

A STUDY OF HOW AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NORWAY WORKS TO INFLUENCE THE NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HEIDI NICOLE PORTHEIM

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF NORAGRIC
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hnportheim@gmail.com

Noragric
Department of International Environment and Development Studies
P.O. Box 5003
N-1432 Ås
Norway
Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00
Fax: +47 64 96 52 01
Internet: <http://www.umb.no/noragric>

Declaration

I, Heidi Nicole Portheim, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature

Date

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Abstract

Within global governance theory there is a consensus that nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) have an important role in creating national and international policies. The literature on the relationship between the Norwegian state and NGOs has been dominated by questions around state funding. This thesis serves two purposes; it gives a thick description of an NGO that actively tries to influence state policy, and it describes the power relations between the Norwegian state and an NGO that does *not* receive government funding. Understanding how Amnesty International Norway works to influence the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at what policies they focus on is important to reveal how independent they are, and how much power they bestow. This study not only maps out the power relations between a state and a financially independent NGO. It also explains why the relationship is as it is.

I spent six weeks at the AIN office in Oslo as a participant observer. I also did qualitative interviews with central actors at the AIN office and the MFA. In addition to observations and interviews, I went through official correspondence between AIN and the MFA. Through my research I discovered that the structure of Amnesty International and Amnesty International Norway mirrors and supports the state system. This means that the MFA overpowers AIN as the state has created the political system in which the actors operate. AIN pushes the MFA in cases where results are likely, and in this way the MFA indirectly steers the actions of the organisation. However, despite the fact that the MFA has more power than AIN, Amnesty International Norway has an array of ways in which they are able to influence MFA policies. This includes using intergovernmental organisations, building personal relationships and affecting public opinion. AIN's knowledge and independence makes them an actor with political leverage.

This thesis argues that there are several ways in which a state can exercise power over an NGO, and that this dominance does not rely on a financial dependency on the part of the NGO. It also argues that although a state may be the most powerful in a relationship with an NGO, this does not mean that the NGO does not have influential

power. In a democratic country where voters have political significance, an NGO has a lot to gain in influencing public opinion.

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1. Introduction

Since the number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) took a giant leap in the seventies and eighties¹, the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society in policymaking has intrigued theorists within international relations. In global governance theory “studies of how transnational social movements and advocacy groups have advanced human rights norms and shaped state policy have contributed to the view of global politics as shaped by processes and networks of governance where nonstate actors play an increasingly powerful role” (Neumann and Sending 2010: 110). To get a better understanding of the power relation between an NGO and a state, I take a close look at the relationship between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the human rights organisation Amnesty International Norway (also referred to as Amnesty Norway or AIN).

At first glance, there are at least four reasons for why one could assume that a non-governmental human rights organisation in Norway would live a fairly uncomplicated life with a cooperative government eager to listen to its expert advice. First, as peace and democracy is a part of the Norwegian identity (Dobinson and Dale 2000), there is a correspondence between national values and those of a human rights NGO. Second, human rights are already a “prioritised and integrated part of Norwegian Foreign Policy” (Stortingsmelding nr. 15 2008-2009: 102)². Third, the Norwegian government has a history of bringing civil society into political discussions. “Norwegian foreign politics has an active cooperation with humanitarian organisations in many areas. When it comes to humanitarian aid, disaster relief and human rights in the 1990’s, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry pulled in voluntary organisations as participants, more than external interests, in policymaking decisions” (Knudsen 1997: 84)³. Lastly, this political inclusion of civil society is backed by financial support. In 2011 over 21% of all development aid given by the Norwegian government went to non-governmental organisations (Norad 2012). Based on these four points, one could draw the

¹ They went from 1255 in 1960 to 4518 in 1988 (Risse-Kappen 1995: 10)

² Quote translated by author

³ Quote translated by author

conclusion that the Norwegian government should be more than willing to listen to and use the expertise within Amnesty International Norway, thus giving the NGO the power to change policies. However there are cases where AIN's demands are ignored by the MFA. One example is the many breaches of human rights in China, where the Norwegian government choose a more diplomatic approach than what Amnesty has called for (Fyhn 2006), another is the Norwegian refusal to sign the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁴. The relationship between Amnesty International Norway and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs evokes two questions: Does Amnesty International Norway possess any power to affect the decisions of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs, or can they only affect policies when the government is open for input? In other words; in the power relationship between the MFA and AIN who comes out on top? And, if the state has the most power, how can AIN still have the power to affect policies?

1.1 Literature review

I am not the first to ask questions about the power balance between states and NGOs. Scholars within international relations, and especially writers on global governance theory, have already investigated the power and influences of NGOs and INGOs. Writers such as Iver Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending (2010) write that "the heightened influence and power of actors representing 'civil society' and its implications for the power and authority of the state are the core of what global governance is all about" (Neumann & Sending 2010: 112). Ann M Florini argues that "Transnational civil society is a piece – an increasingly important piece – of the larger problem of global governance" (Florini 2000: 3). And Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore open their book on international organisations in global politics with the statement "International organisations have never been more central to world politics than they are today" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 1). David Held and Anthony McGrew (2002) and James Rosenau (2002) also have a general understanding that non-state actors, and NGOs in particular have gained power of political influence within global governance. Terje Tvedt attributes this power of influence to the fact that development "can be classified as a subsystem within the global system of

⁴ Interview with "L. Anderson" 06.03.2012, Oslo and "K. Clark" 08.03.2012, Oslo

relations between civilisations, states, classes and social groupings” (Tvedt 2002: 148). It seems that scholars concerned with global governance all agree that international organisations, and among them non-governmental organisations, have indeed entered the stage of international politics. The question is not whether or not they have a role, but what role they play and what power they bestow.

Kathryn Sikkink, and Margaret E Keck developed the term *international advocacy network*, defined as “networks of activists, distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 1). They have looked at how INGOs and NGOs have managed to define international norms and change domestic policies. Based on several case studies, Sikkink and Keck developed what they call the boomerang pattern. The boomerang pattern develops the idea that when a state A is deaf to its domestic civil organizations, these organisations will turn to the international advocacy network. Armed with information from the oppressed organisations in state A, other NGOs will pressure their own state and intergovernmental organisations to in turn exercise pressure on state B to change. The boomerang pattern can clearly be seen in human rights cases. Local NGOs will document breaches of human rights, report them to international human rights organisations who in turn will go to both their respective government and the human rights committees in the UN to bring pressure for domestic changes from the outside. Some writers believe that “As nonstate actors have become more powerful, states have by definition become less so” (Neumann & Sending 2010: 112). And they see the relation between state and nonstate actors as a zero-sum game. Neumann and Sending challenge this view, stating “While studies of global governance excel in charting the diffusion and disaggregation of authority from the state to nonstate actors, they fail when it comes to exploring the power at work in the actual practices through which governance takes place, as well as the more specific content or logic of the relations between state and nonstate actors” (Neumann & Sending 2010: 112). Their conclusion is that there is collaboration between agents from the civil society and the state. However this is not a sign of the state losing power, it has simply found a new way to govern, namely *through* civil society. Jon Pierre and B. Guy Peters (2000) support this view in their book on governance theory. They claim that the traditional governing state “has been replaced by an enabling state that governs to a large extent by coordinating and facilitating other powerful actors in society” (Pierre

