SMU | CENTER FOR PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY

Transatlantic Diplomacy after 9/11: The U.S. and Norway
Collective Memory Project

Interviewee: Kristoffer Egeberg
Editor-in-Chief of Faktisk.no
Author of *Fredsnasjonen Norge (The Peace Nation Norway*, 2017)

Interviewer: LaiYee Leong
Fellow, Center for Presidential History, Southern Methodist University
Senior Fellow, John G. Tower Center for Public Policy & International Affairs, Southern Methodist University

Date of Interview:
April 10, 2018

Editorial Note and Disclaimer:
This transcription has undergone a verification process for accuracy, according to the strictest practices of the academic and transcription communities. It offers the CPH's best good-faith effort at reproducing in text the subject's spoken words. In all cases, however, the video of the interview represents the definitive version of the words spoken by interviewees.

Normal speech habits—false starts, incomplete words, and crutch words (e.g. "you know")—have been removed for purposes of clarity. Final transcriptions will conform to standard oral history practices. Editors will conform all transcription quotations to the Center for Presidential History's final edition.

Please contact the editors at cphinfo@smu.edu with any corrections, suggestions, or questions.

Citation:
Interview with Kristoffer Egeberg, interviewed by LaiYee Leong, 10 April 2018. "Transatlantic Diplomacy after 9/11: The U.S. and Norway" Collective Memory Project, Center for Presidential History, Southern Methodist University.

[Begin Transcription]

LEONG: I'm LaiYee Leong, with the Center for Presidential History. I'm with Kristoffer Egeberg, we're in Oslo. Today is April 10, 2018. Kristoffer, let's start with a very brief bio. Can you tell me some background on yourself as a journalist?

EGEBERG: Yeah. My name is Kristoffer Egeberg. I'm currently editor of the fact-checking network Faktisk, in Norway. I'm formerly a journalist in the Norwegian

daily, *Dagbladet*, where I worked in 2002 as a reporter, and then investigating reporter in the news section. My former most topic is security policy and defense policy, that's my topic of interest. Before, I joined *Dagbladet* in 2002, I was [00:01:00] also a NATO officer. I worked in Bosnia and in Kosovo, and before that, I also had three tours in Lebanon, for the UN, in UNIFIL, in the late '90s, and before that, I was a journalist in -- before I joined the army -- I was a journalist in local newspapers in Norway.

LEONG: Oh, okay. So you just published this book that traces Norway's security and foreign policies in the last 15, 18 years or so.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: How did you come to do that?

EGEBERG: Well, my book, which translates to *Peace Nation*, is based on the slogan that we Norwegians like to put-- the slogan, or the stamp we like to put on ourselves, as a nation in the international community, as a nation of peace, as a peace broker internationally, [00:02:00] very focused on the UN, on brokering peace all over the world. I wanted, when I started out, based on my own kind of experience as a veteran, I wanted to write, first a book about the soldiers on the ground, the boots on the ground, and how different the actual reality on ground in all these missions we have been participating abroad, UN missions like in Lebanon or in Somalia, or as in the newer NATO missions like Bosnia, Kosovo, and Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and now currently in Iraq and Syria. [00:03:00] The reality on ground is quite different from the reality I experienced when I joined *Dagbladet* as a reporter, after being a veteran myself, and see how this reality is portrayed back home, both in the public domain, in the news, but also in parliament and in the political debate. It's very, very different, and I started asking myself questions; how could this kind of shift in reality occur? This is why I wanted eventually, to write a book about this, first from a soldier's perspective, but the more I thought and started this project, I found out that it would be just as important and

interesting to see it from the leaders' perspective, I mean to have the broader picture; both the [00:04:00] soldiers doing the job and the leaders, both political and military, sending them abroad to do the work. To kind of tie these three or four realities together and try to make some sense in how we became this -- had all these different perspectives, and how this played into the broader picture of the portrait of Norway as a peace nation, as a nation, a peace broker across the world. How does this occur and where do our soldiers and the wars, and the political specter play into this. If that makes any sense.

LEONG: Yeah, no that's really interesting, because a big part of your book actually talks about the contradiction of that.

EGEBERG: Yeah, exactly, the contradiction.

LEONG: Of that sort of self-image.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: We want to concentrate on the years 2001 to 2009, [00:05:00] but your book actually begins a little bit before that. So maybe we can just spend a little bit of time setting it up and explaining how the years before that will help to explain the years to come.

EGEBERG: Exactly. Then you have to know something about Norway, I mean to lay the ground here is that Norway, during the Cold War, was the only NATO country bordering directly to Russia in the north. So the whole Cold War, NATO and alliance perspective of Norway was to receive help from NATO. The whole reason of Norway being in NATO was to receive aid if the Soviet Union should, by any chance, start an invasion of Norway. So the whole military [00:06:00] concept, a total defense concept of the Norwegian army or armed forces, was based on defending Norwegian territory against a Soviet invasion. This meant that we had a really big conscript army, on paper consisting of, I think 210,000 soldiers by the early '90s, or at the end of the Cold War. We had many brigades very infantry heavy, everything based on defending the north border of Norway, and also to lay

the ground for NATO shipping in additional troops and equipment to defend Norway. This was all the way from the Second World War, and all the way until the end of the Cold War, the [00:07:00] whole concept was this conscript army, very large, very un-mobile, based on the defense of Norway.

Now during this period, '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s, and into the '90s, missions abroad, which was primarily UN missions, I mean this was before NATO had any out-of-area operations. Missions abroad was very ad hoc. It was something that the generals and something the Department of Defense was not very interested in doing, but this was something, the Foreign Service and Norway, as a small country, based on the UN-led world order, wanted to participate in. This could be the missions, the UN [00:08:00] missions in Congo, observers in the Middle East. You had the largest, through time, UN operation for Norway was in Lebanon, the UNIFIL in Lebanon. But you had several big and small UN missions where Norway were sending either military observers or a small group or a larger group of soldiers to. Now, these were not drawn from the regular army or the regularly armed forces, since this was ad hoc, since this was something that neither the generals or the politicians really, in the defense sector, wanted to participate in or spend money and resources on. These were drawn from the service, from former conscripts out in the civilian life, it would be you know, drivers, economics, scholars, students, whatever. If you had done your draft conscription duty, [00:09:00] you could apply for jobs in the Foreign Service one half year or six months in Lebanon, or six months in Congo, or whatever, and you would be called. You would have maybe two or three weeks of soldiering course, to learn how to shoot and to get your equipment, and then they would send you to these UN missions around the world, and this was how it was done. It was so ad hoc from the regular armed forces, that they weren't in a command structure even, you know? It was a small office up by Gardermoen, outside of Oslo, with you know, a few officers, four or five, six officers, administrating this kind of paper army, ad hoc

army, sending UN soldiers, hiring, used handwritten lists of willing soldiers who wanted to join for this, and calling in if they need one here or [00:10:00] one there. So it was really, what you could say unprofessional, and very ad hoc, and this was the system, because the regular armed forces, they wanted to use all their money, all their focus, on defending the north border to Russia.

Then, we come to the end of the Cold War, where we have then, a huge military structure based on a Cold War which has ended, the Soviet Union, which is not there anymore. This brings a whole lot of problems. One is the obvious one, the economic perspective. It is an old fashioned military structure which is extremely resource demanding to keep up. It has to be restructured for a new time, [00:11:00] a new era. I mean even only on the equipment side, you know, old equipment, old personal equipment from rucksacks to guns to the combat gear, old equipment when it comes to bigger cars, engine tanks. Everything has to be restructured and restructured to a new time, and this obviously costs a lot. You had too many officers, too many conscripts, to keep up for, and they are demanding everything to be restructured after the Cold War.

You also have the allied perspective. Suddenly Norway is the only country in NATO really left up north, in the high north, being concerned about the Russian border. The rest of NATO is [00:12:00] struggling to find any purpose for kind of the new NATO, what is NATO going to be, because the Cold War is over? Is the alliance obsolete? This happens at the same time as you have the Gulf War, I mean Operation Desert Storm, which actually is the first Article 4 NATO mission where Turkey, in the absolute opposite direction of the NATO alliance, is the first NATO country actually receiving aid from NATO, military aid. This is what the whole concept of Norway has been about, to receive the help from NATO, and the first time NATO actually sends help is to Turkey, to defend Turkey in case of an Iraqi attack during Desert Storm or Desert Shield. This is quite interesting, because this brings a shock into the Norwegian, also the political and defense

[00:13:00] community in Norway that, my God, we cannot automatically depend on getting NATO's help, unless we make ourself relevant again.

Also, during the early '90s, you see the demand of four, what do you call it? Equipment that NATO had based in Norway, to make ready for NATO aid, was being pulled back. Traditionally, the U.S. have had the biggest forward storage of military equipment in Norway, but also you had Germany, the German navy had a huge stockpiles stored in Norway, in case [00:14:00] of an invasion, and also Canada had artillery based in Norway permanently, in case of an invasion. These four storage for Canada and Germany, were pulled off during the early '90s, which was also bringing a scare into the defense community in Norway that you know, people were losing their interest in Norway as the focal point of NATO, being where NATO would have its natural alert in case of any shift in -- or threat.

So, this is when NATO starts talking also about, about out-of-area operations, to keep itself relevant. I think it was actually in 1992, they had the big meeting here in Oslo, where they actually agreed on the out-of-area doctrine to aid [00:15:00] UN operations and to be able to send military aid or military interventions outside of the NATO area. Now, this was a really big shift for Norway, because Norway had no actual military structure built for -- I mean in the regular military, built for aiding outside Norway. Everything was built on aiding or defending Norway against an invasion, and these ad hoc kind of hired, six months amateur soldiers sent to abroad for the UN missions were absolutely not either equipped or trained for these kinds of thought operations for NATO, so this was a huge problem. Then you had [00:16:00] the third factor, also the UN mission started to become much harder, where Norway sent a staff company to Somalia, to Mogadishu, and this was in '92, '93, where you, among others, had the big battle of Mogadishu. You had "black hawk down," this incident, and it was the first UN peace enforce mission. I'm trying to get to use the English word for it. You have, not peacekeeping but peace enforced mission?

LEONG: I'm not sure.

EGEBERG: It's an article. It's the UN Chapter VII mission.

LEONG: Okay.

EGEBERG: Where they can enforce peace and not only keep peace, which is a sharper offensive UN mission. [00:17:00] This was the first since the Korean War, or first really Chapter VII mission in the UN history, where we sent ill-equipped Norwegian soldiers that only had one or two weeks for preparation, came from the civilian life, were put on uniforms and guns and sent down to Mogadishu on one week's notice, and they had you know, not adequate equipment. They didn't have bulletproof vests, they didn't have Kevlar helmets. They were even sent down there with 25 kilos of ski bags, because this was a winter -- this was just before Christmas, 1992, and since it was winter in Norway, they were sent down with winter equipment, because that was the concept. It's winter, so obviously, they should need ski bags and Christmas trees, and this was a huge [00:18:00] mess, where these soldiers were put into one of the most dangerous civil wars in Africa. Very ill-prepared and no equipment, not adequate equipment, and this became a very, very hard mission and a wakeup call for both the Norwegian military and the Norwegian politicians, how ill-prepared Norway is to this new era where we have to participate with more professional troops. So this is the backdraft for the military side of how the early '90s became the big shift in readiness for a new era where Norway had to prepare itself to participate around the world, and not only receive help from NATO.

On the political side, [00:19:00] and Foreign Service side, you had a very different development. You had, especially the Oslo peace agreement, peace accords, which erupted in '92, '93, in the Middle East, which really put Norway and Oslo on the map as a peace broker. This was a huge success for Norwegian foreign policy. They were invited to the White House. To broker peace in the Middle East is kind of the diplomatic dream for centuries and suddenly, you had Norway in the

center of attention, actually making headway in this very, very hard conflict. This happens just a year before the Lillehammer Olympics, which also was a huge [00:20:00] international success for Norway, I mean patriotism in Norway has never been as high as these years. We really felt that we are a world actor, I mean this small country is something quite special. And I think it played into the minds of most Norwegians, and even to the prime minister at that time, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Dr. Brundtland, who even went on state television, I think it was the New Year's Eve speech, where she said that it's typical for Norwegians to be good, and good in Norway means both good as in excellent, but also good as being good hearted and good minded, you know. So this played into this national narrative of Norway being something quite special, and this was something that they, in the Foreign Service of Norway, found that they could exploit more and more, because [00:21:00] being invited to the White House, being in the center of attention, being the one that people from Bahrain to you know, to Iceland, to wherever in the world where Norwegian Foreign Ministry went, they were asked about these things, you know congratulated about the Middle East Peace Accords, how did you do that, you know maybe you should go other places. Do you want to you know? Suddenly they were interested.

