers did not understand development practices and should keep their distance. None of the three Norwegian political advisors in place between 2005 and 2009 had been regular MFA employees prior to taking up their duties in Afghanistan: internally posted vacancies in the MFA had not yielded any applicants.

ing. The coordinator liaises with ISAF's PRT office HQ, NATO's senior civilian representative, UNAMA in Mazar-e Sharif and in Kabul, as well as with the local government authorities.

¹⁸ Interview with political advisor February 2009.

¹⁹ Interviews with PRT staff in February 2009.

The development advisor in 2008/09 also came from outside the MFA and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The fact these persons did not come from the line ministries may have affected their influence with the military PRT, as well as with the MFA and NORAD. The civilians in the Norwegian PRT seemed quite junior in terms of rank, compared to the British and Dutch PRTs, and they had no clear hierarchical position in relation to the PRT commander.

No PRT in Afghanistan is organized in exactly the same way. In Uruzgan province, the Dutch PRT is a substructure of a much larger military combat unit, the Task Force Uruzgan. This Dutch PRT is led by a military officer with a civilian deputy seconded from the MFA. In Helmand province, the British PRT is led by a civilian who also has command of some British military personnel. In both these cases, the coordinated authority over the work of the PRT resides in the theatre of operations. Although many decisions are ultimately taken by the various ministries and departments in the home countries, the recommendations are coordinated at the PRT level. In the Norwegian PRT there are many stove-piped supervisors, but no overall coordination process or leadership. This implies that the Norwegian PRT lacks a shared understanding of its tasks, challenges and environment, lacks a common plan, common monitoring & evaluation process that can assist it in tracking progress on a whole-of-government basis, and a common reporting process (de Coning & Romita, 2009).

The degree to which a coherent Norwegian whole-of-government approach is applied on the ground, at the tactical level, in Faryab province, is therefore the result of the extent to which the shared vision and decisions of the state secretaries in the Afghanistan Forum are transmitted, without distortion, through several levels of command in three line ministries, down to the PRT advisors in Meymaneh. In fact, the situation is even more complex than that. There are several different sections in the MFA and NORAD that direct, or otherwise provide advice, to the civilian political and development advisors in the PRT, via the embassy in Kabul. There are also separate directorates in the MoJ that provide guidance and advice to the police and prisons advisors. On the military side, there are the MoD and the Joint Headquarters to consider, but also the fact that the PRT is made up from a number of units from the Norwegian Army, Navy and Air Force. These services and units have different perspectives and cultures, and that is likely to generate variations in the understanding and interpretation of the tasking received. If Naval and Army Special Forces become deployed to the PRT, this tendency is likely to be reinforced.

Achieving coherence under such circumstances is no mean task. There are many layers through which orders or guidance must travel, from the state secretaries down to the PRT. Each of these layers can act as a prism through which intentions may be interpreted differently and possibly become distorted in the process. For the personnel on the ground, such distortions are magnified and they can become significant obstacles to a common understanding of the instructions received. The lack of lower level whole-of-government fora at the Meymaneh and Kabul levels may also contribute to gap between Norwegian political intentions and the realities of the local context. Precisely because the Afghanistan Forum is so distant from the tactical level, its guidance might not be sufficiently adapted to local political and cultural realities in Afghanistan.

3.7 Foreign Policy, Development and Humanitarian Policy Action

Whereas Norway's military role is focused on the PRT in Meymaneh, its foreign policy, development, rule of law and humanitarian policies and interventions in Afghanistan have wider ambitions.²⁰ In 2008/2009 Norway contributed NOK 750 million in humanitarian assistance and development support to Afghanistan.²¹ The MFA, with the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul, allocated approximately 20% of its development and humanitarian budgets to Faryab and 80% to the rest of Afghanistan. Most of the Norwegian funds are channelled via the World Bank, the UN and international NGOs, especially Norwegian ones.

Norway has also placed strong emphasis on maintaining humanitarian space for the NGOs. Various sections in the MFA (including its Section for Humanitarian Affairs) and the embassy in Kabul are responsible for how this assistance is used. Much of it is channelled through NGOs who perform the humanitarian and development work in Afghanistan under one of the MFAs four priority pillars: village development, state-building, good governance and education.