and Peters 2000: 13). This is partly supported by Terje Tvedt in his writings on Norwegian foreign politics and development. However, rather than placing all the power with the government, he argues that the excessive financial support by the Norwegian government has created an interdependent relationship between the state and Norwegian humanitarian NGOs. Tvedt (2009: 57-80) shows that when an NGO relies on government funding, it can lead to a collaboration between the state and the organisation that can be both beneficial for the NGO (both financially and when it comes to building powerful networks) and for the state (that uses NGOs to access areas the government cannot reach for political reasons). This leads us to the theory of 'the Norwegian model', and the place of NGOs in Norwegian foreign politics.

The Norwegian Model is defined by Jon H.S. Lie (2006: 138) as "The comparable advantages of Norway in the international work on development and peace, as a small and neutral country without ambitions of becoming a great power – and that tries to integrate non-state actors in the government's official project of becoming a leading power within humanitarian issues"⁵. It concerns the relationship between the Norwegian government and Norwegian NGOs, which has been highly influenced by historical, political and economical factors. The majority of the discussions on the Norwegian Model have been about the fact that many Norwegian NGOs depend on state funding. This is mainly an issue with NGOs that work with development. The works of Terje Tvedt have been highly influential to the discussions around the Norwegian model. He, along with other writers such as Ole Jacob Sending, Iver Neumann and Jon H.S. Lie, argues that as the financial and personal bonds (many of those with key positions within NGOs have had careers in Norwegian politics, and visa versa⁶) between the two actors have become tighter, they have lost their independence. NGOs have become more politicised, and the state relies on the expertise within the organisations to govern Norwegian policies in places where diplomatic procedures prove difficult. Lie writes: "The Norwegian government uses the expertise within the five biggest NGOs (big as in getting the most governmental funding, ed. Note). This makes them an indirect part of the government, and gives them the opportunity to influence state policy. This happens both on an invitation by

⁵ Quote translated by author

⁶ See Tvedt 2009

the state, but also on the initiative taken by NGOs to promote their interests”⁷ (Lie 2006: 154). This statement illustrates the dual dependency that dominates the literature on the Norwegian model. There is a fear of a lack in autonomy on both sides. The NGOs need the government for financial purposes, and the government need the NGOs for expertise, but also in situations where the government itself cannot intervene because of diplomatic challenges. In these situations NGOs become government policy in disguise. Contrary to many of the other NGOs in Norway, Amnesty International Norway does not receive government funding. This leads to a third question. Assuming that AIN is freer than other NGOs to challenge the state because of financial independence; are there other ways in which the state gains power over AIN?

As mentioned, I am not the first to be intrigued by the power relations between states and NGOs. However I believe that the current literature, although shedding light on the importance of NGOs in international policymaking, fails to give an understanding of why NGOs have gained the position they have. I believe that by answering the questions listed above using a thick description of Amnesty International Norway, I can decipher not only the power relations between a state and an NGO, but also why this relation is as it is. There are several studies on organizations and campaigns operating across borders. The common feature of some of the most influential and widely read writers on the subject, Kathryn Sikkink and Margaret Keck’s *Activists beyond Borders* (1998) and Ann Florini’s (ed.) *The Third Force* (2000), is that they are all based on case studies. One could ask what yet another case study on the relationship between states and NGOs could bring to the table. I argue that the case studies presented in the mentioned literature limit themselves to describing actions and reactions; who is at what meeting defending what case. Anthropologists and qualitative researchers following in the footsteps of Clifford Geertz (1973) characterize this kind of factual and shallow presentation of events as ‘thin description’. It is not to be said that this is not a valuable form of research. When using case studies to illustrate theories within IR, one does not necessarily need to know the intentions of the people working within an NGO. However, I believe a thorough investigation of the practices and routines within an organisation is in its

⁷ & ⁴ Translated by author

place. Understanding why an organization chooses to lobby for one case instead of another, and why certain actions are deemed more effective than others, will reveal how the power relations between NGOs and States are established in practice. In this paper I wish to look closely at the relationship between Amnesty International Norway and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Rather than placing this as a case study within the great IR theories, my aim is to give a ‘thick description’ of Amnesty International Norway. By examining the people, their choices and the routines within the organisation, I will get an understanding of how an NGO works to affect political policies. In turn, this will give a broader understanding of who lays the premises for whom, and in what cases NGOs are more likely to gain influence over political policies. However, before we move forwards, we need to introduce Amnesty International and a few central terms.

1.2 Presentation of Amnesty international and definitions of central terms

1.2.1 Amnesty International

Amnesty International (also referred to as just Amnesty or AI) is a human rights organisation that has gained both moral and political authority in the international community. It is an organisation that bestows much knowledge and expertise on the field of human rights. Because of this knowledge they have a strong voice in international, as well as domestic discussions concerning human rights. Amnesty International’s story began in the early sixties when a British lawyer named Peter Benenson came across a story about two Portuguese students that were imprisoned for toasting to freedom. This inspired him to write an article called “the forgotten prisoners” that was published in the newspaper ‘The Observer’ in May 1961 (Rogan 2011). In this article Benenson recalled article 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and launched a campaign called Appeal for Amnesty. It was “an initiative by a group of lawyers, writers and publishers in London, who share the underlying conviction expressed by Voltaire: ‘I detest your views, but am prepared to die for your right to express them’ “(Benenson 1961). Their initial targets were “To work impartially for the release of those imprisoned for their opinions, to seek for

them a fair and public trial, to enlarge the Right of Asylum and help political refugees to find work and to urge effective international machinery to guarantee freedom of opinion” (Benenson 1961). The campaign started out as a way of grouping people that wanted to do something to ensure freedom of speech and opinion for all. It gained a lot of supporters, and by December 1961 the movement had turned into a permanent organisation (Hopgood 2006). In the first years of the organisation, Amnesty International’s concern was limited to people imprisoned for saying something that, in the eyes of their government, made them a threat – so-called prisoners of conscience (POCs). The organisation would adopt prisoners of conscience from all over the world, and different groups of volunteers would have the responsibility to follow up on a limited number of POCs. The groups of volunteers wrote letters to lawyers, prisons and politicians to demand that the POCs were released or at least got a fair trial. They also wrote to the prisoners themselves, as well as their families, to show support (Rogan 2011). The writing of letters and the work with POCs is still a big part of the organisation’s work. However the areas in which Amnesty International operate have expanded. New focus areas are for example women’s rights and corporate responsibility. As the organisation has grown, Amnesty has become an international organisation with over 3 million members in 180 countries worldwide (Amnesty International 2012 a).