You had especially, when I interviewed for this book, you had Mr. Knut Vollebaek. He was a career diplomat, is a career diplomat in the Norwegian Foreign Service, but he became also a politician. At this time, he was brokering peace with a delegation of Mr. Stoltenberg, Sr., who was a former Norwegian -- up until 1992, he was at the [00:22:00] Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway, and he was headhunted to the UN, to broker peace in the Balkans and Yugoslavia. In his team you had Mr. Vollebaek as a career diplomat, brokering peace in this team in Yugoslavia. So he was very well experienced in this work and obviously, he saw the attention this brought to Norwegian diplomacy, and so when he later on, during the Bondevik one government, became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he found a

way to exploit this. He made this Office of Peace and Consolidation in the Foreign Service, to focus solely on brokering peace around the world. This was in the late '90s, '98, where [00:23:00] Norway also became the first chair of the OSCE, with Mr. Vollebaek, and this was during the Kosovo conflict, which really brought big attention, and this was the first real big mission for the OSCE, to try to mediate in this growing conflict between Serbia and Kosovo.

In the center of this you had the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Knut Vollebaek, who went between Moscow, London, Washington, D.C., and became a close friend and ally of Madeleine Albright, of Tony Blair, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. This Norwegian Foreign Minister being the center of attention, being on the television station, being the one talking against Slobodan Milosevic. [00:24:00] This of course was again, a big boost of Norwegian diplomacy and Norway being a mediator in the world, and kind of strengthened the project of the Norwegian Foreign Service, of being something more than just talking about salmon and fishery and oil. This is how Mr. Vollebaek would word it, that I can, as Norwegian Foreign Minister, I can talk about oil and I can talk about salmon, but nobody really, really wants to listen long about oil and salmon, and this is why they needed this as a dimension, to make Norway interesting. So when certain Norwegian Foreign Service went abroad, they were called in because they were special, because they had special relations with mediators, with Madeleine Albright, with you know, different groups in Kosovo, different groups in [00:25:00] Columbia, different groups, et cetera. They could be the mediator, brokering peace all over the world and making themselves interested in any forum, and this is what they wanted to exploit.

The Kosovo conflict was, because of this, gave huge attention to the Norwegian diplomacy. Going back to the military side, it was a huge disappointment for the Norwegian military, because although they were already, in 1992, very rare that they had to really do some big restructuring of the military

and also, to do something about building a kind of expeditionary force that could support allied missions abroad. None of these reforms really, really worked out really -- you know, they were just on paper, they were [00:26:00] never realized. So from 1992 to 1998, '99, nothing was really done. [Background Noise]

LEONG: Is that okay?

CREW: That's fine.

EGEBERG: Yeah, that's fine, yeah. Nothing was really done. This is -- I just have to pick up my line there. They never really started the big reforms that they needed to, in the Norwegian military, and the restructuring of the army, from a Cold War structure to a more modern and more expeditionary, allied focused military. So when the call came to Kosovo, Norway had no fighter jets; they were among NATO's [00:27:00] oldest and poorest equipped F-16s. This was a huge surprise. The politicians in Norway, even the Department of Defense, even the generals, believed that they had one of the most lean fighting forces, air force, in NATO, but it was actually one of the oldest and ill-equipped and less trained one. So they couldn't really use these airplanes in the Kosovo conflict. They also had problems with the navy, because they didn't have contracts that could allow navy sailors to do out of area missions. So, they had to pull out their minesweeper from the standing NATO fleet, which was called to the Adriatic to enforce the embargo against Serbia. So this was a complete catastrophe, and when they then wanted to bring the only [00:28:00] professional or semi professional battalion, which had been tailored for five years, to do operations abroad, they realized that this was not really a battalion at all. They had struggled to put this battalion together, so it was actually just a few men already bound in Bosnia, and they had no soldiers to send to Kosovo either. So this was one of the greatest embarrassments of the Norwegian Armed Forces since the Second World War, that when the Kosovo conflict actually became a NATO operation, Norway had nothing really, to offer the allied forces, to participate in KFOR. This became actually a trauma and why

this is important is this was setting the scene to how Norway reacted [00:29:00] after 9/11, just a few years later. This was the start of the big reforms in the Norwegian military structure, this was the wakeup call for Norway, how they had to restructure the whole thinking of defense policy, from invasion defense force to allied expeditionary, mobile force, and this was the start of the whole tying together this foreign policy course of Norway as the peace broker, and using peace brokering and conflict as an asset in the Norwegian diplomacy, and tying in the military as a tool for Norwegian [00:30:00] diplomacy abroad. This happened in 1999 until 2001, this restructuring started and was -- and where 9/11 --

LEONG: Before we get to 9/11, if you don't mind, I want to jump in here, because I want to get a sense from you: What was the expectation, both in terms of the Norwegian public and in terms of the Norwegian Government, when it became clear that George W. Bush was going to be the new president?

EGEBERG: In Norway, obviously, George W. Bush was something quite different than Bill Clinton, and in the Norwegian public, I think, Norway being what it is, a liberal social democracy, I think we were very skeptic about George W. Bush, and you had two kind of [00:31:00] sentiments there. You have kind of the public sentiment that this is you know, we were starting to hear about neocons. The Norwegian public, the broad spectra of the Norwegian public is not really orientated to American politics, but neocon sounds pretty, pretty bad in Norwegian ears, that this would be kind of very conservative, not very peace orientated, not very secular, not very liberal, et cetera, et cetera. I think Bush was also portrayed as quite -- how should I say it? Not as intelligent, not as worldly as Bill Clinton had become. He was kind of this jock, you know, [00:32:00] you had all these rumors about him being a former alcoholic, or that he was not as smart as his dad or whatever, he was kind of his dad's son. I don't know, but all these things that the media brings to the public attention, that this is absolutely not the same. He's not true grit and he's not kind of the same caliber as Bill Clinton or any former

president. So this was kind of the public perception of Bush being illiterate, kind of lightweight president. But then you had, on the more educated, I think, and more, like defense policy community in Norway, I think the big scare was that you had a president that early, both in his campaign and presidency, [00:33:00] signaled that he would be more protectionist, that he would pull American troops out and not make -- that the U.S. would not be the kind of police in the world as they had been, that they would withdraw their troops from Europe and make Europe take care of their own problems, that they would be isolated, what do you call it?

LEONG: Isolationist?

EGEBERG: Yeah, isolationist. This, I think was a much bigger scare for the defense and foreign policy community in Norway, because Norway's closest ally during the Cold War was the United States, and we are so dependent on the United States staying focused on the north, the high north, because if not, Norway would be the only country being focused on Russia and the high north. When it came to Russian policy, no one has [00:34:00] been more in line with Norway as the U.S., and having a president in the White House who is not concerned about this would be a catastrophe for Norway. So this was much more important than the kind of populist tabloid reservations the public would have against George W. Bush as president. This was the sole focus when he took over, was you know how could Norway, in any way get the eyes and ears of the White House. This became quite, I think, difficult.

I just remember one of the big speeches that was kind of -- because this was not only a scare in Norway, I think this was a scare in all of [00:35:00] Europe, among these were just I think a month or two before 9/11, George W. Bush had one of his first tours abroad. He visited Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, the American camp there, and he spoke to the troops and had kind of this speech where he more or less kind of said that you know, I'm going to bring you home and you will care

for their own problems. This was a scare also inside NATO, that you know, to lose the attention, the support and the leadership of the U.S. within NATO and within these missions would be a catastrophe. The problem was to find a way in.

A funny story is kind of the -- because this, this kind of comes down to personality, you know [00:36:00] who's who, who has the president's ear, how should we get invited to the White House, et cetera. This presidency started when you had Jens Stoltenberg and the Labour Party in government in Norway, you had Jens Stoltenberg as the prime minister. He was not very orientated abroad, he was a more domestic politician, but he had Mr. Jagland as his secretary of foreign affairs. Everybody thought, I think, at that moment, that Mr. Colin Powell, Secretary Powell, would be the one to go to. He was kind of the liberal, he was the sound character in the Bush first, the new Bush government. [00:37:00] I think people were much more skeptic to Donald Rumsfeld. He was kind of in the neocon cabinet, and Powell was kind of the sound voice, and this was a very natural reaction for the Norwegian Government at that time and for Norway, how Norway and the Foreign Service there would think to go to the person who seems to be most in line with your own opinions, which was at the time, Secretary Powell.

Mr. Jagland [00:38:00] brought -- they'd been reading up on Powell and found that he was an enthusiast for Volvos, for the Volvo car. So in order to kind of please and kind of to befriend Mr. Powell, Mr. Jagland went out and he bought this book, like this mechanics book, guide, of all Volvo cars, a big volume of this, to bring to Mr. Powell as a gift, you know, to try to find something to talk about, Volvo cars, Scandinavia, et cetera, and to have this perspective. I think they figured very early out, that Secretary Powell was not the person pulling the strings in the White House at all, and he was not really very interested in Nordic affairs or going abroad at all. The government, this government of Mr. Stoltenberg was very short lived. You had then, the election, on September 10, 2001, and they lost this

election, and the day after you [00:39:00] had the terrorist attacks in the U.S., 9/11, which obviously came as a big shock, but it came as Mr. Stoltenberg's government was outgoing, and we had no, at that moment, clear definition of which government would take over, because no parties were really big enough. So it had to be a coalition and if that would be able, it would take a couple months before that was clear. In October, Bondevik took over as the new prime minister and the old government was kind of in limbo during these first crucial weeks of 9/11. So that is a big backdraft of kind of how we ended up there.

One thing Mr. Stoltenberg's government did was they set in motion, this huge structural shifts in the [00:40:00] military. They had started the reforms of the military, they inherited the start of reforms from the former government, Mr. Bondevik won government. They did even more and they laid the groundwork for the oncoming government in the total restructuring of the whole kind of armed forces in Norway, in every single -- I mean, down to troop levels, everything. So this had started and 9/11 became the big catalyst for getting these reforms done. It was not the cost, but it was the catalyst for kind of reforming the whole Norwegian Armed Forces structure.

LEONG: Right. You have an interesting story in your book, in which you talk about how, when [00:41:00] Article 5 was invoked by NATO, Norway's representative to NATO was actually not in the room.

EGEBERG: Exactly.

LEONG: Could you tell that story?

EGEBERG: Yeah. I think this came as a total surprise for the Norwegian delegation in NATO. Big countries, as I believe and my sources tell me, Canada was the point for doing. They wanted to invoke Article 5, in order to make sure that the U.S. would kind of do things within their lines and not on their own. This was the rest of the world's, or the rest of NATO's effort, in order to make sure that this would be done in an orderly fashion. Obviously, the Norwegian delegation was not in on

these speeches. This was a few [00:42:00] central NATO countries, I would believe probably Canada, United Kingdom, maybe Germany, whatever. So when this came on the table, the vote for Article 5, the Norwegian NATO Ambassador was baffled, he was like, this came as a total surprise, and he had no idea which way to vote, because he had -- this question was not even on the minds of the politicians in Norway. They probably had a UN approach to this, that this would be a long debate and there would be a lot of time to figure cons and pros, and to align with all our other allies. So this happened actually much faster than the Norwegian diplomacy was able to cope with. So he ran out of the room in order to call back home, to the Foreign Ministry, to find out which way to vote and when he finally came back to the room, the vote was over, [00:43:00] and you know, Article 5 was invoked.

This is kind of illustrative for the position Norway was in, not being inside, not being outside, but not being you know, in the center of attention, which was really, really hurtful from a Norwegian stand at the time, and we did several things during these first crucial days, hours and days after 9/11, which was quite confusing and which is really interesting when you focus on how to communicate. Again, you had these contradictory voices from different parts of government, playing out to different kind of publics. [00:44:00] It was very important for this government to state internally, domestically, that no, no, no, Norway is not at war. At the same time, to display to the U.S., a full support, that we are with you. This obviously came, it was really wrong, where you had the Foreign Ministry putting out statements, you had the secretary of defense putting out statements, and you had even the high command, Norwegian military high command, putting out statements, every single one of them being, contradicting, the other one. Is Article 5, well does that mean that Norway is in war? No, no, Norway is not in war. We can still decide not to be in war, it's up to us and we still have to, you know? And no, no, we can decide if we want to be Article 5 or [00:45:00] not, or whatever. So

this whole kind of Article 5 discussion became a huge embarrassment again, where this was picked up by foreign media and BBC and then CNN, and then several stateside medias, writing about Norway not actually committed to Article 5, which is the sole purpose of NATO and the sole purpose of the alliance for Norway. This country, has for 60, 70 years, been dependent on the solidarity of Article 5, is suddenly starting a domestic debate on if we really have to commit to this or not. So at the end of this, Mr. Jagland, again, the current foreign minister, had to publicly go out and say no, no, we are 100 percent in, this is a war against all our values, [00:46:00] and we will commit ourselves to whatever lays ahead in this war against terror.

LEONG: But why the reluctance?