The embassy in Kabul has a coordination role, and administers and oversees around 70% of the development and humanitarian assistance that Norway allocates to Afghanistan. The funds are distributed among UNDP projects, UN humanitarian appeals (OCHA, WFP, WHO, FAO), the Norwegian Refugee Council, the ICRC, mine-

²⁰ Cf. *Norwegian Legal Assistance Afghanistan (NORLAAF)* (Styrkebrønnen), http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/tema/Internasjonalt_justissamarbeid/internasjonalt_beredskapsgruppe.html?id=417226

²¹ Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre's Foreign Policy Address to the Storting, 10 February 2009: http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/utenriksministeren/2009/address_storting0902.html?id=545344

clearance projects, human rights projects, and others. This way of delegating responsibility through the distribution of funds is the result of an explicit Norwegian strategy. As one of the interviewees from the MFA explained: ‘The NGOs provide the sense of reality, they are the eyes and ears of the Ministry.’ The special relationship between the Norwegian government and Norwegian NGOs is thus maintained as far as development and humanitarian assistance are concerned.

There is a considerable difference in focus at the Kabul (operational) level and at the Meymaneh level. The embassy in Kabul is responsible for implementing the foreign, development and humanitarian policies of the Norwegian government throughout Afghanistan, whereas Meymaneh is focused on Faryab province and has a significant military (security) function, over and above its civilian functions. The embassy is also responsible for engaging with the GIRoA and the international community, and thus performs the crucial function of ensuring coherence between Norway’s national whole-of-government approach and the international efforts underway to ensure an international comprehensive and integrated approach.

3.8 Rule of Law and Policing

The Norwegian MoJ does not have the capacity or the capability to administer a police engagement that fully reflects the desires of the government for its engagement in Afghanistan. As a matter of general policy, the ceiling of the number of Norwegian police officers serving abroad at any time is limited to 1% of the total force – which is more or less 80 officers.²² The Norwegian Police Force has not been organized with the aim of deploying police officers abroad, and it does not have the same institutional apparatus for this purpose as, for example, the military. The executive branch of the MoJ responsible for policing is the Police Directorate. This directorate has an office consisting of only four officers dealing with recruitment and rotation of all Norwegian police officers worldwide. The demand from the MFA for police officers to peace support operations globally is always higher than the supply. One of the interviewees from the MoJ explained that the MoJ ‘cannot meet the current needs from Afghanistan; this is a question of capacity’. In Afghanistan the existing Norwegian police contingent is spread thinly across a broad range of international policing initiatives. One of the results is that the Norwegian government decided that the police advisors responsible for mentoring and training in the new PMTs (Police Mentoring Teams) would be augmented by Norwegian soldiers. This cooperation would seem to be an obvious matching of supply and demand. However, it also represents a major break with the Norwegian tradition, which until, now has maintained a clear sepa-

²² As determined by the Storting (Parliament).

ration between the police (considered to be non-combatant civilians under International Humanitarian Law), and the military (classified as combatants). The arrangement may place both the police and the military in tactical situations where there is confusion and uncertainty about their respective roles and legal status. In Afghanistan, the Norwegian military personnel are part of NATO and their ability to use force is covered by the ISAF Rules of Engagement (ROEs). The police advisors are not combatants and will have to comply with the legal framework of law enforcement personnel. In the report *Samarbeid eller Samrøre*, Halvor Hartz argues that the legal status of the police and military members of the PMTs needs to be clarified. He offers a possible scenario where Norwegian police officers will be subject to investigation and prosecution by Norwegian authorities for the use of force in Afghanistan, whereas ISAF members would have immunity for the same actions (2009:7). There is also concern that military officers may be used as mentors for police activities without having the required knowledge or experience in police work (ibid: 14–16, 35).

The funding model places most of the power with the MFA. As the MFA also controls the budget for the MoJ's international operations, some would say that the Norwegian whole-of-government approach to Afghanistan equals MFA policy.²³ This is a view shared by many actors involved with Afghanistan in other agencies than the MFA: for instance, a representative of the Norwegian MoJ stated that coordination is relatively poor and that a 'part-of-government' approach would be a more precise term.²⁴

²³ This is in addition to the fact that the PRT model favours MFAs in determining goals, activities and funding.