1.2.2 What is power?

The most straight forward definition of power is what Robert Dahl calls an ‘intuitive idea of power’, namely that “*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do” (Dahl cited by Lukes 1974: 11). This definition is helpful when describing the power relation between two actors in a decision-making situation. In my thesis I am investigating how much power Amnesty International Norway has over the policies of the Norwegian Ministry of foreign affairs. In that respect, Dahl’s definition largely covers the use of the term. However power is not only apparent in situations where decisions are made. Lukes points out that Dahl’s view on power “inevitably takes over the bias of the political system under observation, and is blind to the ways in which its political agenda is controlled” (Lukes 1974: 57). For an NGO, the political system in which it operates will have an effect on its power to affect policies, and therefore a wider understanding of power

than that of Robert Dahl must be used. I here turn to parts of Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz' use of the term power as "all forms of successful control by A over B" (cited by Lukes 1974: 17). This definition is too wide for the purposes of this thesis, as not all the aspects of Bachrach and Baratz' definition of power are relevant (it encompasses the notions of threat and force). However, as my study will incorporate both Amnesty International Norway's ability to change policies, direct the political agenda and their role as a collaborator, I will include their definition of influence and governance. "*Influence* exists where A 'without resorting to either a tacit or severe deprivation causes [B] to change his course of action'. In a situation involving *authority*, B complies because he recognises that [A's] command is reasonable in terms of his own values" (Lukes 1974: 17). Throughout this paper the term power and influence will be used interchangeably, and the terms will refer to the range of ways that A can dictate the actions of B both in a decision making process and by defining the political space in which the actors operate.

1.2.3 What is an NGO?

The term nongovernmental organization (NGO) was introduced in 1945 in article 71 of the UN Charter. However, the term was not defined. In fact, as Peter Willetts (2011) discovered, coming up with a clear definition that everyone agrees on is impossible. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) grants consultative status to NGOs who wish to take part in discussions within the UN. Based on article 71 in the UN charter and resolution 1996/31 of ECOSOC, one can say that the terms of applying for a consultative status define what ECOSOC means by the term NGO. Their only requirements to be granted a consultative status as an NGO are "that they can demonstrate that their programme of work is of direct relevance to the aims and purposes of the United Nations" (ECOSOC 1996: Res. 1996/31 part I, 8), that they have a democratic structure, that they have an established headquarter and that they have been recognized by a government for at least two years. These are very broad terms, and not everyone would agree that these are the right criteria to define an NGO. After going through a variety of definitions by different global institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program, Peter Willetts points out that between all the different definitions of an NGO, "consensus only extends to negative points – what are not NGOs." (Willetts: 2011: 9-10). Kerstin

Martens (2002: 282) defines NGOs as “formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level.” This is a broad definition, and as the focus of this paper will be on humanitarian and human rights NGOs, I lean on Willets’ (2011: 20) division between “interest groups”; business, trade or professional bodies, groups working for maintain joint activities or financial concerns, and “promotional groups” (or “advocacy groups”) that try to gain political support for a certain set of values. These are called Private Voluntary Organizations in the U.S, and pressure groups in Britain. Throughout this paper, the term NGO will point to such pressure groups, thus excluding more business-oriented organizations. An NGO with offices in several countries is defined as an international non-governmental organisation (INGO).

1.3 Disposition

In this thesis I will answer three central questions: Are there other ways than through financial support in which the Norwegian state gains power over an NGO? Who has the most power between Amnesty International Norway and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? And If the MFA has the most power how can AIN still affect political decisions and policies?

To answer these questions, I have divided my thesis in three parts. I first present the theory that although Amnesty International Norway challenges state policies, they confirm the state in form. This argument is twofold. On one side Amnesty International mirrors the structure of and take part in an intergovernmental organisation, namely the United Nations, thus building up under a system constructed by states. On the other side, AIN mirrors the state itself through its bureaucratic structure. I argue this by first comparing Amnesty International with Weber’s definition of a bureaucratic organisation, and then by showing how this presents itself in practice. From this structural analysis of the organisation of Amnesty International, after a chapter on methodology, I go on to the second part of my thesis. Here I investigate in what ways the Norwegian ministry of Foreign Affairs have power over Amnesty International Norway. I first go through how the state has the power to limit the scope of what AIN works with, thus arguing that the power of the state is not strictly on a structural level. I then proceed to show that there are cases where the MFA and AIN cooperate. These situations might resemble the interdependent

relationship described in the Norwegian model, however the state-NGO cooperation happens on the terms of the state, again arguing that AIN operates in a world where the state mostly calls the shots. This leads to the third part of my thesis, where I argue that despite the fact that the state is powerful in face of challenging NGOs, AIN still has the power to influence state policy. I present the mechanisms that make such influence possible despite the fact that Amnesty International Norway is overpowered by the state. I first show how the organisation works to influence state policy through politicians and intergovernmental organisations. I then describe how AIN can influence the policies of the MFA indirectly by affecting public opinion through media, activism and working towards long term goals. Lastly I present my conclusions.

2. The structure of Amnesty International mirrors that of international governmental organisations

Amnesty International Norway is a part of Amnesty International, and thus we cannot examine the structure of AIN without looking at the whole organisation. In this chapter I show how Amnesty International both maintains and supports the strong position of states in international politics by adopting organisational features from the UN. Also, by taking an active role in the UN, Amnesty has become a part of an intergovernmental organisation. This adds to the argument that the organisation accepts the state as a strong actor.

2.1 Taking their place in an intergovernmental organisation

Amnesty International legitimises the state as a dominant actor in international politics by being a part of the UN, which is an organisation put together and managed by states. Amnesty has taken its place in the UN by obtaining a special consultative status. Special consultative status is given to “Organizations that have a special competence in, and are concerned specifically with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by the Council and its subsidiary bodies, and that are known within the fields for which they have or seek consultative status” (ECOSOC 1996: Res. 1996/31 part III 23) Granting consultative status to NGOs is a way of bringing the civil society and NGO expertise into the UN. Article 71 of the UN Charter states “The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence” (UN Charter Chapter X, article 71). To attain a consultative status, an NGO has to apply to the NGO committee, which will make recommendations to ECOSOC who

has the final call. As of January 2012, there are over 3.500 NGOs with a consultative status (ECOSOC 1996). There is a division into three categories that create a hierarchy of participation rights, however all consultative NGOs may attend ECOSOC meetings, they have access to all UN documents and they have a “legitimate place within the political system” (Willetts 1996: 43). “NGOs regularly participate in United Nations’ working groups” and they “also participate (...) by sending in reports on states” (Smith 2010:156)” Amnesty International is no exception. In addition to taking part in meetings at ECOSOC, Amnesty International collaborates with the different human rights committees that are in charge of sending reports to ECOSOC on the human rights situation in UN member states⁸. The importance of collaboration with UN committees will be discussed in the chapter concerning the powers of AIN, for now it is important to note that Amnesty uses the opportunities at hand within the UN to affect policies. However, in doing so, it also becomes a part of a state centric system, thus legitimising the powerful position of states in international politics. And, as we shall see, it is not only in taking an active role within the UN that Amnesty supports an international system where states are the main actors.