EGEBERG: Domestically. Domestic politics, I think, and that has always been the problem with Norwegian politicians and the Norwegian Parliament, is to scare about, you know, again, we love to portray ourselves as the nation of peace and where does then war play into this? During the Kosovo conflicts, you had Prime Minister Bondevik, who could not put the word war in his mouth. No, no, Norway is not in war, although NATO is bombing Serbia, this is just a military operation but it's a peace operation. It's an operation to make peace and it's absolutely not a war. And already at that time, this made the discussion about the [00:47:00] pilots participating into this, well does that make us terrorists? If we actually are not at war, why are we bombing them, and what happens if we are shot down and captured, if we do not actually acknowledge that we are invoking war in another country? This has been the dilemma all the way, that has been so hard for politicians, especially governments in Norway, wanting to portray us as a peace loving nation, actually participating in wars that actually kill people. This was the dilemma when Article 5 was invoked. I think it was a domestic scare, that this, in some way would -- that the public would not understand, that the public would not accept. We had to smooth, to make a smooth message to you know, no, no,

stay calm, don't be scared, this is not really happening. But it was really happening, you know? [00:48:00] The Twin Towers burned and crashed down, and I think everybody all over the world and especially also of course in Norway, felt that that day, something changed permanently and it was scary, but that has always been a problem, I think, in Norwegian policy, to accept that people are to understand that this will, in some way have to -- you know, this will invoke some kind of reaction. Being part of NATO, this is the price to pay.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: But this was very difficult and also, obviously you had the internal dilemma that this was an outgoing government. I believe also, that you have an element there, of a government who are reluctant to make major decisions on the behalf of [00:49:00] an oncoming government. What to do? Here, you have a very diverse version, if you ask Mr. Petersen, the leader at that time, of the Conservative Party, who was the winner, the primary winner of the elections, the biggest party of the oncoming coalition. If you ask him, he will tell, or at least he told me that there were too few discussions with him, from the outgoing government, what to do. If you ask Mr. Bondevik, which was in the junior party, but he became the prime minister, he would say that they had discussions about what to say, what to do, during this period of transition. I'm not sure who to believe or if it was because Bondevik was the one involved and Petersen was not involved, but anyway, obviously, this was a [00:50:00] big also, dilemma for the outgoing government, to actually make major decisions and major policy shifts. I mean, to pull Norway into a potentially war, without you know, being absolutely sure that this was the ongoing -- or to bring to the oncoming. They wanted to delay, I think, the decision to the oncoming government.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: It's very interesting, to see how this also plays out to personalities. Also, almost prophetic kind of thoughts of Mr. Jagland at the time, the outgoing Foreign

Ministry, when he called to caution about you know, what would become kind of this, [00:51:00] this war against terror, how this could become a domino effect that we would have to be cautious about treating terrorists as criminals and not war against countries, et cetera. It's very interesting to see how, if you study this analysis, in the very early days after 9/11, from the Norwegian diplomacy and Norwegian Government, it was quite actually accurate when it comes to what became of the war against terror.

LEONG: Right, right.

EGEBERG: Prophetic actually, and it was very interesting for me, when I worked with the book, to actually see this in the documentation. At the time, you know, the press statements, the statements in the newspapers, et cetera, during those days, and to read them [00:52:00] 15, 16 years later, and see that a lot of these cautions actually happened.

LEONG: Right. Were these cautions aimed at the U.S. Government?

EGEBERG: Yes.

LEONG: Who were they addressed to? Okay.

EGEBERG: They were addressed to the U.S. Government, to NATO, to the world leaders, to be aware, this could really bring us on the path for war and destruction more than for combating terrorists.

LEONG: Now, Mr. Bondevik was one of the first world leaders to then meet -- to then visit the White House, after 9/11.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: In October, he met President Bush. Do you have a sense of what came out of that meeting?

EGEBERG: Well, I have a sense that the oncoming government was really well prepared, especially Mr. Bondevik, and Mrs. Krohn Devold, the oncoming [00:53:00] secretary of defense. Now, this is because you had a bureaucracy, especially in the Ministry of Defense, who had been studying and working with

this for years, I mean they had like 70 years of experience in U.S./Norwegian defense relationships, and they had already made a good relationship with the Defense Department, during the Bill Clinton era, the bureaucrats. You absolutely had the same on the Foreign Service side, where you had really strong ties, the bureaucrats, the professional levels of diplomacy with the U.S., after all the mediations and this office that Mr. Vollebaek started, you know, Norway was conducting kind of behind the scenes work in Columbia and Cuba, you know, [00:54:00] wherever in the world, Tahiti, et cetera, and had built a very strong relationship to Madeleine Albright and to the U.S. Foreign Service. Also, Foreign Service has been a focus of Mr. Bondevik himself, being a former secretary of state in Norway, and at this time, being a very experienced prime minister, being to the White House several times before, during the Bill Clinton era. So he was quite international orientated and quite well educated, and quite the diplomat himself.

On the prime minister's side, they used very much, the conservative side of the Bush regime, Mr. Bondevik himself being an ordained priest, being a [00:55:00] man of the cloth, being a godly man, and I think he would admit himself, that this had a very nice, kind of tuned into President Bush's own kind of faith and view of the current situation as being the responsibility that Bush faced after 9/11. Foremost, you could see, on the defense side, as I talked about, not only Norway was in this big shift of restructuring the military, but the whole of NATO was in transition, and as things were lagging behind in Norway, in doing this transition of the Norwegian military, [00:56:00] the Bush regime and the neocons and Donald Rumsfeld was really, really impatient with the speed of NATO transition. So this was, you know, already a big topic, that NATO had to renew itself to be relevant, and this was something the Norwegian Ministry of Defense had been working on for a long time before the transition of government, and how to, in some way, make this transition to save the relevance of Norway, the high north, to keep the NATO bases, but still you know, to bring Norway back into the center of NATO, to

be the focal point of NATO you know, and to bring attention to Russia and the high north. [00:57:00] So they'd been working really, really hard, and when Kristin Krohn Devold took over as the minister of defense, already, a lot of this groundwork was laid and they were working really hard to bring the attention to Donald Rumsfeld.

This was also acknowledging that Colin Powell was not the man to go to, but probably Donald Rumsfeld was the influencer in the White House, and especially after 9/11. So, the focus shifted from Mr. Powell, to Rumsfeld, and this is quite an interesting story, of how then, Kristin Krohn Devold -- fairly young, about 40 years old, female minister of defense, which was you know, not many in NATO, I think she was the only one at that time -- as the one [00:58:00] fated to kind of charm Pentagon, and to be the one to get the attention of Donald Rumsfeld.

LEONG: Yeah.

EGEBERG: Now the way they did this was to, among others, they found out that the current U.S. ambassador, Mr. Ong, Ambassador Ong, he had been an old acquaintance to Donald Rumsfeld, very conservative, already a very controversial ambassador in Norway because he was quite vocal in having Norway's support in the war after 9/11, and almost kind of paranoid to the Norwegian, kind of reluctant to support Bush and support the regime, even before 9/11. [00:59:00] So, he was known as a very conservative and free-spoken ambassador. But they called him into the Ministry of Defense, and almost had kind of this third degree interview with him, in order to learn more about Donald Rumsfeld and his reaction, his mimic, down to you know, how he sounds, what to listen to, his body language, everything, you know what will make Donald Rumsfeld tick, how can we get his attention. Among the things that came out of this, obviously they talked to a lot of people, and they even had, I think, people in the Pentagon, working with the Norwegian, on -- in order to kind of making a master plan, how to charm Mr. Rumsfeld. One of these things Mr. Ong told him was that you know okay, if

[01:00:00] you come and you kind of cry, we have an expression in Norway, if you -- what's the English expression for this? If you come and just -- [Speaks Norwegian]

CREW: "Cry over your sick mom?"

EGEBERG: Yes, "cry over your sick mom." That's a Norwegian expression. If you come and you cry over your situation, you only come with your own problems, he will probably throw you out of the office, he's not interested at all. If you come there, oh we have to keep our NATO base in Norway, you can't put this down, this would harm us. If you come begging and crying, you know, he would -- you know, absolutely, you would rule yourself out at once. [01:01:00] If he leans back and he says you know, this is interesting, it is absolutely not interesting, you are finished, you have lost him. But if he leans forward and says this is helpful, that's when you have Donald Rumsfeld, that's when you can start pulling him in. This was something that they studied and they worked on, and at the same time, they made a plan for the transitional plan of NATO. Instead of coming there, trying to save Norwegian bases, Kirstin Krohn Devold should go to Rumsfeld with a master plan of restructuring NATO, to be this forward leaning transitional. Even the word transitional, which was one of the buzz words in Pentagon at that time, was worded in you know, to use the words, they knew that the [01:02:00] Americans and the Pentagon, and absolutely, that Donald Rumsfeld would like to hear when a minster of defense from Norway came.

So she came to the Pentagon and met him and she laid on the plan, the Norwegian plan, for how to transform NATO into this more modern alliance. She said you know, of course you have to pull the plug on all these NATO bases, we don't need them anymore, just like Rumsfeld wanted, and even, you know, you could close down the Norwegian NATO base in Stavanger and you could close down Norfolk even, you know we don't need it, but you could restructure this to be the transitional command of NATO. We don't need the old command, we need

a new structure for [01:03:00] a transitional command, for restructuring NATO, and you could put that in Norfolk. You could even make, you know, kind of a warfare center for this new NATO and you could put that in Stavanger, and we could work together in doing this, to make a new lean alliance for the modern era, out of area, alliance. This worked very well with Donald Rumsfeld, he was really impressed, as far as I know, by this Norwegian, young female minister coming there, being on the offensive, being proactive and coming with a solution and not, you know, a problem, but coming with a fine-tuned, Pentagon friendly solution to the problem of NATO. She was paraded around after that, by Mr. Rumsfeld. [01:04:00] I think the U.S., at that moment, really needed some visual support from friendly NATO countries, but also they needed solutions, to someone who could actually work with the U.S. in restructuring NATO, and Kirstin Krohn Devold presented herself as the greatest ally the U.S. could have in Europe, and it worked and it worked really, really well. This was the mission she was tasked with. And I think also, in Norway, this has been somewhat misinterpreted as you know, more like traditional charming or whatever, but this was a really played out plan, which was worked on for months in the Norwegian Ministry of Defense, in order to win the heart and mind of Donald Rumsfeld, [01:05:00] and by doing that, also win the attention of the White House, in order to be the best allied. This was not sucking up to the U.S. for sucking up to the U.S., but this was absolutely in the interests of Norway, especially during the war against terror, to not lose the attention on the high north, you know to keep the U.S. from pulling out their forward storage in Norway. The U.S. have, I think it's a Marine brigade, stored, you know with tanks and equipment and ammunition and everything. It's a bigger storage there than the complete Norwegian army, I think, and they have jets, fighter jets, everything, stored [01:06:00] in the mountains of Norway. If the Marines, during the war against terror, would pull that out, I think it would never come back, so it was very, very important for Norway to keep those forward storages here, in order to

keep at least some part of the old security against a Russian invasion in store. So this was a played, carried out plan.

LEONG: So in terms of Norwegian contribution to the war in Afghanistan, how did that work out?

EGEBERG: This goes back to the broader picture I brought up until Kosovo, the disaster in Kosovo campaign, where Norway was not able to scramble working fighter jets, a working naval force, and even an infantry unit of any [01:07:00] size.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: This was a catastrophe and as I said, you know, this was a huge, maybe the greatest, embarrassment for the Norwegian Defense Forces since the Second World War, that when NATO finally made the call, they were not able to deliver at all. This happened just as the new general, the chief of staff of the military, the defense chief, Sigurd, General Sigurd Frisvold, he took over. He had, as he told me, there was one thing he thought, that never again, Kosovo, never again; next time we will be prepared. So in the years from 1998, '99, when the Kosovo campaign started, until 2001, everything was focused, as [01:08:00] I told you, to start restructuring. The first thing they had to restructure was the rapid reaction forces, the forces that should participate. It was the air force, to get the fighter plane, the F-16s in Norway, up-to-date, from being the most obsolete and ill-equipped F-16s in all of NATO, to be the most, best equipped and best trained fighter force in NATO. You had the navy, to get contracts in order, to get the ships working, to put this -- we got new frigates during this time span, to buy new frigates, to absolutely get this shipshape and to make sure that the army had a battalion, a fighting force, [01:09:00] to respond anywhere in the world on NATO's command, you know within a week's notice. This was the absolute focus point of the military after Kosovo. So, when 9/11 came, this was the test, this was the test. At that time, General Frisvold was on the bus, at 9/11. I just have to check. They had been in a NATO meeting. Just try to get my head around this. Yeah.

LEONG: It was a bus full of the top commanders.

EGEBERG: All the top commanders, NATO commanders, were in this bus, but I'm trying to remember, was it in Bulgaria? [01:10:00]

LEONG: I think it was somewhere else.

EGEBERG: I'm trying to find that here, I think it's here.

LEONG: I remember you wrote that the phones all started ringing.