²⁴ Interview March 2009

4. Critical Analysis

Although the need for an integrated or comprehensive approach is widely accepted, many obstacles remain when it comes to implementing the concept in a meaningful way. Most, if not all, actors still fall short of their own commitments in this regard. This is because there is a significant difference between a policy commitment to the integrated or comprehensive approach, and the challenge of navigating the real-world dilemmas that decision-makers face in trying to coordinate multiple independent agencies, each directed by their own mandates, governing bodies and priorities, acting under pressure as a result of limited resources, limited knowledge and their own time-tables and reporting lines. With such constraints and pressures, it is not surprising that various studies have found inherent contradictions (Paris & Sisk, 2009), lack of strategic direction (Smith, 2003) and conflicting aims and perspectives (OECD, 2007).²⁵ This remains characteristic of many of today's peace, stability and reconstruction operations, despite significant policy-level initiatives to facilitate an integrated or comprehensive approach in these missions. Norway's whole-of-government experience in this regard is thus not significantly different from the international experience recorded to date.

4.1 Lack of Strategic Policy Planning

Despite the leading role it has played in promoting integrated approaches to international peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, Norway does not have a comprehensive strategy for its engagement in fragile states in general, nor a whole-of-government strategy for any particular country, including Afghanistan. However, in 2009 Norway did attempt to develop a strategic vision for its engagement in Faryab province (Norwegian MFA, MoD and MoJ, 2009). The Faryab strategy lacks a description of the ground realities that the strategy is intended to deal with, and is more a vision than a plan – but it can offer a good starting point. It is indicative of how a more strategic approach to Afghanistan can help to direct a more coherent whole-of-government approach to Afghanistan, as well as other similar country initiatives. Different government agencies can be expected to pursue coherence if they do not have clear benchmarks for measuring

²⁵ See for instance the report, *Whole of Government Approaches to Fragile States* (OECD, 2007:19) that points out that different actors approach fragile states differently, and may, at times, even have conflicting aims and perspectives that are not easily reconciled. These perspectives may range from counter-terrorism to governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, trade promotion, humanitarian action, reconciliation, and development cooperation.

whether they are acting in coherence with a larger strategy (de Coning, 2007:12).

The reluctance to develop such specific strategies is perhaps symptomatic of Norwegian foreign policy in general. Norway has identified peace and reconciliation, development, humanitarian aid, support to international organizations, human rights and democracy-building as key components of its international policies. It has more than tripled its development budget since 1990, becoming one of the few countries to fulfil the commitment to raise the development assistance contribution to one per cent of GDP. In the proposed national budget for 2010 the level of assistance is set to 1.09 per cent of GNI (Norwegian National Budget, 2010:13). There is thus no doubt about Norway's commitment to making significant contributions in the areas it has chosen to focus on.

However, Norwegian engagements abroad have been characterized by *ad hoc* solutions. Referring to Thune and Ulriksen's (2002) foreign policy analysis discussed earlier, we may say that, as a result of this lack of clear strategic planning, Norway's default foreign policy and whole-of-government approach appears to hinge on being recognized as a substantial international actor. The Norwegian approach suggests that Norway would prefer to focus on *how best to make a substantial and sustainable contribution to the peace process* in Afghanistan, but that the lack of a clear strategic planning process has led all agencies and levels of government to pursue the safe fall-back, or auto-pilot, position: to make Norway look good, and firmly anchor it within multilateral frameworks like the UN, NATO and the EU. It might be argued that there is not necessarily a contradiction between these two approaches, but if that is the case they at least do not appear to be aligned by design. For any shift in this default position to take place, a clear and powerful signal will need to be sent from the political leadership down through the bureaucracy. Otherwise the organizations will keep on pursuing what they believe to be a continuation of long-held and valued Norwegian policy.