2.2 The structure of Amnesty International mirrors that of the United Nations

If we compare the structure of Amnesty International and the human rights organs in the UN, namely the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), we can see that Amnesty mirrors that of the UN organs. Amnesty International is a global organisation that is run by a set of democratically elected boards. At the top of Amnesty International you find the International Council (IC). It has the “Ultimate authority for the conduct of the affairs of Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2011). The Council works with strategy and sets the “vision, mission and core values” (Amnesty International 2011, §6 ii) of the organisation. It determines the Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP) (a plan that is made every six years that maps out what areas AI should be focused on), it evaluates the results of Amnesty International, and keeps an eye on the different sections, structures

⁸ Interview with “E. Fields” 29.02.2012, Oslo

and other bodies within the organisation. The International Council also elects an International Executive Committee (IEC). The role of this Committee “is to provide leadership and stewardship for the whole of Amnesty International worldwide” (Amnesty International 2011, §7). It makes adjustments to the ISP and makes sure that it is implemented, and it ensures that the different sections and groups within the organisation act in accordance with the Amnesty Statute. The Executive Committee also appoints a Secretary General. “The Secretary General is the operational leader of the movement, acting as its chief political adviser and strategist, its chief spokesperson and the chief executive officer of the International Secretariat, which carries out the majority of our research and campaigning work” (Amnesty International 2012 b). The Secretary General is the manager of the International Secretariat (IS), Amnesty’s permanent office in London. The role of the IS will be explained further in the next chapter. For now I want to draw your attention to the parallels between the organisation of the human rights organs in the United Nations and how Amnesty International is organised.

In the UN, there are three main organs that are in place to secure human rights in the respective member-states (and any country that has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights); the General Assembly (GA), the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council (Smith 2010). The General Assembly is the main policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations where all 193 Member States are represented. The GA receives all reports from the human rights committees, and initiates studies and makes recommendations to assist in the realisation of human rights. Declarations of the GA are not legally binding, but have a strong moral force. The role of the General assembly in the UN can be compared to the role of the International Committee of Amnesty International. Just as all Member States take part in the GA, “All sections and structures [of Amnesty International] shall have the right to appoint one representative to the International Council” (Amnesty International 2011, §19). Although the IC has a more active role in deciding the course of action of the organisation, the IC and the GA have the same position as head of an international organisation. Under the GA you find the Human Rights Council and ECOSOC. The HRC is responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights. It addresses situations of human rights violations and makes recommendations on how to treat

them. The committee also receives Universal Periodic Review⁹ and gives its opinion on these. Just as the HRC is concerned with the conduct of different Member States, the Executive Committee of Amnesty International sees to that the different sections of AI follow the right strategies and the Amnesty Statute. Unlike the HRC and ECOSOC, which are two separate organs under the General Assembly, the Executive Committee assigns the International Secretariat of Amnesty International. This means that the division of responsibility between the two organs are not as clear-cut as with HRC and ECOSOC. However one can still see similarities between the functions of the IS and ECOSOC. ECOSOC receives all the reports from the different human rights committees, and serves as the main forum for discussing policy recommendations for member states. It also has the power to initiate studies. The International Secretariat has the same power to initiate investigations. Where ECOSOC provides policy recommendations to Member States, the IS provides strategy recommendations to sections within Amnesty International. Just as human rights abuses in one country is treated by an intergovernmental organ, the “Responsibility for Amnesty International work on abuses of human rights in any country or territory, including the collection and evaluation of information, and the sending of delegations, lies with the international governing bodies of the organization, and not with the section, structure, groups or members in the country or territory concerned” (Amnesty International 2011 §12). One can see that it is not only the concern for human rights that the organs at the UN and Amnesty share. They also share the way in which they are organised.

I have argued that AI acknowledges the power of the state by becoming a part of, and contributing to the state-centric international forum for the creation of international human rights policies. I have also stated that AI legitimises the state in mirroring the structure of an intergovernmental organisation. However this affirmation of the state does not limit itself to international governmental organisations. The bureaucratic organisation of AIN legitimises the state on a national level as well as the international one.

⁹ The Universal Periodic Review is a report that all Member States of the UN have to submit every four years. In the report the countries have to review how well they are doing on respecting and promoting human rights. For more information see Smith 2010 or Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2010

3. Amnesty International Norway – a bureaucratic organisation

We have established that Amnesty international supports a system that gives states power in international policy discussions. However Amnesty International is not only an actor on the international arena. Local sections in different countries play a role on the domestic level. I argue that even within the local branches of Amnesty International, one can see that Amnesty looks to the state for structural guidance. By leaning on Max Weber's understanding of a bureaucratic organisation, I show similarities between the bureaucracy within Amnesty International Norway and that of a modern western state.

3.1 Amnesty International Norway

In examining the characteristics of Weber's definition of a bureaucratic organisation, we recognise the bureaucratic traits of both modern western governments, such as the Norwegian government, and Amnesty International Norway. But before we go in to the details of Weber's definitions, we will take a look at the organisation in question.

Amnesty International Norway is a section of Amnesty International, which means it is obliged to "act in accordance with the core values and methods of Amnesty International, as well as any Integrated Strategic Plans, working rules and guidelines that are adopted from time to time by the International Council" (Amnesty International 2011, §123 iv). AIN's main office is in Oslo. There are 35 permanent employees at the Norwegian secretariat (as of May 2012). Then there is a varying number of staff hired to spread campaigns on the streets, so called face 2 face-workers. The rest of the people working for Amnesty in Norway are volunteers. There are student groups, resource groups, and smaller groupings of people engaged in human rights work. In total there are over 100.000 people engaged with Amnesty

International Norway (Amnesty International Norge 2012). With the organisation properly introduced, let us move on to Weber's bureaucratic organisation.