EGEBERG: Yeah. Even the chief of staff, U.S. chief of staff was there as well, on the bus. Yeah, here, here, yeah. Now, on September 11th, there was a big NATO meeting with all the NATO commanders, the chief of staffs. They started the day in an Italian aircraft carrier, outside of Naples, and this was about when they actually hijacked the airplanes from Washington D.C. and New York, et cetera. [01:11:00] Then, they flew to Liszt, yeah, in Budapest, yeah.

LEONG: Ah, okay.

EGEBERG: So they were en route, on the airplane to Budapest when the first airplane struck the Twin Towers. They were on the bus into Budapest, the center of Budapest, when the second airplane hit the towers, and this is when all the phones start ringing inside the bus. He sits beside the German chief of staff and obviously, you know, the news spreads in the bus, they stop at the hotel. The U.S. delegation leaves quite quickly, but this is actually the first meeting, NATO top commander meeting, after 9/11. It is there where they realize that this will become a NATO issue very, very fast, and this could be an attack on NATO. Nobody [01:12:00] knew at that time, what was -- I remember myself, I was in Kosovo, I was a captain in Kosovo, in Pristina, and the alarm goes off and everything is on lockdown and everyone is to arm himself. We had no idea what to anticipate and we were watching this live on television, unfold. For Mr. Frisvold or General Frisvold, at that time he tells me already there, at the hotel, he took up his piece of paper and started making a list of what Norway could deliver. This was what we couldn't do in Kosovo, but this is what we can do now, and on top of this list, Special Forces,

mine clearance teams, and fighter jets, and then infantry, et cetera, et cetera. Special Forces, mine clearance, and fighter jets, and this made -- you know, and already when he then came back from [01:13:00] Budapest, they started planning this, before the politicians, before the Ministry of Defense tasked him to do this, because they were in this limbo, you know, trying to communicate that we were at war, we were not at war, we were at war, we were not at war.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: The high command in Norway started planning for putting troops anywhere, I mean this was before Afghanistan was even you know? But something is going to happen and we have to be prepared. So this list already, on September, I think the 13th, or September the 12th, he had a meeting and the general staff of the armed forces, where the commanders of the different branches of military were sitting there, and they started planning, what can we put forward to a U.S.-led, potentially NATO-led, operation. This is why we were actually eager to join, but [01:14:00] the U.S. didn't ask us before, you know, almost we had to you know, [raises hand] we can go as well this time. We were sitting, we were ready already, in September, October, and then the new government took over. Obviously, Kristin Krohn Devold was keen on being on the list of the coalition of the willing, for Enduring Freedom, because this was the strategy of Norway, making sure to be around the table when the decisions are made. So the government put forward different choices to participate, and the mine clearance team was the first to go, and they got on an airplane on New Year's Eve, I think, and they landed in Bagram, in Kandahar, the first day of the new year in 2002, among the first [01:15:00] allies to be there, but in General Frisvold's mind it took too long. He would like to have them there already, before the new year's end that was in his mind, the deadline, that we have to be prepared until new year, but this was more of kind of a logistic thing.

Kristin Krohn Devold told me that she was -- when the news broke that Norway was going to participate, Norway was among the first ones putting concrete troops forward, and she remembers, she told me she remembered she was at this NATO meeting around the table, and you had all these screens with CNN and international channels, you know muted in the background, but you could see the ticker, the news ticker with "Norway sending troops, engineers, to Afghanistan." She [01:16:00] tells me that Donald Rumsfeld was sitting there as well and he watched this and then he looked at her and nodded and she nodded, and she was really, really proud that this time, Norway could deliver. So this was the start and Special Forces, mine clearances teams was the first to go, and also, I think transport airplanes.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: Hercules, and then later on, F-16s. This is when Norway conducted the first air raid, bombing mission, since the Second World War, which is again, a very nice story, I don't know if you heard this, if Mr. Vollebaek told you.

LEONG: I Haven't talked to Mr. Vollebaek yet, but before you go on, I think I know the story you want to tell, which we will get to, but before you get there, I'm curious to know, how did the Norwegian Parliament respond to this move [01:17:00] to send these resources to Afghanistan, and how did the Norwegian public respond to that?

EGEBERG: This was really mixed. Afghanistan, I would say, as I remember, it was understandable that the reaction would come. I mean Taliban and the Taliban regime was not a known factor even in Norway, at that time, the atrocities, everything about that regime was loaded also, in Norway. I think most people supported Norway's participation at that time, in Afghanistan. I think most people agreed that something had to be done and that this was an opportunity for [01:18:00] doing something good in Afghanistan. But I think what started out as a mission with broad public support, became very early, a controversy, because of

the way the Afghanistan mission was conducted by the Enduring Freedom campaign by the U.S. And you had kind of two parallel paths here, how the public support diminished. One was how the campaign itself was conducted with, you know, mostly Special Forces and air raids and bombing, unclear you know, numbers on civilian deaths, a very aggressive campaign, which more and more seemed unfocused of what to achieve. [01:19:00] You know, the lack of kind of a plan to build the civilian society and the lack of kind of letting the UN -- and this to be led by the UN, but being kind of a more aggressive U.S.-led, closed kind of mission with not much publicity. In Norway, since we participated with Special Forces, there was a lot of secrecy, in my opinion unnecessary secrecy, bound to this, which further went against the public support, because the speculations, et cetera, et cetera. It was very different from former missions Norway has been involved in and this kind of put off the public in a way. So this was one [01:20:00] path.

The other path was the rising rhetoric from the White House, you know what became the war against terror, and not at least you know, "if you're not with us, you're against us," this famous quote, and the "axis of evil," which was a very un-Norwegian way, you know very aggressive and very neocon way, and immediately, when Iraq became the next focal point, I think the vast majority of Norwegian people became skeptic to the whole concept of the war against terror. Is this really an honest way of combating terror and building a sound democracy in Afghanistan, or is this something else, you know the Bush Doctrine and preemptive war, which [01:21:00] is a concept very far from the Norwegian spirit, et cetera, which is really against the whole concept of the peace nation or the peace broker of the world, peaceful solutions and a UN-led peaceful solution always should be the preferred solution to any problem. So, the aggressiveness conducted on the ground in Afghanistan and the kind of looming war in Iraq, was the reason

that the support of the whole war against terror plummeted in Norway and most other European countries, immediately.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: But the initial support for Afghanistan was quite broad and quite understood, and I think you had a unified and proud Norway, when [01:22:00] we were among the first of the small countries to actually participate. This is why also, we send mine hunters or mine clearance teams and engineers, you know, because it has the kind of concept of rebuilding and doing something good, although it's still a war, you know, very Norwegian kind of diversity into how you communicate. Special Forces, don't talk about them, you know they're a secret, they're doing pretty much not probably nice things but anyway, and we have, but look at the mine clearance teams, they are doing something good. So they brought the press down only to see the mine clearance team, but we can't talk with Special Forces because they are secret.

LEONG: And I think the word war was still not used.

EGEBERG: No, this was not a war, this was still a peace operation, a military operation, conducted because we are here to free the people of Afghanistan [01:23:00] and to fight terrorists, and they are not, you know a country, but al-Qaeda, et cetera. So it was still just an operation. It would take several years still to come, before Norwegian politicians and Norwegian Government would agree to use the word war about Afghanistan. Even there, they would always take this kind of, it's warlike, or we agree that it's kind of war but you know, still it's not really a war.

LEONG: Right. Was there discussion here, the way that was in the U.S., about -- especially given what Foreign Minister Jagland had said about focusing on terrorists as criminals.

EGEBERG: Yes. Absolutely.

LEONG: Was there that type of conversation? [01:24:00]

EGEBERG: Absolutely. It was a very strong conversation and this was one of the big reasons that not only the public support but I mean pretty broad on parliament and politicians as well, pulled away from this concept because -- and I think this was in the European spirit, not only the Norwegian spirit, that this was conducted the wrong way, that what should have been a hunt for terrorists in a way, to root out the terrorists, but doing it in the civil matter, became kind of a death squadron, regime changing kind of unlicensed war, if you understand my wording on this. It became kind of a renegade war, where you really did not see or [01:25:00] trust the sole purpose of it. It started out with the way things were done in Afghanistan, with CIA operations and secret jails. Rendition, the rendition program, was something that really hit hard in Scandinavia. You had examples of people being abducted from Sweden, there was a huge story, and you had the CIA airplanes landing on Scandinavian tarmacs you know, with secrecy. This kind of -- Abu Ghraib later on, scandal, Cuba, with Camp X-Ray. This was so against the moral understanding of Scandinavians and Europeans. It was you know, if we are going to combat terrorists, we can't [01:26:00] act like terrorists.

I remember myself, I was on this tour, press tour, invited actually, by the State Department in the U.S., back in, I think it must have been 2005, visiting the Pentagon, visiting the State Department, talking to U.S. lawmakers, Congress, et cetera, and you could really feel the difference in policy, in mindset, when it comes to this. You know, the way that on the U.S. side, I think we had this understanding that you know, we are just here to kill terrorists, whatever means, you know, the means -- what do you call it?

EGEBERG: [Speaks Norwegian] The means.

CREW: The means justify the goal.

EGEBERG: Yeah. No, the goal justify the means, yeah the goal [01:27:00] justify the means. What are you talking about, why should we give them lawyers? All we want to do is to kill them. You should agree to this. The rhetoric about this kind

of passionate hate or passionate kind of -- this not respecting, kind of the humanitarian law, not respecting the UN, not respecting the consensus that the whole system of the UN was built upon, you know the consensus of nations and the Geneva Convention. All these things have been printed into our backbones, into our minds, into our kind of moral map, the mappings, in Norway and in Scandinavia, being small countries, being so dependent on a world order which hold these rules, set of rules, high. The UN-led world [01:28:00] order, which kind of is the guarantee for small countries like Norway not to be bullied by the big countries. You know, to see that all these rules were just thrown out in the war against terror was really hard and it was also really hard because this was not our perception of the U.S. being the leader of the free world. How could you, in a way, endorse this, how could you do this, when you are the guarantee, and have been the guarantee, for the world having this set of rules, being kind of the good guys in the scenery for so many years and then suddenly, you know, you -- I [01:29:00] think a lot of people reacted very negatively to the way, you know, with secret prisons, secret imprisonments, imprisonment without --

LEONG: Trial.

EGEBERG: With trial. Torture. The whole torture matter, which was really unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable and un-understandable that you know, a country like the U.S. would even think about this, and how fast kind of the moral rule set deteriorated during these first couple of years in the war against terror. This made the divide and the skeptic, I mean people became very skeptic and made a divide between [01:30:00] Europe and Scandinavia and the U.S., which I think never really mended, not even during the Obama period. Also, freedom of speech, press freedom, all these things that we felt being attacked in the name of the war against terror, all these liberal and later on you had surveillance, surveillance of even foreign leaders in Europe, et cetera. All these things which did not apply to the rulebook that we thought applied to everyone, and especially U.S.

I think this, from [01:31:00] you know, trying to analyze the mood in Scandinavia and Norway, this was really, really hard to accept. This made it even harder for the government, both to try to keep kind of the high moral standards of being the peace nation, but also acknowledging that we are really dependent on the U.S. If ever anything happens at our borders, the only real power we can depend on is the U.S., and this is what also made this very interesting, studying the Norwegian policy where you had the prime minister, a priest from a Christian conservative party, having obvious moral dilemmas himself, to accept the war in Iraq, to be the friend of George W. [01:32:00] Bush, to keep Norway out of the war in Iraq but still keep Norway in as a friend of the U.S. Government. You had the Ministry of Defense focused on keeping the alliance and keeping the U.S. as the guarantee for Norway's security in the high north. How to combine that, and the other you know, to take a stance against Iraq and against the U.S. policy on one side and then endorsing it and trying to pull the U.S. in on the other side. Then you had Mr. Petersen, the party leader of the Conservative Party, and really the strong element in this government, U.S. traditional, very U.S. friendly and pragmatic, to keep this government alliance together, to keep the people happy, to keep the defense [01:33:00] guarantee for Norway and still in a way, you know, and they navigated in these complex waters really, really, I would say almost -- it's very fascinating to, in hindsight, to see how they navigated this, and as Iraq became a war, how Norway, as I think the only NATO country who actually did not participate in the war, still in a way became part of the coalition of the willing in Iraq, sending engineers, but not as soldiers but as humanitarian soldiers, which Mr. Bondevik, the prime minister, named them. They were not part of the coalition but they were humanitarian soldiers there to help the people of Iraq, you know clearing mines and doing this. A full [01:34:00] breadth, professional, mechanized, combat engineer company in Basra, I think, fully armed and combat

ready you know, but they were humanitarian soldiers. How to play all sides in this, to find the middle way and to keep everybody happy.

LEONG: Right. So speaking of keeping people happy, let's get back to the story about Ambassador Vollebaek.

EGEBERG: Oh, yeah. This was back in-- just let me check the dates here.

LEONG: I think it was January, 2003.

