A Presentation of the State of Societal Security in Norway

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Norwegian Society and 'Total Defence'

Societal security today forms a key part of the recently updated 'total defence' concept that has been in place in Norway since 1946. The particular civil–military relationship **of civil support to military defence** has been further developed to include military support to civil defence. However, a recent Defence Study (FS-07) recommends that the military support be more contained to the military side of defence. Globalization has increased the focus on international issues and their impact on national security. As argued in PRIO Policy Brief no. 3/2007, national security has become closely integrated with societal security. Among other things, this has resulted in the establishment in 2003 of a coordinating directory, DSB (Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning). At the same time, evolutions in both national and societal security have extended the reach of such issues beyond territorial borders.

In Norway, societal security comprises in particular critical infrastructure, information technology, communication, health, food and climate. Society's dependence on technology and the fear of appropriation of advanced technology by terrorist actors link these areas to current risk analyses. In the concept of societal security global and international events are assumed to potentially have impact on local levels. The abovementioned areas that are identified as critical can provide an analytical measuring stick. Societal vulnerability can in practice be measured through the level of risk or threat posed to any of the prioritized areas.

A Fresh Look at Security

There is considerable diversity within the understanding of security. In some cases, defining what is and what is not a security issue reflects a political programme. Attaching the security label to particular events becomes a way of putting issues on the agenda. At the same time, it is essential to bear in mind that different agencies also operate with differing time perspectives – some with longer political momentum and others with shorter. This variation in **security intensity** brings a constant challenge in terms of the need of the security sector to balance *political requirements* with *executive demands.*

Another challenge is civil–military cooperation. Boundaries between civilian and more military-related areas are often in flux. To a certain extent, such a fluid relationship is necessary to meet the need for diversity that characterizes today's security landscape. However, this requires more from the parties involved. This is particularly evident in relation to terrorism. In Norway, as in other parts of Europe, terrorism is defined as a criminal act and under the jurisdiction of the Justice Department. Still, the Defence Ministry has the right to intervene in questions of security-political crises, within which it classifies acts of terrorism. The three principles of *responsibility*, *equality* and *proximity* in general lay out the organisation of command. However, as demonstrated, there is room for ambiguity in areas of responsibility, particularly in abrogating circumstances where command must transfer from civil to military command. The question of communication and cooperation becomes essential for effective response in such instances.

While the securitization of *material values* is prominent in societal security, there is also a stated wish to protect society's *cultural values.*

Lastly, there exists an inherent tension in the concept of *societal security* itself. While the concept aims to cover both material and cultural values, the tendency to generalize societal security across a broad scope of social values excludes, to a certain

degree, the value of the *individual,* as well as individual or isolated societal groups.

Invisible Values

Norwegian social values are often articulated in terms of democratic culture, and democracy is often expressed as the ultimate security referent to be protected. Paradoxically, the protection of individuals in society or groups within society is not directly a part of the strategy, despite the obvious fact that it is individuals who make up society, and that individualism is often praised as a democratic value. This paradox forms the tacit background for much policymaking in security affairs. This is the case despite the fact that most scholarly literature highlights this problem as underlying and sustaining a wide variety of social groups' perceptions of insecurity. One can easily ask whether societal security is indeed adequately assured when there are groups that feel threatened by the establishment that is intended as the provider of security. Such groups can be political, ethnic, religious or generational, depending on circumstances. National and global events can affect these groups, or their perceptions as a group, as with communist groups during the Cold War or Muslim groups following the 2001 World Trade Centre attacks. The exclusive and exclusionary potential of societal security must be considered in policymaking.

Empirical and Ideational Components

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact empirical and ideational components of Norwegian societal security, as official understandings vary from the very broad to the narrow. There are some elements, though, that are repeated and that may offer an outline. Revenues from oil and gas resources form the basis of the Norwegian standard of living in the future and give the state room to manoeuvre in the international arena. This is one critical empirical aspect. In terms of ideational components, there are two aspects that are visible across different conceptualizations. First is the sovereignty of the Norwegian state. The impact of Norway's colonial past and its delicate position during the Cold War is visible in the careful attention given to international diplomatic and strategic positioning. Second is a national image of an inherent Norwegian social democratic culture, with principles that are understood as highly concentrated, if not unique. Values often pointed to are egalitarianism, individualism and peacefulness.