When speaking of social organisations, Max Weber refers to what he calls 'corporate groups'. A corporate group is "A social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders by rules (...) so far as its order is enforced by the action of specific individuals whose regular function this is, of a chief or 'head' and usually also an administrative staff" (Weber 1947: 145-46). Weber then divides these corporate groups according to "three pure types of legitimate authority", namely "legal authority", "traditional authority" and "charismatic authority" (Weber 1947: 328). It is within the first category that we find what Weber calls "legal authority with a bureaucratic administrative staff" (Weber 1947:329), that defines both AIN and the Norwegian government. According to Weber there are certain criteria that need to be in place in a bureaucratic organisation. Not all of these characteristics are relevant to Amnesty International, however I am going to highlight four of Weber's "fundamental categories of rational legal authority" (Weber 1947: 130) and how they apply to Amnesty International Norway. These categories are continuity, expertise, hierarchy and impersonality:

1) *"A continuous organization of official functions bound by rules"* (Weber 1947: 130)

Amnesty International is a centralized and coherent organization where the national sections follow the policies set by the International Council (Willettts 2011). All sections of Amnesty International are bound to follow the rules set in the Amnesty Statute, and as we shall see, the International Secretariat ensures to streamline the actions of the different sections, thus keeping the organisation together as a whole. In Amnesty International Norway, the main office in Oslo functions as a unifying force by formulating the strategic plan for all the different sections in the country.

2) *"A specified sphere of competence"* (Weber 1947: 130), which functions as an 'administrative organ'

Again, (as will be further discussed in the next chapter) the International Secretariat plays a vital role as the main provider of knowledge. However within Amnesty International Norway, the secretariat in Oslo can be characterised as a 'specified

sphere of competence'. This is where the political advisors, who are the experts in AIN, reside along with the Secretary General.

3) *"The organization of offices follows the principle of hierarchy" (Weber 1947: 131)*

This applies for both the different sections of Amnesty International and Amnesty International Norway. As mentioned, the International Committee ranks higher than the Executive Committee which in turn appoints the International Secretariat and so on. In AIN, the national Secretariat trumps the different regional offices, which in turn stand over the local groups. What is interesting is that there is a strict hierarchy when it comes to lobby work. Regional leaders will talk to regional politicians, the administrative director will talk to ministers, and the IS will talk to UN¹⁰. This means that the people at AIN mostly work towards their own government.

4) *"(...) the typical person in authority occupies an 'office' " (Weber 1947: 130)*

This means that the person acts on behalf of his or her position, not according to personal preferences. This also counts for how others relate to a person of authority. One has respect for the authority of an office, not necessarily the person holding it. The General Secretary, the regional leaders and the researchers at the IS are examples of people that occupy 'offices'. When issuing orders, the Secretary general does it on behalf of his office, and when researchers make their recommendations for actions of the organisation it is also in the role as researchers, and not private persons.

As we can see Amnesty International Norway is a highly bureaucratized organisation that mirrors the structures of a modern western state, such as the Norwegian democracy. To get an understanding of how this looks in practice, we need to take a look at the relationship between AIN and the International Secretariat.

3.2 Bureaucracy in practice - The International Secretariat

To get an understanding of how the bureaucracy within AIN, we take a look at how it is controlled from the office in London. When Stephen Hopgood wanted to analyse Amnesty International, he turned to the IS, and when people at Amnesty International Norway talk about decisions on a higher level, they always refer to the International

¹⁰ Interview with "D. Brown" 08.02.2012, Oslo

Secretariat. The IS manages the day-to-day work with Amnesty International, and the Secretary General is, in practice, at the wheel of the entire organisation.

The International Secretariat in London is the headquarters and the heart of Amnesty International. Much of today's activities in Amnesty International are lead from here. The Amnesty Statute states "Responsibility for Amnesty International work on abuses of human rights in any country or territory, including the collection and evaluation of information, and the sending of delegations, lies with the international governing bodies of the organization, and not with the section, structure, groups or members in the country or territory concerned" (Amnesty International 2011 §12). Eric Baker, one of the founders on Amnesty International, said "national sections must (...) be willing to resist the temptation to act entirely independently. They must be willing to consult the Central Office (the IS, ed. note) before undertaking a project and to accept the advice of the office as partners" (Hopgood 2006, 77). Even though much of the responsibility of Amnesty's work lies with the IS, the degree of management from London has varied. When it was established, Amnesty International was very centralised. Then, as new sections became more experienced they got the confidence to do things on their own. This was especially true for those offices that did not need financial support from the IS. This escalated, leading to an international organisation that had no common focus. In recent years, one has tried to find the balance between global and local actions¹¹. Although the over 80 different offices (Amnesty International 2012 c) around the world are fairly autonomous, the IS plays an important role in three ways. It ensures that the organisation speaks with one voice, it coordinates the actions within the organisation and it provides every section within the organisation with necessary and reliable information.

3.2.1 The one voice policy

As a representative for the organisation you have to put forward the official opinions of the organisation. This means that the IS controls what every section, and representative of Amnesty International is allowed to say. Stephen Hopgood (2006) talks about the "one voice policy". A worker at Amnesty in Norway calls it the "One

¹¹ Interview with "S. Edwards" 27.02.2012, Oslo

Amnesty Policy”¹². He explains how the different branches of the organisation all have to have the same opinions. This is because the organisation is strong as long as all its sections stand together. As soon as Amnesty sends out mixed signals, they lose credibility. Amnesty everywhere has to be coordinated, and the opinions of the organisation have to be based on facts¹³. To make sure that the entire organisation speaks with one voice, there is an established process at the IS that one has to go through whenever a standpoint is made. How this “one Amnesty-Policy” works, is well illustrated by the following example given by one of the workers at the AIN office¹⁴. In 2010, a group of Amnesty-activists in Hamar wanted to join the Gaza-convoy that set out to breach the Israeli blockade of the Gaza-strip. To make sure that their actions would not harm Amnesty, they got in touch with the office in Oslo. As this was a controversial act, the request was forwarded to the IS, and it eventually landed on the desk of the Secretary General, who eventually decided that this was not something Amnesty could support. The Norwegian activists were told that if they wanted to join the convoy, they would have to go as civilians. This practice ensures that Amnesty International speaks with one voice, and that the different branches of the organisation are centred around the same ideas. The IS acts as a proof-reader, and thus controls both the opinions and actions of the different Amnesty offices. In the “one Amnesty Policy” we recognise two of Weber’s criteria for a bureaucratic organisation. First, we see that the organisation is continuous, as the policy applies to every part of Amnesty International. We also see the impartiality mentioned by Weber. You do not necessarily speak for yourself, but you have to act according to your role or “office”, as was illustrated by the volunteers who wanted to go on the Gaza convoy. However, to keep a worldwide organisation centralised, common opinions are not enough, you also need common actions, and again, the International Secretariat sets the course.