EGEBERG: Yeah, exactly, January, 2003. Norway have their F-16s in place in Afghanistan and doing combat missions, support missions, for Enduring Freedom. During this, they have their first actual combat bombing mission where the bomb targets in Afghanistan, [01:35:00] and it's just the first time since the Second World War, that the Norwegian Air Force have been in combat and actually taking, bombed, any targets, live. So this is a huge event obviously, which happens quite in the night, early morning in Norway. I mean in Norway, we had no idea about this, but in Washington, D.C., then Ambassador Vollebaek, being the Norwegian Ambassador to the U.S., is called to the State Department and as he tells the story, this occurred quite a lot with European ambassadors as this time, and more often than not, it was to get scolded. They were called in and got scolded by the U.S. representatives in the State Department, but this time it was very different. So he came there, he had no idea about this, he came there and he was [01:36:00] welcomed and jubilated. They were standing around and they were giving him applause, and he was congratulated, that Norway had conducted their first bombing mission in Afghanistan. They wanted to be the first to congratulate and even the president had made a press statement that he is about to put out, to congratulate the Norwegian people, by conducting their first bombing mission in Afghanistan. Mr. Vollebaek says, "No, no, no, you cannot put this statement out, because this will really hurt my government." And they were baffled, they were like what, but this is a proud moment, I mean you hit the targets and this was very well. No, no, no, you cannot put that. You do not know how this will be

interpreted by the Norwegian public. We do not congratulate anyone by bombing other people, really this would be a crisis in Norway. [01:37:00] So, the statement was never put out from the State Department in the U.S. He stopped, in the latest minute, the statement for going out, and in Norway, it was very subtle kind of news, which was of course made big, negative headlines, about the first bombing mission since the Second World War, because you know, then again, media. Did they bomb the right persons, was this really necessary, who have we angered, will this bring terrorists on Norwegian soil, et cetera, et cetera, which is the job of the media, to really have a critical view on what we are doing during a war. There was no congratulations coming from President Bush that day and I think that was probably a good idea.

LEONG: Yeah. In your book, you also suggest that even the Norwegian Cabinet were not entirely aware of all the facts related to that raid. [01:38:00]

EGEBERG: Oh yeah, absolutely, absolutely. This was an ongoing thing. Obviously, the secrecy around especially the Special Forces, et cetera, was a huge dilemma, but also you had this kind of subtle diplomacy between Norway, the cabinet trying to hold together, the opposition in parliament, and you had still, this American, Ambassador Ong, which was becoming more and more erratic, in many people's view. He was sending wires back and forth, to Washington, with a lot of writing about [01:39:00] the negative stance of the Norwegian people, writing about the opposition in parliament, writing about the dilemmas inside the government, and they were quite colorful wires being sent back to Washington, about how things were going in Norway and the Norwegian support to the U.S.-led Enduring Freedom. They were actually so colorful, I'm told, that the State Department were becoming quite skeptic about what to believe and what not to believe in these wires, and they were reluctant, because of the good relationship between Norway and the Norwegian Government, and the U.S. and the White House, they became more and more reluctant in forwarding these wires up the chain of command

before they were kind of verified. You know, how to verify that this [01:40:00] is actually true, because these wires were colorful and quite negative about Norway and Norwegian policy against the U.S. So what they actually did was they called in Ambassador Vollebaek again, because, as I've said, he was a very known figure in the State Department. He goes back since the early '90s and since his first work as a peace broker in the Balkans, and being a very, very close friend to Madeleine Albright in the Clinton era, and being a very known diplomate but also a very known politician by the bureaucrats in the State Department. They trusted him basically. So they called him to review the secret wires from the ambassador in Oslo to the State Department, in order to kind of [01:41:00] understand them better, to verify them, you know how to interpret them.

LEONG: Huh.

EGEBERG: This is quite interesting, I think it's quite amazing as well, and as far as I know, this put out a lot of potential fires between the White House and the State Department, and the Norwegian Government during this era, because he kind of became a broker, to make sure that no, you can't understand this like this but you know, this is more like this, and this is probably put out of context, et cetera, to smooth over all these small fires erupting in the U.S.-European affairs.

LEONG: Why would Ambassador Ong be negative if Kristin Krohn Devold was doing a good job?

EGEBERG: Yes, but she was only one of many. [01:42:00] I think Ambassador Ong was seen upon as a very erratic and very, very conservative figure, and that's always been kind of a thing in Norway, that the ambassador to Norway has always been a political appointee and not a career diplomat, which means that you always had somewhat very distinct and colorful ambassadors to Norway, many legendary American ambassadors to Norway, not to mention the predecessor, no the --?

LEONG: Successor.

EGEBERG: The successor of Ambassador Ong, Ambassador Benson Whitney.

LEONG: Whitney, mm-hmm.

EGEBERG: Who was a very [01:43:00] outgoing, young, dynamic guy, also very free spoken, very outgoing, and I would say very popular, but I think almost, they had to rein him in sometimes, because he was -- he spoke his mind all the time and he was very, very much -- he was participating in the public debate very openly and speaking, had a very open -- I mean the embassy was very open to journalists, et cetera. As a journalist, this was a very exciting time, because they were -- it was easy to get access and to get opinions and information, both on record, but also off record, et cetera, from [01:44:00] the U.S. Embassy, which was quite good. But also, I think this was annoying for parts of the government, who really didn't want any big debate about the U.S.-Norwegian relationship, because it was a very difficult time.

LEONG: Right, right. So Ambassador Ong actually became -- so as we now move closer to the Iraq --

EGEBERG: Ambassador Ong actually threatened Norway, in a speech.

LEONG: In the leadup to the Iraq War.

EGEBERG: In the leadup to the Iraq War, he kind of repeated George Bush's sentence about if you're not with us, you're against us, you know, but directly against Norway, and said that Norway not supporting the Iraq War would have consequences, harsh consequences, [01:45:00] as it was interpreted by the media there. He said this publicly and this was obviously very undiplomatic for an ambassador to do, and this was in the period which was really, really difficult for the Norwegian Government, because the prime minister was in a very, I think a big dilemma, you know both personally and to keep the Norwegian Government together and to find a solution to this dilemma with the Iraq War and the lack of a UN resolution. Ambassador Ong, he was kind of an elephant in -- what we call an elephant in the room.

LEONG: A bull in a china shop?

EGEBERG: Yeah, a bull in a china shop you know, really rocking the boat there, in a way that was unacceptable both for the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Parliament, and opposition. So they were really joined in not having a U.S. ambassador meddling in Norwegian affairs at that time. It was really, [01:46:00] really not taken lightly and this made people even more, what do you call it? They were more skeptic to anything coming from the U.S. side, and this I think also made it even more important for Vollebaek having this in between role, interpreting the wires going back to Washington, D.C.

LEONG: So let's talk about the Iraq War now. As we lead up to the Iraq War, what were the considerations as far as Norway was concerned?

EGEBERG: Well in Norway, without a UN mandate, we cannot join the Iraq War, that was kind of the bottom line. This was, for the opposition's side, nothing to discuss, and for the public side, [01:47:00] nothing to discuss. Norway will not participate in a war against Iraq unless you have a firm UN resolution backing it, or giving the green light, which was, at that moment, not very likely. Obviously, there was no joy connected to even participating, if there would be a UN resolution, because at that time, I think the public in Norway was quite against such a war, not because there were any love to Saddam Hussein or that regime, but that there was absolutely no -- I think most people did not believe in the portrait, [01:48:00] you know, or the -- did not believe in the story. Most people did not believe in the story about Iraq having anything to do with 9/11, did not believe in the weapons of mass destruction, were skeptic to the evidence put forward. I mean it was just a really big skepticism, because they did not trust the White House and the Cabinet of George W. Bush, I mean it was a lack of trust. So, it would have been really difficult, even with a UN resolution, to support a Norwegian active kind of combat mission in Iraq anyway.

LEONG: It must have presented the cabinet with a major dilemma though.

EGEBERG: It was an extreme dilemma. You have to remember that this cabinet [01:49:00] was consisting of three parties, where the Conservative Party, the traditionally very U.S. friendly party, was the big question. They were the dominating party and the party leader, the Minister of Foreign Defense, Mr. Petersen, was reluctant to say that we will not go to war. I mean he was you know, if the UN supports this, we will go to war and we will join forces with the U.S. You had Kristin Krohn Devold, who really was not in the decisive -- I mean she was not the foreign minister, she was not the prime minister, but she was solely tasked that if we were going to war, we would be ready to do so with anything. Being such a visual and U.S. friendly figure in [01:50:00] the cabinet, I think she got a lot of attention, being pro-Iraq, being pro-war anyway, not really stating this, you know, but this was kind of the public --?

LEONG: Perception?

EGEBERG: Yeah, the public perception of being, you know, really trying to root for war and for joining the war in Iraq, while Mr. Petersen, he will say, at least in my work, he said you know, I never said that. I never said that we would not go to war, but I never said that we would go to war. What I said was that we would wait for the UN resolution. While the opposition obviously, a lot, I would say majority of the public, and even so, [01:51:00] the party of the prime minister, Mr. Bondevik, they wanted to make a clear stance to say that anyhow, we will not go to war, we will not join this war. This is the dilemma almost ripping the ruling cabinet apart, was this dilemma from waiting for the UN resolution and clearly stating no, regardless of the UN resolution. This became a terrible dilemma for the prime minister, not so much a dilemma for, I think, Mr. Petersen or Kristin Krohn Devold, being a lot more pragmatic about this. What happens here, as I'm told from my sources and firsthand sources and open sources, is that the opposition, the major opposition party, the [01:52:00] Labour Party, which had the outgoing government, and Mr. Jagland again, being the president of the parliament in Norway, the speaker of the

parliament, and the party leader, Jens Stoltenberg, they made kind of a back channel, giving the prime minister their support not to go to war, that they would support him in this and they would make this clearly, that the parliament would be fully against going to war and in order to make this clear to Mr. Petersen and the Conservative Party, they would make a consensus behind the scene, not to go to war without anyone losing face. This is at least how they portrayed this, almost clash within the government, where then finally [01:53:00] Mr. Petersen and the Conservative Party agreed that okay, there is no UN resolution, it will not come, therefore Norway will not go to war. So, as it's portrayed by both opposition and in a way by Bondevik, this kind of agreement behind the scenes, made, took out kind of the pressure from this, this potential rift, and ended this dilemma just before the war. But it was really, really tense and Mr. Bondevik has stated very clearly, that if the Conservative Party had not backed down, he would step down as prime minister, that this would break the government, that he would not allow himself to be dominated by the major [01:54:00] party in government, to go to war. We will never know, if push came to shove, if that would happen, but he's been very clear that he would have stepped down as Prime Minister if Norway, or if the Conservative Party had pushed for war.

LEONG: Right. That must have put Mrs. Devold in a very difficulty position, in her relationship with Donald Rumsfeld. I think it was around this time that he said, well there's old Europe and there's new Europe.

EGEBERG: Yes. I don't know, it's hard to say, because their relationship was already really, really strong. I think, in many ways, Kristin Krohn Devold avoided a lot of this by -- I think also, Donald Rumsfeld and Lord Robertson, the NATO [01:55:00] secretary, general of NATO, had such a good understanding of politics, that they knew that she was junior in that relationship, that Mr. Petersen was the Conservative Party leader, her boss, and Mr. Bondevik was her prime minister, and she had you know, really not much to say if they decided something else. She

would be in the clear. So for her, as a person as a minister, and for the defense cooperation, I think still, I believe that this would -- you know, it would have made the big picture maybe more difficult, kind of the foreign relation, but Kristin Krohn Devold, I think would still be a star and would still have this influence, because they all knew where she was and [01:56:00] what she was made of and what she was capable of doing. She really worked hard in this transitional period, for the Norwegian Armed Forces, and she worked hard, doing her part in reforming NATO, parallel with this very fantastic relationship she had with Mr. Rumsfeld. She parallel, also had a very good relationship to Lord Robertson, the Secretary General of NATO. In the same way, they had this kind of agreement behind the scenes, because she was a really fluent English speaker, because she was dynamic, because she was for this transformation. She [01:57:00] represented kind of the new NATO. They had this agreement of making the meetings in NATO more fluid, more progressive. As I'm told, Lord Robertson was quite unhappy about these foreign NATO ambassadors and foreign NATO ministers of defense, coming, you know reading from a piece of paper, in French or in German or in some other country, not even being able to communicate in English, using headphones and translation, instead of having a dynamic meeting in the NATO boardroom, you know, to get things done. In order to combat this, Kristin Krohn Devold volunteered to be speaker number three or four, instead of being number ten or eleven, to speed things up in these meetings. [01:58:00] They had this agreement, if you know, things started to bog up or people reading from paper or whatever, he would kind of just give a glance and she would take the word. This made, suddenly Norway, from being number six, seven, eight, nine, to be number three or four on the list of speakers. It had a lot to do with the influence of Norway in that room and it brought Norway, really into the center of, you know the inner circle of NATO, and with the relationship to Donald Rumsfeld, the inner circle in Washington, D.C., you know both places, which was the mission she had,

which was the whole concept of the new foreign policy of Norway, to be in the center, in the circle anywhere, in the alliance, in Washington, D.C., in the UN, to make sure that nobody forgets [01:59:00] Norway. That's the whole purpose. So, while Bondevik were doing domestic policy in Norway, trying to keep the public happy, she could do -- her sole mission was to keep the alliance happy.