Organizational Challenges in Norway

Since the end of World War II, Norwegian preparedness has been built on a horizontal structure, with an extensive civilian support network for the military. With the increased reliance on societal security concepts, a number of security responsibilities have been centred in the civilian arena. These are executed by both military and civil administrations.

In matters of security political crises, command is referred to military control. Owing to the primacy of the military in national defence, this is understandable. However, the military may face a potential communication problem when it enters the civilian domain while maintaining a military operationalization that is not necessarily in line with civilian expectations of transparency and public access.

The new Defence Study, FS-07, places considerable emphasis on a more professional military, rather than one based on conscription. It suggests reforms that would revise the concept of 'total defence' – with a military less dependent upon civil support than previously – and limit the military's tasks in the civilian arena. This can be read as a wish to distance the military from the civil, which would represent a move away from current political aims for 'total defence'.

However, one might ask: where do the limits go? As framed in PC 17 and by DSB, societal security encompasses a wide variety of issues that at times have little in common. DSB issues warnings on issues as diverse as terrorism and material flaws in household products. The differentiation of tasks among Norwegian institutions corresponds to a significant differentiation in understandings of security in Norway. Gathering the threads of the concept of security in a new age of insecurity has become one of the central challenges of the new defence concept.

Total Defence

In 2000, the Willoch Commission set out to determine the need for a reorganization of the 'total defence' system at a time when a number of voices were arguing for a more hierarchical and centralized system. The Commission's end report, *A Vulnerable Society,* resulted in some efforts to centralize the work of civil crisis management without taking away local responsibility. DSB (Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning) was founded in 2003 as part of this plan. DSB is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and the Police, reporting on issues ranging from terrorism to various local societal concerns.

According to the ambitions of the 'total defence' concept, the two complementary parts of Norwegian security organization, the civil and the military, should cooperate more – for example, there should

be improved cooperation between military intelligence and police intelligence. In 2006, a large-scale crisis-management rehearsal was organized, comprising responses from all responsible parties. This was carried out to test local responses and responsibilities, as well as communication between civilian and military responders, both horizontally and vertically. The concluding report, *Øvelse Oslo 2006 – Evaluering,* revealed, among other things, a certain lack of communication between responding groups. This weak communication link demonstrates one of the challenges involved in the approach of sharing responsibilities between civilian and military actors, as well as between sectors. Basic understandings of the direction of command in civil–military operations also differ.

Furthermore, while PC17 focuses on societal issues, it relies heavily on one *particular source,* the FFI (Norwegian Defence Research Establishment), to provide information, threat assessments and evaluations. The FFI's principal analyses have used a technical and 'biological' approach for understanding and measuring risk and (in)security as objects present in society.

The result is that societal security is termed in a language close to the military establishment and technical analysis. Yet, the context of societal security is non-military and often non-technical. The human factor that is not included is critical for many of the identified risk areas such as radicalized societal groups. An alternative structuring, based on institutions linked to softer ends of societal security, can be envisaged in order to bridge this lacuna.

Norway at Risk

Norway perceives itself as *low at risk*, yet the discourse on security in Norway has a high profile. The closer an event is to Norway, either geographically or culturally, the more elevated the intensity of the discourse within Norway. In other words, events need not take place in Norway in order for them to become visible and relevant. So, Norway prepares itself for different eventualities. DSB performs a multitude of rehearsals (response to potential scenarios and incidents), supervisions and evaluations of what may be said to be internationally recognized risk areas, including evaluation of critical infrastructure – that is, infrastructure that society is heavily reliant on in order to maintain itself and function. Some of DSB's recent activities have included evaluating national electrical systems, organizing a terrorist attack response rehearsal, and testing crisis communication systems. On the other side of the security executive, the military participates in international interventions and operations that are politically, if not directly, con-

nected to societal and national security. The military may therefore also experience 'risk' differently than the civil administration.

A Hub for New Security Knowledge

DSB regularly publishes its reports on and evaluations of different societal concerns. This publishing is part of the political drive for a more open security dialogue. One consequence may be the identifications of risk areas, but also the communication of the state as a constant evaluating body of security, risk and threat. This may generate a sense that society is insecure even when PC 17 and DSB state that it is the low level of risk that provides opportunities to test identifiable security scenarios.