Most of the examples provided throughout the text contribute to this finding, but perhaps the most obvious one relates to the contribution of the MoJ in Afghanistan. The limited number of police officers that Norway can deploy in Afghanistan – approximately 23 in 2009 – have been spread thinly across a broad variety of organizations and projects. Nine officers are serving with the EU mission EUPOL-A, four are working within the US-led Focus District Development programme, one is seconded to the UN mission UNAMA and seven officers are working bilaterally on various projects, amongst others, mentoring the Counter Narcotics Police in Afghanistan and the Female

Police Project at the Police Academy. An alternative approach could have been to focus these Norwegian resources on one, or a few, limited specific needs-based programmes, so that the investment could more readily produce tangible and sustainable results. Instead it would appear as if the Norwegian police advisors have, since the outset in 2003 and up to date, been randomly deployed – in the words of one person interviewed: ‘at a bureaucrat's best guess of what will benefit the reputation of Norway in the EU and NATO.’

4.2 Process vs. Structure

One strength of the Norwegian whole-of-government approach lies in its *ad hoc* nature that favours process rather than structure. This avoids the main unintended consequences of most of the institutional models, such as the Canadian START, the US C/SCRS and the UK's Stabilization Unit. In most, if not all, these cases, the newly established coordination units became part of the coordination problem and bureaucratic turf battles, competing for funds, power, influence and prestige with the existing departments that they are supposed to coordinate. The Norwegian approach, which is to keep coordination separate from execution, seems to be optimal for the highly complex and dynamic environments in which most peace and stability-type interventions take place.

However, too much of an *ad hoc* nature can be a weakness. Norway's whole-of-government approach seems to be too dependent on the will of the sitting government, the goodwill of the current state secretaries and the personal chemistry of the personnel in the embassy in Kabul and the PRT in Meymaneh. There is no guarantee that a new government or new personnel will follow the same system. In this context the Swedish, Dutch and Canadian models, where there is a legal or at least high-level policy basis for the whole-of-government approach, are to be commended. Such a legal or high-level policy basis serves to formalize the processes that need to be followed to ensure that a whole-of-government approach has been integrated into the policy decisions that lead to, and sustain, foreign interventions.

The Norway's whole-of-government approach can also be broadened from its current focus on creating a space for sharing information through the Afghanistan Forum, to include a formal requirement in high-level policy, as in the Canadian and Swedish approaches, that the whole-of-government process should develop a national strategy. For instance, it could be specified that such a national strategy must be preceded by a joint assessment and analysis process involving all the relevant governmental departments. The ensuing joint strategy will need to include a joint monitoring and evaluation system. Such a sys-

tem should monitor progress against benchmarks on an ongoing basis, and evaluate progress against goals and objectives on a regular basis. This will ensure that the coordination process is driven by, and can be evaluated against, clear goals and objectives.

These goals and objectives should be broadly defined at the higher strategic level, leaving room for operational and tactical flexibility. Indeed, part of the strategy should be to remain flexible, and to seek to be coherent with Afghan and international strategic frameworks, as well as to be responsive to changes in the situation. In that way, the strategy would not become locked into a narrowly defined and highly detailed national whole-of-government plan, but would be able to consider Norway's goals and objectives in the context of the dynamic situation as well as Afghan and international strategies.

Canada, the UK and others use their whole-of-government approaches to coordinate all their international interventions. By contrast, Norway's approach has been limited to the intervention in Afghanistan. The Norwegian whole-of-government approach could be formalized, either in a law, or through a high-level policy process, and could be applied to all cases where the Norwegian government deploys civilians, police and military to international conflict management operations. In the case of Afghanistan, the initiative was initially driven by the MoD because of its military deployment, but in other cases there may be only civilian and police deployments. The Norwegian approach should thus not be dependent on any one ministry, but should automatically involve all the ministries that are usually engaged in international deployments, even if they are not engaged in a specific case at that point. Such involvement will help them to learn lessons from that experience, learn from the process, and be better informed of the situation, should circumstances change and require deployment from that department in future.

4.3 The Tension between National and International Coherence

Both the international and the Norwegian whole-of-government experiences point to an important tension between national and international coherence. If the Norwegian government were to have a detailed nationally developed, nationally driven strategy for Afghanistan, it would be limited in the extent to which it could contribute to a coherent international approach to Afghanistan. It would be equally limited in the extent to which it could align its national interests and values to those of the Afghan government and people, because such a strategy would, by definition, be driven primarily by Norwegian national interests and domestic decision-making bodies. This inherent

tension can be resolved only if the national strategy is informed by extensive international and Afghan consultations and a commitment to support, and be coherent with, international and Afghan strategies and approaches.