3.2.2 Strategies

Based on the Integrated Strategic Plan, the IS decides much of what the different sections of the organisation should work with. Two representatives from the IS are

¹² Interview with “D.Brown” 08.02.2012, Oslo

¹³ Interview with “D. Brown” 31.01.2012, Oslo

¹⁴ Interview with “D. Brown” 08.02.2012, Oslo

permanently in Geneva. They sit in the Human Rights Council and send out a list of themes that should be prioritised for each season (summer, fall, winter, spring). A theme could be violence against women, maternal health, corporal responsibility and so on. Even though every sector is free to choose what cases to pursue, the encouragements from the IS are usually followed, and Amnesty Norway has a local strategic plan where the target is to reach the ISP goals¹⁵. The IS also makes plans of action/ operative plans over two years. These plans dictate what themes one wishes to work on and what campaigns to launch. There are different levels of priorities: Top priorities are mandatory, and all AI offices have to follow the program. Then there is a subcategory with recommended themes to focus on. These are not mandatory, but they are usually followed. Different Amnesty offices will work with local issues and adapt their strategies to their country. However, the overall strategy plans are made in London, and much of the local campaigns are based on instructions from the IS. Again, we recognise the continuity criteria from Weber, as well as hierarchy. The Hierarchy is closely linked with the criteria of a specialised sector of expertise. When working on themes established through the ISP, the different sections of AI depend on the IS to provide information, global action dates, global petitions and such. This is because all Amnesty campaigns are based on research, and in most cases this research is done by people at the IS.

3.2.3 Knowledge

The third, and perhaps most important role of the International Secretariat is as the provider of knowledge. Reliable information about human rights abuses is the fundament of Amnesty International, and the researchers that produce this knowledge are all employed by the IS. This means that the research at the IS defines both the topic and the timing of international campaigns. “(...) because research has been the primary organizational output, its production structuring everything downstream, from campaigns to membership action, the culture of research has become the dominant feature of everyone else’s working life” (Hopgood 2006, 26). This notion that research comes before action became clear in a meeting within Amnesty International Norway. A date (set by the IS) of an international campaign was coming

¹⁵ Interview with “D. Brown 08.02.2012, Oslo

up, but there was a lack of information. This became a source of frustration, because it made it difficult to plan actions in different Amnesty-groups in Norway. You need reliable information to launch campaigns. And the IS controls much of the knowledge that Amnesty offices around the world rely on. Because of its role as a source of information, the IS becomes the ‘specialised sphere of competence’ that a bureaucratic organisation needs. This expertise does not only come from the researchers at the IS, but also those AI representatives who are present in certain international organs. These representatives do not bring facts about human rights abuses, but are valuable in the lobby-work of Amnesty International worldwide.

3.2.4 Lobby-work

In AIN, the three political advisors at the main office in Oslo, as well as the communication manager and the secretary general are in charge of lobbying strategies and much of the lobby work. As mentioned, Amnesty International Norway has to follow certain strategy plans set by the International Council. The two AI-representatives in Geneva are the main lobbyists of Amnesty. They will push where they find it necessary, but also make sure to tighten the bonds with those who could be important allies, or those that they know will support their case. According to one of the political advisors at AIN, the Amnesty-representatives in Geneva also send direct requests to different Amnesty-offices to lobby their own government on concrete issues¹⁶. In this practice we also see Weber’s criteria of a competent sphere and the case of a hierarchy where representatives from the IS will command national sectors of Amnesty. However, despite this control by the IS different sections (especially those who do not need financial support from London) feel fairly autonomous. As “D.Brown” explains it is important that to adjust each action to the different sections. The people on the ground know best which campaigns and what kind of activism that would be most effective in their area¹⁷.

The bureaucracy of Amnesty International and Amnesty International Norway has both its advantages and disadvantages. In one way, as we have seen, the control of the

¹⁶ Interview with ”S.Edwards” 27.02.2012

¹⁷ Interview 29.02.2012

IS constrains AIN as there is a lack of autonomy. However the expertise the IS provides AIN with essential knowledge – knowledge that would be difficult to obtain for AIN alone. Also, the fact that there is a strong continuity in the organisation strengthens the voice of each section, including AIN, because it means that there is an entire international organisation behind each national sector.

In the first part of this thesis I have argued that Amnesty International mirrors the organisation of an international governmental organisation. I have also shown how AIN is a bureaucratic organisation, and that this bureaucracy both enables and constrains the NGO. This shows that the state system is strong both around and within AIN. But the fact that the states are able to build the world in which Amnesty International operates, does not necessarily mean that AIN will not have the power to affect Norwegian policies. We saw that the IS can dictate much of what AIN should work with. International actions aside, if the decisions on when to have what kind of campaigns is made by someone else than AIN, can the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs still restrict the actions of AIN? As we shall see in part three of this thesis, the answer is yes. However, first we have to look at the methodology of the research on which this answer is based.

4. Methodology

My aim with this study is to say something about the power relations between an NGO and the state in which it operates. I wanted to know who was dictating whom and in what way. Looking at such a relationship from the outside can tell us something about the influence of NGOs on state policies. Case studies by Sikkink and Keck (1998), Florini (2000) and Neumann and Sending (2010) show that NGOs, especially those involved in a transnational nongovernmental network, have the power to set the national and international political agenda. What these studies do not show, however, are the thoughts behind the actions, the reasons for why some cases are being pursued in stead of others, and why issues are dealt with in the way they are. Taking an inside look into a non-governmental organisation will reveal to what extent the state can control the actions of an NGO, directly or indirectly and visa versa.

4.1 Epistemological and ontological considerations

Epistemologically, my study leans on interpretivism explained by Max Weber as “interpretive understanding of social action” (Weber 1947: 88). Contrary to positivism, where patterns of cause and effect exist independently of the researcher, interpretivism argues that the researcher interprets the world from the point of view of the subjects. “This clash reflects a division between an emphasis on the *explanation* of human behaviour (...) and the *understanding* of human behaviour” (Bryman 2008: 15). My findings thus depend both on how I was understood by those I studied, and on how I interpreted the information I gathered. This implies that I cannot see myself as a disconnected observer, but rather as a part of what is being studied.

Ontologically I place my research within constructionism, which means that I consider the order of things to be created by, and constantly modified by social actors. Social entities are thereby viewed as “social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (Bryman: 2008 p 18). This implies that based on my findings, I will be able to describe “a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive” (Bryman: 2008 p 19). There is no *one answer or one reality*, making generalisations difficult. This will be discussed further down.

4.2 Research design and research methods

The study of how Amnesty International Norway tries to influence the Ministry of Foreign Affairs In Norway is a case study. I focused on the organization itself, and how the people working for AIN approach the government. I have taken an inductive approach, where the theory has been generated by my findings in the field. The study can be classified as a representative or exemplifying case study. It gives a thick description of Amnesty International Norway, and provides a “detailed account of a social setting that can form the basis of the creation of general statements about a culture” (Bryman 2008: 700), namely that of the relationship between an (economically) independent NGO and the state in which it operates.