LEONG: Right. But what did that mean in terms of -- of course, as all this was going on, France and Germany and Belgium, became very vocal about the Iraq War, and came out very strongly against it. Did it make things difficult for Norway in that regard, because they of course are also, at least Germany and Belgium, also are NATO allies.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: How did that work out?

EGEBERG: One of the big dilemmas during this is that Norway, being a Scandinavian country and being kind of a secondary member to the EU, being part of the European community, being small, kind of kept them quite clear, you had differences in [02:00:00] NATO. In Europe, you had big differences even within the EU, where you had Poland as a strong supporter of the Bush policy, for example, doing their own things, et cetera. So they had bigger problems within the EU then, to really care about the Norwegian stance, I think. This is my opinion, obviously it's more complicated, but in the big picture, the Norwegian kind of stance was not very unique and not a big problem for the big picture, within the EU especially I think. Also, Norway had this problem that the EU, the big problem was a scenario where the EU started to drift from NATO because of this. This was the big scare also for Norway. That is why Norway was a strong [02:01:00] supporter of tying Afghanistan to NATO, to ISAF, more than to the Enduring Freedom, because in order to bring most of these conflicts from ad hoc alliances, into NATO, which Norway was a part of, and not to EU. EU was talking about making their own alliance, which they are doing now again, a defense

alliance, which would be bad for Norway, because Norway is not a fully member of the EU.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: We want to have everything, all our strategic alliances must be within a format where we are a member, which is NATO. That is why we needed a strong relationship to the U.S., which is not EU member but a NATO member, and also our very strong, at that time, relationship to Britain, which already at that time was a skeptic to the EU defense cooperation, and also, [02:02:00] aligned with Norway's opinion, wanted all these to be put into NATO and not to EU. They wanted NATO to be the sole defense alliance also for Europe. So you had kind of these three countries, which was a very strong supporter of NATO.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: Which was kind of contradictory to the French, German kind of thoughts of strengthening the EU, the defense cooperation within the EU. This is, as I'm told and my sources tell me, this is why Lord Robertson, as far as I know, was the one who actually forwarded Kristin Krohn Devold as a candidate, to be his successor as the secretary general of NATO. She was among the three frontrunners, finalists, for this run, and I'm told [02:03:00] that the reason why she did not -- I mean also, Donald Rumsfeld was a supporter of this. I'm told by sources, that the reason she did not get the job, although Lord Robertson is very influential, and Donald Rumsfeld, and the U.S. supported this, was this dilemma keeping the EU, NATO orientated, that it would be bad for the alliance that a non-EU country got the NATO general secretary, that in order to tie EU to NATO and tie the focus point of the EU to NATO, they had to give that position to an EU member country, and that's why, just in the end, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer from the Netherlands, suddenly appeared and became the new secretary general [02:04:00] of NATO at that time.

LEONG: Right, right.

EGEBERG: At least that's one version of how that became and why Krohn Devold became a candidate, because she was very supported by Lord Robertson, Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S., and different countries, because of her progressiveness, the new NATO thing.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: But because of real politics, you know, in order to save the alliance relevance also within the EU, they had to give it to an EU country. That's at least one version that I've heard about how that came about.

LEONG: So Norway didn't participate in the invasion of Iraq, but it very quickly joined in when the stabilization --

EGEBERG: Extremely quickly.

LEONG: -- authority was put into place.

EGEBERG: Yeah. They participated with engineers, also with [02:05:00] officers, during the NATO training program, which was quickly developed. A lot of NATO countries, I believe had their caveats to stay out of that, but Norway was one of the countries who strongly supported that. This was extremely controversial in Norway, by the public, you know why do we have soldiers in a war we didn't support. Again, you have this no, this is not part of the occupation, this is part of the stabilization, this is a humanitarian mission, et cetera, et cetera. You had all these kind of acrobats when it came to rhetoric, and how to label this, the support mission. Anyway, we joined in very fast and we stayed for about a year, with soldiers, and then we stayed on with training officers in the NATO training program, for several years, until [02:06:00] 2005, and you had a new regime change in Norway, where you had new elections and where the former Labour Party won the election and they formed what they called the red-green coalition.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: Which was the Labour Party, the Socialist Party, and the Centre Party, which then formed the new government, and this was also very interesting when it

came to the U.S.-Norwegian relationship, as far as I've researched. It went really wrong already, from that election day.

LEONG: You're talking about the phone call.

EGEBERG: Yeah, I'm talking about the phone call. What happened then was -- it's a very interesting story. It was written, it's written quite a bit about [02:07:00] in Norway as well, but I think it still hasn't -- you know all the elements have still not been disclosed and what really happened, but I've done my part and that was my first, also my first experience with the George W. Bush Library, trying to get information about exactly that phone call, because at the eve of this election, when the Labour Party Leader, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, was declared the winner and was anticipated to form the new government, George W. Bush, President Bush, called him to congratulate him. This, obviously is a very important phone call for any European leader, when the U.S. president calls to congratulate, but at this time, when it's a big [02:08:00] discussion, both during the election and which would become a focal point after the election, was Norway pulling their support out of the Iraq War. This was one of the big promises that the oncoming government had during the election campaign, that they would pull out the Norwegian military support in the Iraq conflict. This is something, coming out from that phone call with President Bush, Jens Stoltenberg said that, "I made clear to President Bush that we would pull our troops out of Iraq," and he declared this with a kind of bravado, you know, I had a strong message, et cetera, et cetera. This is still disputed, because from the U.S. side, nobody heard this at all, [02:09:00] and as far as we know, this did not go well when the U.S. diplomats saw this cited in newspapers and in TV reports and all over the news wires, that this new prime minister-elect in Norway kind of told the president that he would pull his support out of Iraq, when he actually did not do that in the phone call. There has been many disputed kind of different messages after this and how, you know, what was said, what was not said. One theory was that this was during the Katrina disaster

in the U.S., that President Bush was on Air Force One, on the way to New Orleans at that time and had a very bad telephone connection, so maybe he didn't really hear what [02:10:00] Mr. Stoltenberg said, or that he didn't understand or that he didn't pay attention, or whatever, but all these versions have been, in one way or another, that Mr. Stoltenberg said this but maybe not in a way that could be understood as that he really said it.

Anyway, one mission during my work with this book, was at least to rule out, or in, if he was on Air Force One or not, and as far as I know, getting a Freedom of Information Act, I got at least the diary, the presidential diary for that day, and he was sitting in the Oval Office, having, I think, a five or seven minute phone call with Mr. Stoltenberg, and it was quite a good setting for getting the wordings, listening in, and it even states the three [02:11:00] persons in the ops, listening in on this call. So if Stoltenberg really said this, it was misinterpreted by four people and not only the president, and I tend to believe that maybe the message from the prime minister-elect was not as strong to the president as it was to the public after this phone call, that maybe he pushed it a bit far. But the result, I think was devastating, that President Bush did not trust this man after that, and this was immediately, a result of this was putting Norway in the freezer, as we call it. I think this was both a combination of not trusting the prime minister-elect, and also obviously, because this was looked upon as a socialist [02:12:00] elected government and not a conservative, as the latter one, and I think for anyone not really understanding Norwegian policy and how, how small differ from the Norwegian conservatives, to the Norwegian socialists or social Labour Party, that these are pretty much, you know shades of the same color. In Scandinavia, everything is kind of social, democratic, in a way there is not at all like viewing American politics and the Republican and Democrats. Obviously, during my research, I could see many tendencies for the government, having prejudice against this oncoming government long before they actually took to office. You

also have this [02:13:00] in how Donald Rumsfeld met the new secretary of defense. As we all know, he had a fantastic relationship to Kristin Krohn Devold, the new secretary of defense, she was also a woman. Anne-Grete Strøm Erichsen was received quite differently. This was during NATO, the first meeting between the Norwegian Secretary of Defense and Donald Rumsfeld, was during, I think it was a NATO meeting in Sicily, which was kind of forming the scene, because as it's repeated to me it was like a mafia, mob meeting, down in the cellar. I don't actually know if it was in the cellar, but everyone from the Norwegian side participating in this bilateral meeting with Donald Rumsfeld, [02:14:00] has this perception of this happening in the cellar, because it was like a mob setting, where they came in and Don Rumsfeld was sitting behind a big desk and he was having a pencil, which he was pounding to the table while he was kind of firing very critical questions; why haven't you met the 2 percent goal, why haven't you built up this? He was very aggressive, very aggressive, very aggressive, against this new minister of defense. But she was a very experienced domestic politician, former mayor of Bergen, the second largest city in Norway, which is known for pretty harsh politics. She tells me, during my research, that you know okay, I immediately understood that we [02:15:00] will never have a good relationship, so I would just have to work pragmatic with this guy, but I've seen several guys like this, you know trying to dominate women in politics. He would not be the first one and he would not be the last one, so I will just have to make the best of it; that's her version of it. At that time, the new chief of staff and chief of the armed forces, he tells another version of this, how they had to kind of step in and support their minister because Mr. Rumsfeld was so aggressive during this meeting.

But anyway, it pretty much set the kind of tone of things, that things would not develop further after this change of government, that the relationship with the former government would be as good [02:16:00] as it would get. It would not be a warmer and stronger relationship after the transition. This endured, I think until

Donald Rumsfeld left office, and I think it was Robert Gates who took over, and the relationship got more stable and more constructive on the defense side after Mr. Gates, Secretary Gates, took office. They had a better kind of chemistry and working relationship. They more or less avoided -- and I'm not really sure if they ever had any meetings with Rumsfeld after this famous Sicily meeting down in the cellar, or whatever. [02:17:00] So, it's quite interesting to hear these stories from the people who were there today, how this strong relationship immediately deteriorated. This was on the defense side.

On the foreign policy side, it's very interesting, because this time, from 2005 and forward, really correlates to the timespan for the Cablegate leaks from Wikileaks, which gave me a trove of cables from the embassy in Oslo, regarding their stance and how they viewed the new Norwegian Government. This is really exciting to study, in the perspective of what we're talking about, the foreign [02:18:00] relations, because at the time when the leaks came out, a lot of people were focused on combat operations in Afghanistan or in Iraq or whatever scandal they could find, but if you view these as more a diary of the deteriorating relationship between the government of Norway and the embassy in Oslo, and how the U.S. sees on this, it's very interesting. Because of this phone call, they had anyway, almost, if I could have a tabloid version of this, given up Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg as kind of not trustworthy. But, they had great anticipations in his secretary of state, Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, he's portrayed in the early cables as a star, as [02:19:00] a world diplomat, as the strongest force of dialogue between the U.S. and Norway, and as the guy to put their trust in, to mend this relationship. But he disappoints the U.S. Mr. Støre has a very clear vision of bringing back the peace broker theme, the UN oriented world order. They mentioned peace, Norway as being the peace broker and the peace nation in their platform, for governmental, and he's kind of the main broker for Norway being something else, being not this war against terror, but as being [02:20:00] something else, to bring

back kind of this whole concept of Norway being this mediator in the world, promoting the UN and promoting human rights, promoting code of conduct, et cetera, et cetera, all these things that they actually was elected to do. But also, he's seen by the U.S. embassy as very arrogant, not able to listen. Superior is repeated again and again in these cables. They become more and more frustrated because you know, they do not listen to sense, in the U.S. perspective.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: They don't want to listen that you know, sometimes we have to be pragmatic. [02:21:00] Also, in this eager of changing the course, finding a mission, a UN mission, finding some peace to broker somewhere in the world, the U.S. feels that Norway is stepping on toes. This was very visual, for example in the Middle East, where Norway was very strong in keeping a dialogue with Hamas while the U.S. was pressuring everyone, the U.S. and Israel was pressuring everyone, including the EU, to take a stance against Hamas, while Norway was a firm believer that without Hamas, you could never broker peace in the Middle East. This was not looked good upon by the U.S., who wanted to put Hamas on the terrorist [02:22:00] list, et cetera, and the EU, et cetera. This was kind of directly against U.S. policies. You had the same with Cuba, where Norway wanted to soften up their stance against the Cuban regime, which was not looked good upon by the U.S., and you had other initiatives that where Mr. Støre was actually called a busy bee, by the U.S. Embassy, that you know, he's a loose cannon and a busy bee, and he doesn't understand what's good, you know that Norway should know their place.

LEONG: That's ironic, because I think it was mentioned in your book that Mr. Vollebaek, and then later even Mr. Petersen, had come around to this idea that one way that Norway could make itself useful was actually to be involved in these places and become a [02:23:00] broker between the U.S. and these other actors.