It is thus important to reflect on what should, and should not, be decided upon at the national or whole-of-government level. The objective of the whole-of-government approach is to harmonize the policy actions offered by the various government departments in a given intervention, for instance Afghanistan. One way to do that is to ensure that there is a mechanism in place where these various departments can meet regularly, exchange information, and discuss cooperation – like Norway's Afghanistan Forum. A more ambitious approach would be to seek to develop a national strategy towards, e.g. Afghanistan, so that all the departments become linked into pursuing the same objective. As noted above, several governments, including those of Canada and Sweden, have institutionalized this strategy-driven approach. Such a strategy approach can be especially useful if it creates a process that brings the different departments together in a structured dialogue. This will often start with a joint assessment and joint analysis process which will result in the departments coming to a shared understanding of the problem. The next step is a discussion leading to a strategy that formulates how Norway can best make a contribution to, manage, or resolve the problem at hand. The added value of the whole-of-government approach is that this process aims to integrate the various dimensions and principles represented by these different departments – diplomacy, defence, justice, policing, security, development, humanitarian assistance, human rights, etc.

The danger, as highlighted earlier, is that the assessment, analysis and planning that follow from such a process could lock the Norwegian government, or its respective departments, into a path that is not coherent with, for instance, Afghan or international strategies, or that is slow to adjust to developments on the ground and in the international arena. An alternative approach is deliberately to avoid having an overly detailed national plan that might entail lack of flexibility when it comes to cooperating with Afghan and international partners. Instead, the whole-of-government approach could be limited to formulating broad or higher-level goals and objectives. Of course, it should also state a clear commitment to support Afghan and internationally agreed frameworks, and a commitment to engage vigorously in shaping such an international strategic framework.

Norway has not developed or chosen the PRT model in Afghanistan, but has had to contribute within the structural limitations governing the situation, including the requirement of broadly following ISAF's

intentions for the PRTs. To some degree, Norway has been able to influence its specific approach to the PRT model. The PRT model in general, however, is a clear example of the tension between national and international approaches, and has contributed to the lack of coherence in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, precisely since Norway values its international contribution through the PRT, its only choice is to try, in the short term, to contribute to improved coordination within the given structural limitations, while engaging internationally to find better ways of achieving coherence among the international actors in the longer term.

4.4 The Tension between Strategic and Operational Coherence

The need for strategic guidance at the political level in Oslo has been recognized and implemented, through the functioning of the Afghanistan Forum at the state-secretary level, but there seems insufficient recognition of the need for operational-level coordination in Kabul. Head office political functionaries and officials typically cover a range of issues at the more strategic level, whereas the officials deployed into the theatre of operations have a directed focus on the specific case and end to be more engaged in the operational and tactical issues at hand. As this is also the case with other countries and international organizations, the coordination among international actors in the theatre or at the operational level is a crucial level where those dedicated to the specific context can meaningfully engage with each other. It is here that the local authorities are present at the highest level, and that they can be most meaningfully engaged.

It is thus very useful to have a range of in-country level coordination processes where national, international and local stakeholders can meet regularly to share information and coordinate action. In the whole-of-government context, the ambassador is the natural focal point for coordination, and one would expect that he or she would regularly convene meetings where the most senior representatives of the various government agencies represented at country level would meet to coordinate their activities. It is also to be expected that they would discuss the issues that need to be referred to the strategic or Oslo level, as well as issues be taken up with partners in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan. As these various agencies are each networked within their own functional sectors, regularly coming together to exchange information would be a useful opportunity for cross-pollination and triangulation of perspectives across sectors. It was thus surprising to learn that such meetings among all the different government agencies engaged rarely took place in Afghanistan.