In my study of Amnesty International Norway’s relation to the Ministry of Foreign affairs I did not only search to find out how much power the two actors bestowed, but also why and in what way. I wanted to understand the mechanisms that are in place within the organisation to reveal hidden power structures. The best way to get a thorough view of the actions of the AIN, and to understand the reasons behind these actions, was by using qualitative methods. More specifically, by using the participatory approach. I had an inductive approach, as I used observations in the field to reach a theory. My role as a researcher was open, but in a closed setting, meaning that I took part of the everyday work at the office, but everyone knew that I was there for research purposes. I believe that the statistical tools of a quantitative study would fail to provide all the information I needed to understand the different dynamics between the people of the organisation and those working in the MFA. It was important for my study to understand both what is being done, but also why. A mixed methods approach could be useful as quantitative methods could measure the rate of success by AIN to influence the MFA. However, I believe that the potential gain in such an approach would be relatively low compared to the cost in time and resources. Another argument for using mixed methods is that it could be used to triangulate findings and thus strengthening the validity of my research. I argue that by triangulating sources, namely using observation, interviews and written sources, I ensure the validity of my work.

4.3 Sampling

When I started out, I had a very specific research question, and I found that the use of purposive sampling would be the best way of getting to the answers I needed. Thus I chose my research objects based upon how well they corresponded with my research question.

4.3.1 Finding the right NGO

My first challenge in my study of the power relationship between an NGO and a state, was to find the right NGO. My choice fell on Amnesty International for three reasons. The first is that for financial and practical reasons I had to do my research on an NGO with its headquarters in Oslo. Not only does AIN have its secretariat located in central Oslo, but the headquarters of the eastern region (there are five regions), “Region Øst”, shared offices with the secretariat. This gave me the opportunity to look at how the organisation worked both on the national and regional level. The second reason for why I chose AIN, is a more personal one. I have been interested in the field of human rights for a long time, and I have taken several courses in human rights at university level. As I have both an interest and knowledge in the field, I would get the most out of my research if I chose to work with a human rights NGO. Lastly, and most importantly, Amnesty International Norway does not rely on government funding. As mentioned in the introduction, most of the literature on the relationship between NGOs and the Norwegian state has been on humanitarian NGOs who rely heavily on financial support from the government. According to the literature on the Norwegian model, the dependency on money from the state, alters the relationship between State and NGO. One example of how state funding may inhibit the actions of an NGO comes from a poverty conference arranged by NORAD¹⁸ in 2006. As Jon Herald Sande Lie recalls “In a conversation in one of the breaks one representative from an organisation confirmed that criticizing NORAD was difficult. ‘They are our main donors, and we do not want to give a bad impression that could result in losing funds. It is obvious that we depend on the state, however NORAD wants us to promote ourselves as independent and an alternative to the state. The line between our

¹⁸ NORAD is a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that allocates state funds to the different NGOs.

own interests and the guidelines that come with state funding is difficult to draw' ” (H.S Lie 2006: 152)¹⁹. To avoid the extra dimension that money can bring, I wanted to examine an NGO who were financially independent. This way I could get a clearer view of the power balance between state and NGO. So my choice of research subject fell on Amnesty International Norway.

4.3.2 Finding the right people to interview

I interviewed six people, five from the Amnesty International Norway secretariat and one from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As I was investigating how the AIN tried to influence the MFA, it was most relevant to interview those who were directly involved in the decision making process of this work. Amnesty International Norway as a lobbying organization. Depending on how you define lobby work, the people involved in this kind of activity could range from a handful to anyone who has participated in a demonstration. I chose to interview those who were involved in the strategic planning of the lobby work of the organization, those who decided what cases to pursue and to an extent in what way. When it comes to my contact at the MFA, I based my choice on the recommendation of my informants at Amnesty. Different people at AIN are in contact with many different people working at the MFA. Choosing one of them by myself and counting on that this person could give me relevant information would be a gamble and most likely time consuming. I therefore trusted my informants at AIN to point me I the right direction. This put me in danger of interviewing a person that would, for example, be overly positive of Amnesty's work. However, based on the answers I got in my interview, I concluded that she was a trustworthy source without a compromising bias.

4.4 Collection of data

The collecting of data consisted of observations during my stay with Amnesty International Norway, interviews with informants within the organization and a collection of relevant documents. Field notes and interviews was then transcribed, and supported by the analysis of certain documents constituted the basis of my findings

¹⁹ Quote translated by author

4.4.1 Participant observation

I spent six weeks at the secretariat of Amnesty International Norway. Here I became a fully integrated part of the staff, working on the spring campaign concerning the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). I worked for both the national team that had the overall responsibility for the MENA-campaign, and for the regional office (region east) organising local actions and activities. I was also able to take part in strategy meetings and staff briefings, making it possible to observe how plans were made and what issues came up in relation to these plans. I had one key informant that would help me to access relevant meetings, who was also available to answer questions that came up during my stay at AIN. This person was also one of those I did in-depth interviews with. During my six weeks of field work I observed procedures of addressing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and gathered information on what was being done, how it was done and who did what. Because the staff at AIN eats lunch together, I was also able to listen in on and take part in daily conversations where people would talk about their work, discuss approaches to certain issues and express personal concerns. I kept a journal in which I noted any interesting conversations or observations. These observations then made the foundation on which I built my interviews.

4.4.2 Interviews

To supplement my own observations I also carried out in-depth interviews with some of the staff at AIN. I did one interview with five people at Amnesty International Norway and one with an employee at the Ministry of foreign affairs. The interviews lasted between one hour and one hour and a half. My questions to the AIN staff revolved around what each person saw as good ways of gaining influence on Norwegian policies, what they did to obtain influence, why they did what they did and how they viewed the relationship between AIN and MFA. The interview with the person at the Foreign Ministry was mainly used to triangulate my findings at Amnesty, but I also aimed at understanding the relationship between the organization and the Ministry from the point of view of the MFA.

4.4.3 Written sources

In addition to observation and interviews, I consulted written sources. These consisted of letters and e-mails sent to and from AIN and the MFA. In Norway we have a law that gives the public the right to see letters (including electronic ones) sent to and from governmental bodies (Offentleglova §6.3). I searched for all the documents that included the words ‘Amnesty International’ in the period between 01.08.2011 and 01.02.2012. This enabled me to see if the correspondence between the two parts matched the image that was given to me through observations and interviews.

Although most of the communication between people at AIN and the MFA happen on a personal basis (thus not accessible), consulting official letters gave me a picture of the official relationship between the two.