What is essential to underscore is that, in an era where popular, political and strategic perceptions of insecurity in Norway tend toward an intermixing of societal and strategic security questions, DSB represents a hub or meeting place of security knowledge. DSB and the Joint Operative Headquarters (FOKH) alternate yearly in chairing the Central Forum for Total Defence, while the National Security Authority (NSM) reports to both the Justice and Defence departments on the civil and military sectors, respectively. DSB possesses the analytical standpoint for a more unified implementation of an increasing hybrid form of security knowledge. It is also important to note that the military and information networks (PST and military intelligence) are not transparency-oriented. The articulation of security can therefore be expected to come, to a large extent, from DSB.

However, DSB does not measure any element of insecurity raised by securitization. Neither does DSB move beyond the understanding of security or vulnerability as objects in society.

Globalization and Democracy

In PC 17, Norwegian security thinking is presented as a total concept that can respond at any point to a given threat and that is also suited to identifying security issues that would be commonly handled by *civilian departments*. An international ideational feature is also stressed, namely, that while international events may have an impact on security at a specific time, such events must not affect the organizational structure of security. Yet, Norway relies on alliances to help protect its sovereignty, which commits the state to non-national policies. Norway's traditional policy is one that adheres to the conviction that the *advancement of democracy* has a long-term positive effect on security. At the same time, lack of democracy elsewhere is not considered a direct threat to Norway. *Preparedness* is thus

highlighted as much as *response*. In this way, understandings of *risk* comprises that future threat comes to play as much a role as planning for responses in real time.

It is essential to bear in mind that *'security stress'* is seen to affect all matters on the security continuum and that overburdening of the very categories of security and insecurity could lead to an eroding of the usefulness of the concept of societal security and, collaterally, of the sharpness of the concept of security in general. Furthermore, the civil emphasis on security organization does not meet the challenge of individual or *group insecurity* faced by certain members of society, especially in relation to *religious and ethnic minorities.*

It is important to recall that the main provider of information on risk and threat perceptions to both civil and military administrations is the military research establishment. The FFI's primary focus has been to deal with the *national security* of society as a whole, and not with potential alienation, fragmentation or insecurity among specific groups or individuals. On the contrary, the emphasis of current research on threats to Norway at best focuses on the reverse cause: the threat of alienated individuals and fragmented groups on society at large.

National Values

Distinct among the main interests of both traditional and societal security is the protection of social values. Yet, when one first begins to identify a set of national values, one quickly finds values that are shared internationally. There is no clear or exclusive Norwegian exception. Norway has, however, promoted some values over others based on need, utility and the particularity of Norwegian geography and traditions. Norway's history of colonial occupation and suppression has left a greater mark on its security thinking, which influences strategies sought to uphold sovereignty.

Effects of International Cooperation on Norwegian Security Organization

NOU 2003, *The Security of the Nation,* stipulates that it is the core interests of national concern that are to be protected, not indirect or related values such as the interests of allied parties. Nevertheless, allied forces or personnel on Norwegian soil are to be protected. This conclusion is reached on the basis of the logic that it is the sovereignty of the state and its security that are to be protected. However, in Norway – as elsewhere in an increasingly globalized world – there is no sharp delimitation between the inner and the outer security of the state

NOU 2003 suggests that threats stemming from terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure should be added to the traditional issues of espionage, war, occupation and attacks on central government in the penal code section that deals with national security. That this is suggested even though it is acknowledged that Norway is at little risk of such attacks may demonstrate the impact of the international climate. Hence, the NOU suggests slimming the understanding of 'national interests' to core values with direct national interest, but it simultaneously recognizes threats against other member-states or allies as affecting Norwegian security preparedness.

This brief suggests that Norway will continue to incorporate non-Norwegian security interests in its national agenda to a larger extent than it is able to export its own security thinking, owing to the role the country plays internationally as a facilitator of decisions rather than an instigator of policy. Further, owing to the principles of equality, responsibility and proximity, this has potential effects on regional and local levels. Ambiguities in the conceptualizations of the civil and military administrations and in executive roles also have an impact on both the operative and the conceptual state of societal security in Norway.

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