It is recommended that Norway, following the Canadian example, include as part of its whole-of-government approach a specific set of policy actions required at the operational or country level. These could include an annual national or operational-level action plan, with an assessment, an operational action plan, a description of coordination mechanisms, and a monitoring and evaluation plan. The ambassador, together with the most senior representatives of all the government agencies represented in country, should be responsible for developing such a plan, which should serve as a living document that is continuously updated as important indicators change.

The national-level plan should be informed by regular consultations with Norwegian civil-society organizations working in the country, as well as other consultation processes, for instance with an advisory panel representing a cross-section of eminent local personalities. The operational or country-level plan should both influence and flow from Oslo-level strategic guidance. There needs to be a clear time-table for submitting an annual review and assessment to Oslo, followed by strategic guidance from Oslo, and followed by a revised country-level plan. In the interim, the country-level forum should report regularly to the Oslo-level forum on implementation of the current plan, based on the feedback generated by the monitoring and evaluation process. The monitoring and evaluation process should track the implementation of the whole-of-government strategy and the country plan, as well as various country-level indicators independent of the Norwegian strategy.

Neither the Norwegian strategy or operational plan, nor the monitoring and evaluation process, should be so intensive as to hinder or prevent the country-level representatives from participating fully in their own functional coordination processes. The whole-of-government coordination process should be intensive enough to inform the Norwegian policy-making process in a meaningful way, but not so intensive that it negatively affects Norway's ability to engage meaningfully with other international partners or in-country and local-level coordination processes.

4.5 Local Context and Local Ownership

One of the most persistent criticisms levelled against ambitious initiatives intended to promote coherence among external actors is the view that this amounts to a 'ganging-up' of the international community, with the domestic actors forced to deal with positions pre-agreed among the external actors. Such an approach is not conducive to dialogue among partners, nor does it encourage local ownership and the

contextualization of responses to local needs, priorities and the local social-cultural environment. In its whole-of-government approach, Norway should make special efforts to remain sensitive to the local context, aligned with local needs and visions – especially in the post-conflict peacebuilding phase, where such visions are typically formulated in a country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) or similar frameworks, like the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) in the Afghanistan context.

One of the ways in which Norway can encourage local contextualization in the context of a whole-of-government approach is to establish, at the embassy level, an advisory body made up of a representative cross-section of members of the local cultural, social, financial and academic community. Such an advisory body can be convened perhaps twice a year, and consulted on Norway's strategy and plans in the country, including on its assessment of progress. It could also play a role in advising the Norwegian ambassador on developmental and related projects being considered for support, if only at the generic or abstract level. At the very least such a body would provide Norway with the opportunity to engage with local opinion-makers in a structured and systematic way, enabling it to air some of its assessments and assumptions to leading figures in the local community.

4.6 Relationship with Norwegian Civil Society

Norway's special relationship with civil society has several advantages for its whole-of-government approach. First, it can provide the country with flexibility to adapt relatively easily to a changing situation; second, it enables maximizing the range of engagement so that Norway can be involved in a wide range of international processes; third, it can serve as a way for the government to maintain the humanitarian space – as in Afghanistan.

However, there is a danger that the whole-of-government approach may negatively impact on this special relationship. The special relationship between the Norwegian government and civil society has traditionally operated in the context of the developmental and humanitarian dimensions of Norwegian foreign policy, including its relationship with the UN – generally uncontroversial, and broadly supported by all segments of the Norwegian population.

More recently, Norway's post-9/11 military operations, especially the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan and the linkages with the international war on terror and the unpopularity of the Bush administration, have been controversial in Norway and abroad. The fall-out from these operations, and the general policy followed by the humanitarian

community of maintaining a clear distinction between humanitarian and military identities, roles and responsibilities, are may well lead Norway's NGO and research community to feel less comfortable about being closely associated with their country's foreign policy, if this is seen as closely integrated with a Norwegian military presence.