EGEBERG: Yeah, and I think this shows kind of a difference, or kind of how hard it is also, for a country like Norway, to understand the shifts in U.S. policy. I mean the huge shift between the Clinton White House and the Bush White House, and the huge difference between the U.S. before 9/11 and the U.S. after 9/11. As Mr. Vollebaek explains, you know, even how diplomats, if you forgot your flag pin, you could really have a big problem, because of the patriotism, the whole kind of shift in the U.S. spirit after 9/11, which was quite hard for countries like Norway to understand. I don't think really, a lot of countries in Europe never really understood how [02:24:00] -- what strong impact this had, not only on policies, but also on patriotism, on kind of the U.S., the American people. So, kind of drifted apart in a way, in understanding each other, and this is what is clearly also when Norway wants to go back to this kind of what worked and what made Norway something special, not only a good ally, but also something more than Poland, something more than other countries; someone who also had an equal kind of place at the table. The U.S. was not really interested, or the Bush regime was not really interested, in having anyone at the table, you know they would lead and we would follow. This is very different from the world view that [02:25:00] Norway wants to promote, where everybody sits around the table and has an equal voice. This is why this really was a mismatch, and this is why also, Norwegian politicians on both sides of the left/right, had such big anticipations to Obama when he rose as a candidate, as being something more like the Clinton White House, something more liberal and more of a UN friendly, consensus, everyone around the same table president, while Bush, at this time you know, was seen as someone [02:26:00] who wanted the whole table for himself.

LEONG: Right. What was Norway's view, both the public and the elite, view of Condoleezza Rice?

EGEBERG: Oh, I think very mixed, and that comes to me too because I think, I think at the time, not only in the U.S. and in the State Department, where a lot of people

had lost faith in Colin Powell and his you know -- and if he would be able to make any difference anyway.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: I think he became a disappointment by many, not only because of the war against terror, but he was not a very outgoing, open [02:27:00] secretary of state. I think a lot of people had anticipated him to be a greater force than he became in the cabinet. So I think the shift to Condoleezza Rice, this taken from memory, and I mean this is many years ago, I think was welcomed. It was a very interesting change, not because I think a lot of people viewed Condoleezza Rice as something very different, as someone very educated, very able, and being a woman, being African American, being highly regarded by many sides. I think [02:28:00] it was an anticipation that she would be able to be kind of a voice of reason, a pragmatic voice of reason within the Bush Cabinet. I also believe that she at least was perceived in Norway as a better listener than Colin Powell was. If you ask Mr. Støre, he would say that they had a great working relationship and that they kind of spoke more of the same language because they both are highly educated and have kind of academic [02:29:00] background. She was a very interesting change in the U.S. Government. I'm not sure if she met the expectations. I think also, to be quite frank, people may have anticipated that she being a woman would make her softer, which I do not believe she was at all, quite on the contrary. She was more --

EGEBERG: [Speaks Norwegian]

CREW: Clear.

EGEBERG: Yeah, she was very clear. I mean, I think she was easier to -- plainspoken [02:30:00] and easier to kind of cooperate with than the former, also because she was stronger and she had a lot more influence within the cabinet. She became a more important partner than Colin Powell was.

LEONG: Was she considered maybe more reassuring, because she was also a Russia expert?

EGEBERG: I think so, yes, absolutely, and that became very obvious, a kind of, at least a wanted relief with the government change, because a very key issue also, for the Stoltenberg government, was to orientate things back to the high north. This was one of the big kind of projects after the Stoltenberg government, and the focus was to bring [02:31:00] attention back to the high north, away from Iraq, away from the war against terror, to bring attention back to Russia, to the high north, to the future. Obviously, Condoleezza Rice was viewed as an expert, I mean a real expert academic, very well orientated, very up-to-date, and also a Republican, conservative Republican, who also was concerned about the new rise of Russia and Putin, et cetera. This was also a dilemma, which was also one of the mismatch between the U.S. policy and the Norwegian policies, that Norway trying to please everybody. This is very well read in the Cablegate, but I also asked journalists at that time, working with this foreign policy, I had a lot of contacts, as I mentioned, both in the U.S. State Department, in Pentagon, but also [02:32:00] at the embassy, the British Embassy, the German Embassy, et cetera, I was working these relations.

Especially a couple of things angered, really, really angered the U.S., you had two episodes which were really not well taken. When Mr. Stoltenberg visited St. Petersburg and Putin, and this was during the debate about the rocket shield over Europe, which was a major policy for Bush, which Norway was, and the Norwegian Government, was very reluctant against and even voiced, during the meeting with Putin in St. Petersburg. I remember very strongly, that high level U.S. policymakers actually [02:33:00] used the words, that he was conducting himself as Putin's parrot, he was parroting Putin, which is quite strong language, but it also says something about -- you know, I think at that time, people were really angry on the U.S. side and also on the British side. They were really, they felt that Mr. Stoltenberg was actually working against the alliance and doing harm

on this topic, going to Russia and speaking in a way that was seen as against the mission shield, supporting, almost viewed as, in a way, supporting Putin, and this was not received well at all.

You had another incident that I remember at the time, [02:34:00] when I was working these topics as a journalist, was really -- became an issue in diplomatic community, was when Mr. Raymond Johansen, the deputy secretary of state or vice secretary of state, went to Iran during the Iran nuclear program debate, the six-party talks, and this was a really hot topic and suddenly, this Norwegian diplomat pops up in Tehran and I believe speaks about you know, maybe being a backdoor, brokering again, brokering some kind of deal to end the nuclear program, which was not cleared by the EU and it was not cleared by the U.S. It was kind of seen as kind of a [02:35:00] lone Norway being a busy bee and meddling in this ongoing effort on you know, brokering a nuclear deal with Iraq, with the EU. This was not well received at all and this was then in line with also the efforts towards Hamas and brokering peace in the Middle East and softening to Cuba. So there was a lot of issues where Norway and the U.S. did not at all agree upon. That said, this was totally aligned with how Norway in general, and the red-green government especially, had always conducted things, for the last year, so it should not [02:36:00] have come as a surprise. In many ways, this was, if you really knew the Stoltenberg government, they should have anticipated that they would make real efforts in doing it the Norwegian way.

LEONG: I thought a point that you made in your book that was very interesting also, is not only how domestic politics affected foreign relations, but also how -- correct me if I'm wrong -- I think you also made the argument that because of the War on Terror, because of the way the U.S. conducted itself, it actually pushed the Labour [02:37:00] Party more left.

EGEBERG: Absolutely.

LEONG: To the degree that it makes a difference.

EGEBERG: Absolutely. This is very clear in how Norway conducted itself in Afghanistan. Because the Labour Party, which has always been -- or this Labour Party, who really has been very close to the center, was pulled left by having the coalition with the Socialist Party, which is pretty far left, and the Centre Party. The Centre Party really not being the big issue here, but -- and more aligned with the normal good standing with U.S. and a pretty pragmatic party when it comes to these kinds of issues. But you have the Socialist Party, who really had to work out their stance on NATO before they even could become a part of this red-green, from this being traditionally anti-NATO party, had to do a lot of work in accepting NATO as the prime alliance [02:38:00] for Norway, but obviously against the War against Terror, against Enduring Freedom, against Iraq, against any kind of warlike operations, at best peace operations, but absolutely against any kind of offensive warlike operations. So this obviously was a dilemma for the Labour Party, always having to balance this in their policies when it came to the War against Terror and especially Iraq and ISAF. The first move was to move everything in Afghanistan had to be within the frameworks of ISAF and not Enduring Freedom. So they pulled out of Enduring Freedom in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and so everything would be framed within the NATO structure and ISAF.

Also, we at that moment, already had committed ourselves north, but pretty fast, [02:39:00] 2005 and onwards, when the situation really deteriorated in the south of Afghanistan, more and more allies not primarily the U.S. but foremost, the British, the Netherlands, the Danes, et cetera, who were bogged down in the area around Kandahar, was asking Norway for support, for troops, for anything which could support them in this deteriorating environment in the south. This was something that the current army chief of staff really strongly felt that Norway was obliged to do, because these were our close allies, but because of the policy, was more or less absolutely out of the question for the Socialist Party. They drew the line somewhere around Kabul, that south from this point [02:40:00]

was a very clear line on the map, south of this point is war, north of this is peace, is peacekeeping and this is war. It was kind of a very strange line to put.

LEONG: Arbitrary.

EGEBERG: Because both were ISAF, both were NATO, both were the same mission, but this was kind of a line put in government, in policy, that made it impossible for the Labour Party to agree to support the troops south of Kabul. This was the biggest rift in the red-green government, as Iraq, participating in the war in Iraq, was for the former government, but this was drawn out of a much longer timespan. More or less for eight years, [02:41:00] you had this extreme tension between the Socialists not really wanting to participate at all and eager to pull the troops out and eager to find the UN mission, and the Labour Party, being traditionally a strong supporter of NATO and a strong supporter of the alliance, trying to balance this for a working relationship. The Socialist Party, several times, threatened to leave, to break the government if anything warlike happened with Norwegian troops in Afghanistan. This was a dilemma during these eight years, and long after the Bush presidency.

You had [02:42:00] Libya, which really is a study for itself, but as we agreed, it is not part of this, but obviously also the strong fatigue against Bush in the Socialist Party, you know was a big factor. Things were initially better when Obama took over, it was easier after Obama took over, but any efforts to participate in the hard environment in south Afghanistan was effectively blocked by the Socialist Party. This became a problem within the alliance, where I think both the Netherlands, the British, [02:43:00] and obviously the Americans, felt that Norway should have supported more where they were needed. But this kind of equalized itself later on, where the environment up north, where Norway had its PRT, started to become really, really bad, from 2006, 2007 and onwards, it was increasingly bad. Also, south and Norwegian troops were more and more pulled into combat, and huge combat operations there, which really kind of made this

problem go away, but in 2005, 2006, 2007, this was a big issue within the Norwegian Cabinet, in order to support. This also played out in the whole Middle East [02:44:00] thing.

There's a story in my book about -- and this happened very early in this, where Kristin Halvorsen, the Ministry of Finance, but also the leader of the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party traditionally has been vocal, been very vocal about boycotting Israel because of the Middle East crisis, in the support for the Palestinians. Obviously, this works well when you're in opposition, in the opposition party, but when you're in government, this is not as easy, and when you are Ministry of Finance and a cabinet member of the Norwegian Government, it's not taken well in Israel, or in the U.S., when you speak up about a boycott against Israel. So this became a huge issue and [02:45:00] Mr. Vollebaek, the ambassador, Norwegian Ambassador in Washington, D.C., was actually called into the Congress in the U.S., and he will tell a story about how former congressman, trying to -- the only Holocaust survivor in Congress. I'm trying to catch his name.

LEONG: We'll have to look it up.

EGEBERG: I'll look it up.

LEONG: I'm embarrassed that it doesn't come to mind. I should know this.

EGEBERG: You should remember this, yeah?

LEONG: I should know it. I should know it.

EGEBERG: Yeah, here it is, I think. No, no, it's later on. Ah, Lantos. [02:46:00]

LEONG: Lantos.

EGEBERG: Lantos, yeah, Congressman Lantos, a Democrat, I believe, and traditionally a very strong supporter of Norway, a very strong supporter of Fridtjof Nansen and the Norwegian kind of -- the whole mentality of Norway, being a peace broker in the world. He was a strong supporter of the UN and he spoke in Congress, about Trygve Lie being the first UN Secretary General, and they spoke very warmly and it was kind of a very strong friend of Norway in Congress, for many, many years.

Phil, I think Phil Lantos, Congressman Lantos. Anyway he, being a Holocaust survivor, he was so extremely upset about the Norwegian Government actually [02:47:00] talking about boycotting, or elements in the Norwegian Government talking about this boycott against Israel. He used the F word against Ambassador Vollebaek in Congress, he was so angry that you know, he was red-faced and couldn't control himself, as I'm told, and scolded the Norwegian Ambassador in front of other members of Congress. This was quite unlike Congressman Lantos. The temperature was really, really high, and what happened within the Norwegian parliament was that they actually had to intervene, and both Prime Minister Stoltenberg and [02:48:00] Secretary of State Støre had to you know, make the Finance Ministry, Kristin Halvorsen, apologize for this and stop this talk about boycott, because it became so contentious internationally. This again, a bit like I told you, the aftermath of 9/11, this kind of trying to speak one voice to the public and one voice internationally and one voice to the foreign policy, not being in war, being in war. This whole kind of split and different ways of explaining the world we're in, two different publics. Someone would call it two-faced or even three or four-faced, someone would call it [02:49:00] diplomacy, someone would call it, I mean a very hard balance to make. It was awkward and I think that describes the whole kind of thrive of trying to both distance themselves from President Bush and to keep itself as a center of the alliance in NATO, both being a friend and being a critic, being a diplomat also, participating, et cetera. It was a really, really hard balancing act which, for the U.S.-Norwegian relationship, was played out better, I think, by the former government [02:50:00] than the latter, but from a public perspective or EU or European perspective, I think you would have very different views on how they conducted themselves, but absolutely no doubt about the strong relationship becoming much stronger during the period from 2001 to 2005, and how it really deteriorated through the last period of President Bush, until Obama took office, and things very slowly started to mend.