In other words, if the whole-of-government model means that Norwegian NGOs will have to deal with a Norwegian development advisor embedded in a Norwegian/NATO PRT, and if that involves frequent official visits to the PRT compound, or other frequent and public associations with the Norwegian/NATO military, Norwegian NGOs are likely to develop other ways of liaising with such development advisors, and will seek to limit their openly visible association with the Norwegian/NATO military presence.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and all the agencies involved in the whole-of-government approach, should engage with the Norwegian NGO and research community, and openly discuss the Norwegian whole-of-government approach, and how that may impact on the special relationship between the Norwegian government and civil society. A forum could be established where Norwegian civil society, recognized as a key partner in achieving Norway's foreign policy, especially its developmental and humanitarian objectives, can regularly engage with each other on issues related to Norway's international operations and its whole-of-government approach to these. Such a forum could be replicated at the embassy level, so that the Norwegian ambassador and other government agencies represented at the in-country level may regularly engage with Norwegian NGOs active in that country, and discuss issues of common concern. Such organized discussions can create the space for a positively critical analysis of Norway's foreign policy and whole-of-government approach in general, or in a particular country. They can provide both the Norwegian government and Norwegian civil society with useful information about each other's policies, actions and perspectives – offering to both an opportunity to harmonize and align their policies accordingly.

5. Conclusion

This report has sought to address the lack of information available, in Norway and internationally, on the Norwegian whole-of-government approach, and to make a first attempt at analysing its effectiveness. We have focused extensively on Norway's engagement with Afghanistan, because Norway has developed and applied its whole-of-government approach exclusively in connection with its engagement there.

The rationale for a national whole-of-government approach is greater effectiveness. It is driven by the assumption that a government's foreign engagements will have a more meaningful and sustainable impact when the various government departments involved pursue a common strategy, have a shared understanding of the problem, a common theory of change, and an agreed plan for implementing such a strategy.

We have found that Norway lacks a comprehensive strategy for engaging in fragile states in general, as well as a whole-of-government strategy for any particular country – including Afghanistan. As a result, Norwegian engagements abroad have been characterized by *ad hoc* solutions. The lack of clear strategic direction often results in people at the operational and tactical levels falling back to the default position, i.e. making Norway look good and firmly anchoring Norway within multilateral frameworks like the UN, NATO and the EU. This report recommends that Norway consider adopting a law, or high-level policy document, that integrates the whole-of-government approach into the working methodology of government. Such a law or policy could make it a requirement for Norway to have a national whole-of-government policy towards every country where it is engaged in initiatives related to peacekeeping, peacebuilding or conflict resolution.

In order to avoid possible tensions between a whole-of-government approach and country-specific integrated strategic frameworks, Norway's goals and objectives should be broadly defined at the higher strategic level. Focusing on the strategic level should leave sufficient room for operational and tactical flexibility for Norway to pursue coherence with local and international strategic frameworks, while also remaining flexible to changes in the situation on the ground.

A unique characteristic of the Norwegian model is the special relationship between the Norwegian government and Norwegian civil so-

ciety. This report has expressed concern about the negative effects a Norwegian whole-of-government approach might have on this relationship. We recommend that a forum be established where Norwegian civil society and government can regularly engage each other on issues related to the country's international engagements, and its whole-of-government approach. Such a forum could be replicated at the embassy level, so that the Norwegian ambassador and other government agencies represented at the in-country level could regularly engage with Norwegian NGOs active in that country, to discuss issues of common concern. Such organized discussions can create the space for positive, critical analysis of Norway's foreign policy and whole-of-government approach in general, or in a particular country, and provide both the Norwegian government and Norwegian civil society with useful information about each other's policies, actions and perspectives, thereby providing both with an opportunity to harmonize and align their policies accordingly.

The need for an integrated or comprehensive approach is widely accepted, but many obstacles remain when it comes to implementing the concept in a meaningful way, and most (if not all) actors still fall short of their own commitments in this regard. This is because there is a significant difference between a policy commitment to an integrated or comprehensive approach, and the challenge of navigating the real-world dilemmas that decision-makers face in trying to coordinate multiple independent agencies, each directed by their own mandates, governing bodies and priorities, acting under pressure as a result of limited resources, limited knowledge and their own time-tables and reporting lines.

Given such constraints and pressures, it is not surprising that various studies have found inherent contradictions, a lack of strategic direction, and conflicting aims and perspectives. Despite the significant policy-level initiatives undertaken to facilitate an integrated or comprehensive approach in such missions, this remains characteristic – not only of Norway's engagements, but indeed of most peace, stability and reconstruction operations today.

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