LEONG: I want to ask you also, about the commission on Afghanistan that was led by Former Minister Godal. It found that Norway had three goals in Afghanistan and really only achieved one.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: Would you talk more about that?

EGEBERG: Yeah, absolutely. This is [02:51:00] very in line with my own research on the topic as well, and this especially I think, relates to the red-green period from 2005 until we pulled out of Afghanistan. Initially, in 2001-2002, the goal was to kill al-Qaeda and topple the Taliban regime. Obviously, in no way they achieved this, but it was more a combat operation. But then it became a NATO allied regime change, stabilizing mission, and this is kind of what this report is about. There you could state the three goals was to stabilize [02:52:00] the humanitarian goal and to support our allies. As we know today, nothing we or anybody else did in Afghanistan really stabilized Afghanistan. It's very unstable, the Taliban is not toppled. You have armed elements and different groups, I mean it's very unstable. We did not build a strong democracy in Afghanistan. On the humanitarian side, I think you will -- it's hard to say. Of course, in the whole, things are probably better off in Afghanistan today than during the Taliban regime. It's not as stable, but you have a better healthcare system, child deaths are lower than ever. [02:53:00] Women can actually work and go to school in parts of Afghanistan, the education system is better, the healthcare system is better. I mean as a whole, it really has done something, but when it comes down to the Norwegian part of this, the Norwegian effort, it hasn't really done much of a difference. That's what this report also did. Norway was pretty much bogged down in a small area up north, in Meymaneh, in Afghanistan, and neither put the efforts in, neither humanitarian or military efforts, enough to do anything different, to make a difference. It was kind of a mission where nothing really was adequate to do anything more than [02:54:00] whatever else happened in Afghanistan. It was too few troops, too little

humanitarian, too little aid, badly coordinated, et cetera, but we were very good allied.

LEONG: Right. Why was there such a failure on the two scores? Would it be fair to say that it was because Norway was much more focused on showing that it was a good ally?

EGEBERG: Yes.

LEONG: Without really putting considerable effort. Would that be fair?

EGEBERG: Yeah, it would be fair to say that, and that has been a problem. We were eager to show that we are with and not against, but we gradually scaled down and tried to do this and still try to do this the cheapest possible way. [02:55:00] In many ways, obviously, which is not wrong, to try to keep the troops out of harm's way, but we had really problems in scaling this mission to be something other than just participating, to make a difference. On the humanitarian and aid side, we were often contradictory to NATO policies and to U.S. policies. Norway conducted a totally different view on what COIN should be. Our COIN concept was to establish a very airtight gap between what is [02:56:00] military and what is humanitarian. There should be absolutely no military aid. Military troops should not win hearts and minds, should not build wells, build bridges, and do anything for the civilian effort. They should only stabilize. They even wanted to change the PRT, which was Provincial Reconstruction Taskforce, I think was the NATO name, to be PST, Provincial Stabilization Teams, to really show also, in name, that they are not doing any reconstruction, that is not a military task. This was the policy of Norway, which was quite different from what NATO agreed upon, that COIN operations should be a tightly integrated military and aid, civilian aid, to kind of work hand in hand. This is because of the red-green policies on this, because of the region [02:57:00] policies, and this is one of the things that made kind of a problem with U.S. policy, is that the Norwegian way was not -- you know, there was no understanding. Why can't Norway listen? Why can't Norway listen to you

know, when everybody agreed on one thing, we go another way, go solo in a way. This happened also up north, in Afghanistan, and made it very difficult because also, Norway had a very strong policy to pull their aid, not to the area where they were operating, but through the UN and through Kabul, which makes sense of course from you know, a broader perspective, but it meant that they had a lot of troops in one area, who were not allowed to do any kind of service for the civil society. They were only there to be guns, to be a force, to fight any opposition or fight [02:58:00] any Taliban or armed groups, but they could not do any civil service. While the civil service did not really come to this area because it was far north, it was initially a quiet area, so this civil aid was used elsewhere. So you didn't really have a coordinated effort in the hand in hand with stability, comes reconstruction, which made people lose their faith in NATO I think, not only in this area but in all of Afghanistan and that's why it became a failed effort, I think, and that's why you can say that we really didn't achieve stabilization, because people lost their faith.

CREW: Go ahead.

LEONG: So the question was, how far has the transition actually been achieved, that started in the late 1990s?

EGEBERG: Well, [02:59:00] if you see on the military side, it has gone too far, that is one. Today, until 2011, things were very focused on making a kind of transition from the big, old, static defense force against invasion from the Soviet Union, to a small, lean, allied orientated expeditionary force. As many would say, we know now, more about how to defend ourselves in the deserts of Afghanistan, than to defend ourselves in the harsh winter climate in Norway, which I think is actually a quite interesting statement, because in many ways it's true, because we have gained so much combat experience abroad, in very different [03:00:00]missions environment than what our defense capabilities are meant for in the defense of Norway. I think this transition went too far. I think it's an acknowledgement on

both sides of politics and in the public, that it went too far and they are struggling today, to kind of pull back and make -- keep a defense force for the defense of Norway. With the rise of Putin and the kind of new authoritarian kind of Russia showing muscles in the Ukraine, in Crimea.

The new landscape of [03:01:00] foreign policy with Trump and Brexit, I think it's extremely clear that it was too focused on pleasing the alliance and not enough focused on the possibility that these alliances can change overnight. This is what we are struggling with today, which was also acknowledged in the late eras after the red-green government, who kind of fulfilled the transition plan which was made in 1999, 2000, followed up by the conservative Bondevik [03:02:00] government and the red-green fulfilled the goal, the mission to make this small, mobile, alliance force, which was too small, too mobile and too little kind of robust, to actually tend to the defense of Norway, and this is what, from 2011, '12, '13, and in the new government now, has been struggling to kind of rebuild the army, rebuild the structures also to work domestically. This is a dilemma. So that's the military side.

This is also, since the pullout of Afghanistan, resulted in Norway not participating abroad nearly in the same level as before. If we go back to 1990 [03:03:00] when -- 1998, '99, Norway had almost 2,000 troops abroad, which is quite big for a small country like Norway. Today, 2018, I don't think the headcount is 200, maybe 150, 170, military personnel doing service abroad. It is almost nothing and it's just 10 percent of the capacity we had 20 years ago. If you ask both the Department of Defense and the High Command in Norway, they would say that 200 is too much, which is quite astonishing. So the change has actually reduced the capability [03:04:00] of Norway participating in the allied mission and reduced our capability to defend ourselves at home.

When it comes to policies, the wish, especially from the shift from 2005 to the red-green government, the strong urge to fulfill this role as a peace broker, to

be a diplomat, worldwide diplomat, failed, not because of the Norwegian effort, not I think because of -- I mean this urge and this wish to make a difference, they really, really tried, but it failed in the Middle East because the Middle [03:05:00] East did not want to be brokered.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: It failed in Afghanistan, the Taliban is not easy to negotiate with. It failed with Norway wanting to participate with troops more in the UN, not because Norway was not ready but because in Sudan, for example, where they wanted to participate, the president said no, and you need a consensus in the UN to participate. There were all these rocks, stopping this change of course for the red-green government that you know, eventually made them much more pragmatic, not -- you know, acknowledging that they would not achieve these, some would say [03:06:00] lofty, I would say respectable goals they had when they took office, to actually change the course and do something different. The gravity just was too strong and it stopped this effort, and then you had Libya which came and surprised, I think everybody, and that gave a UN mandate and military wise, Norway fulfilled the circle by sending the most advanced fighter planes in NATO, the most upgraded, capable F-16s to that mission, and I think it's re-known that Norway's effort in the Libyan War, the air effort, the bombing effort in the Libyan War was absolutely world [03:07:00] class. They did more missions, hit more targets, faced more danger, than any other NATO nation during the operations in Libya, and they really, really, really did a stunning job military wise. They really showed that a ghost from 1999 and Kosovo was, you know, gone. But they also showed, with the results in Libya, that being the peace nation that we want to be, being the broker of peace, has failed. I think that was kind of the end of this vision of Norway as a peace nation, where even the [03:08:00] government, at reelection in 2009, changed their platform. In 2005, when they took office, they mentioned Norway as a peace nation three places in the platform, and it was the initial

sentence in their foreign policy goals, was that Norway should be a peace nation. They write also, I think, 35 times, they mentioned the UN and how Norway will be UN orientated, and they state that Norway will work for a UN-led world order. In 2009, having failed at achieving a difference, they rewrote this platform when they won reelection. Every mention of Norway being a peace nation is stripped away, it's not mentioned at all. I think they reduced the mention of the UN to half, [03:09:00] about 15 times, and their very central sentence about which world order we should work for, a UN world order is changed to being -- *rettferdig*.

CREW: Fair.

EGEBERG: A fair world order. I think that is very significant. Someone went in and changed that Norway will work for a UN-led world order, to Norway will work for a fair world order. That's a significant change in policy and I think it also reflects us today, not being really where we once had ambitions to be this worldwide peace broker. This could change again, but at the moment, Norway is sitting very, very quiet in the boat, too quiet maybe in the boat, both [03:10:00] when it comes military-wise and when it comes to diplomacy, because we are a small country still, outside of the EU, struggling for NATO being the central point of the European-American relationship, in the European-American relationship which is not very good at the moment, with a president we do not understand, with Britain existing EU, EU struggling, and here we are, small and still the only country, you know, in which we feel in NATO, having their lone border in the high north with Russia.

LEONG: I have a question that's maybe not directly related, that has to do with the July 22nd tragedy.

EGEBERG: Yeah, yeah.

LEONG: Do you think that if Norway [03:11:00] had not participated -- and I'm asking you to speculate here, I realize, but do you think that if Norway had not participated in the Global War on Terror and have been so supportive of U.S.

actions, and perhaps focused public attention on Muslim terrorists, that someone like Breivik would have come along anyway?

EGEBERG: To be quite honest, I think he is a unique case among, sadly, probably more unique cases which we see all over the world. I'm afraid that what happened there probably has to do with a much older, looming [03:12:00] kind of tradition in Norway. I mean, we have had neo-Nazis in Norway long before 9/11 and long before that again, in the '80s, in the '70s. You have had frictions between the socialists and the conservatives, and I think the extremists you see both in Norway, but also in the rest of Europe. So on both sides, they've always been there. Obviously, 9/11 and the War against Terror, has been a catalyst. The war against Libya and the refugees have been a catalyst for different motions within this, but need I think, to be quite honest, unique personalities like Breivik. I'm [03:13:00] not sure if those were his catalysts or if he just managed that all on his own. I think that it's very hard to see what made [Speaks Norwegian] in the '70s and the '80s, what made -- you had in Norway, Arne Myrdal and the very far right Nazi movement, very active in the '80s. You had other far left movements being very active, doing military style demonstrations, throwing Molotov cocktails and extremists on both sides, all through history, since the Second World War and before that. So I think you always will have these elements [03:14:00] which are dangerous, more or less influences or more or less individual crackpots. I think you can maybe explain it, or even apologize it in a way, with you know, big happenings like the war against terrorists and stuff, but obviously, it has been -- could I rephrase that? I have to think about that.

LEONG: Maybe it's an unfair question.

EGEBERG: No, but I think obviously, the environment we are in, the polarization of east-west, no not east-west but yeah Middle East-west, western world, against the western world, et cetera. The [03:15:00] rhetoric, the strong rhetoric in the aftermath of 9/11 has obviously done something to the whole public discourse, not

only in Norway and Europe but in the whole world and it's been different stages of this and different results of this. Obviously, it has not done anything in broadening the understanding among people. It's been quite contradictive to the goals that both sides in Norwegian policy traditionally has tried to achieve, in being the small but strong mediator for peace in the world. I think it's dangerous, or we should be very -- *forsiktig*[1].

LEONG: Careful. [03:16:00]

EGEBERG: Yeah, careful. We should be very careful to kind of excuse this or use this to explain how individuals become radicalized and terrorists. Obviously, it could be a strong mover to either side, but also, I think in the case of Anders Behring Breivik, you can see all the elements of psychology, of loneliness, of radicalization, of being influenced by everything from videogames to bloggers, to trying to seek out -- he tried to be a tagger, he tried to be [03:17:00] accepted, you know to be accepted. I don't know, maybe it could have gone both ways, I mean this was what finally got -- where we found him, his kind of goal, but I think maybe it likely could be the other way around as well.

LEONG: Right.

EGEBERG: Who knows?

LEONG: All right, well that's all that I've got.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: Yeah. Do you think we covered --

EGEBERG: I think we covered a lot.

LEONG: We covered it fairly, yeah.

EGEBERG: Yeah.

LEONG: Okay, well very good, thank you.

[END OF AUDIO/VIDEO]

[1] careful