4.5 Validity and reliability

To meet the research criteria of validity and reliability I lean on terms developed by LeCompte and Goetz as presented by Bryman (2008) namely external reliability, internal validity and external validity. The external reliability refers to how well the study can be replicated. This is a challenge in many qualitative studies, as you cannot “freeze a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable in the sense in which the term is usually employed” (Bryman 2008: 376). My study is no exception. However, by giving a ‘thick description’ of the object studied and clearly stating my role as a researcher it is possible to conduct similar studies in other NGOs. The internal validity of my research relates to the link between my observations in the field and the theories developed in my study. I believe that this point is particularly strong in my research. Because of the time spent in the field, I was able to get a good understanding of the organisation and the people working there. Triangulating my research using participatory observation, interviews and documents further strengthens the validity of my observations. I used interviews to make sure that I understood what I saw and heard during my fieldwork, and backed up this information with the data collected from documents. Respondent validation was also used. I gave participants an account of what I had taken down in interviews to make sure that I had understood correctly. The room for misinterpretation was therefore minimised, and I could develop theories that were derived from reliable observations. As I have studied a particular situation, the external validity of my

research can be debated. Because I have done a case study on one particular organisation at one particular moment in time, generalisation is difficult. However the study can be useful to do comparative studies in similar organisations.

4.6 Challenges

There have been several challenges in the course of my study. The perhaps most pressing concern is that of possible bias in favor of AIN. My study is solely focused on the side of the organization, leaving out the viewpoints of the people within the state. This might evoke questions on the fairness and biasness of my research. However my research question does explicitly state that the aim of the study is to understand the mechanisms *within Amnesty International Norway*. This makes it clear that the point of view of the MFA will not be considered, thus not compromising the fairness of the study. A second concern is that even though I worked at the AIN offices in Oslo for six weeks and got to participate in meetings that were relevant to my study, I did not have full access. I have, for example not been able to observe an informal meeting between someone at AIN and a representative from the MFA. The fact that much of the lobby work was not directly accessible to me, leaves the question if important aspects were being left out. Although this might be the case, I still believe that I was able to do a thorough enough study to be able to draw the conclusions I did. On a more technical note, because of the lack of proper equipment and a working habit that I have developed as a journalist in interview situations, I did not record the interviews on tape or video. I simply took notes along the way. This might have caused a gap between the interviewee and my transcriptions of the interviews. However I believe I avoided any contamination of the data by letting my sources look over the transcriptions and check for errors or misunderstandings. I have also been very careful not to quote anything that is not correct word for word.

5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in power

In the power relationship between Amnesty International Norway and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the MFA comes out on top, because the government sets the base from which AIN has to work. This means that the priorities of the state, the government's will to collaborate with civil society and so on will decide the working conditions of NGOs in Norway. In states that include civil society in their work, there will be a mutual dependency between the state and representatives of the civil society, such as NGOs. We saw how this presented itself through the Norwegian model, but it is not only in cases where the state is involved financially that such a relationship can be seen. In the case of AIN, the government's high profile as a human rights defender has made the competence within the organisation relevant to the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I will get back to how the organisation uses this situation to gain influence. For now, I want to point at three reasons why the power relationship between Amnesty International Norway and the MFA is asymmetrical, and in favour of the state. The first is that the Norwegian government's attitude towards human rights affects the political position of human rights organisations. The second is that the MFA can expand or limit AIN's access to international meetings, and the third is that the Norwegian state's international position and political priorities affect the prioritisations of the NGO.

5.1 The government lays the premises of AIN by how they view human rights

The position and influential power of Amnesty International Norway is determined by Norway's attitude towards human rights. In a state that does not care about human rights to begin with will not care about what a human rights organisation has to say,

and the work of human rights NGOs becomes hard. Even though human rights have gained increasing respect since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was first adopted in 1948, recent events in Syria have shown that there is little local human rights organisations can do in a country that does not respect human rights. In the case of Amnesty International, the fact that there are no Amnesty-offices in countries such as China, Libya, Egypt and Iran²⁰ indicate the organisation's position in such countries. This does not necessarily mean that there is no work on human rights in the country, but it does indicate the position of human rights organisations.

Representatives from AIN explain that the government's open attitude towards human rights has not only given them a certain room for political influence on the matter of human rights, it has also changed the way they work. "L. Anderson" explains in an interview 06.03.2012; "Because Norway has been a great supporter of human rights for a long time, we have not had to use a lot of time and effort to lobby our own country. However, lately the attitudes have changed, and we have had to focus more on our own government". This shows that the MFA can influence how AIN works by being more or less cooperative. However, it is not only the general attitudes towards human rights that give states the upper hand on AIN. As mentioned, intergovernmental organisations have become an important part of human rights work. The MFA can regulate the access of AIN to the UN by bringing AIN representatives along to certain international meetings.

5.2 The MFA and AIN in the UN

Even though NGOs are allowed to attend meetings within the UN according to Article 71 of the UN Charter, they do not have legal access to every UN meeting (Willetts 1996). Amnesty International Norway is therefore dependable on cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to get into meetings that could be of importance to human rights policies. Luckily for AIN, the MFA believes in bringing the civil society in on discussions. In meetings at the UN that might be closed to NGOs, the Norwegian delegates often bring representatives from civil society as a part of the Norwegian delegation²¹. According to political advisors at AIN, the MFA even brings along

²⁰ This was concluded after a search of amnesty-offices on Amnesty International's webpage www.amnesty.org

²¹ Interview with "D. Brown", Oslo 29.02.2012

representatives from foreign organisations, if they are asked. The general impression is that Norwegian delegates are very cooperative when it comes to giving representatives from Amnesty International (both the Norwegian and other sectors) access to meetings within the UN. Even though they cannot take an active part in these meetings, the information that Amnesty gets by listening in is highly valuable. As we will see in the chapter on the powers of AIN, the organisation has its own ways of gaining information on what is going on at the UN. My point here is that the MFA can make this job easier or harder by bringing the civil society in on closed meetings. We now move from ways in which the MFA can influence AIN directly, to how they affect AIN indirectly.

5.3 The government's priorities direct the focus of Amnesty International Norway

By focusing on certain issues, the government can indirectly lead NGOs in a certain direction. Amnesty International Norway chooses what cases to pursue according to the priorities of the state. There are three trends that can be seen.

5.3.1 The Norwegian state's position in international politics affect in what cases AIN will pressure the MFA

First, AIN focuses on cases where the Norwegian state can actually make a difference. This means that the power of the state defines AIN's room for action. As "D. Brown" says; "There is little use in pressuring the Norwegian government to act in places or on subjects where Norway has no influence. I never go to the MFA to ask for things where I know that pressure from the Norwegian government would be meaningless" Even though the organisation is concerned with breaches of the human rights everywhere, this does not necessarily mean that they will lobby hard for cases where Norway's influence is limited. "There are cases where we have to take a stand because the media and the public demands us to be involved. However these cases are not prioritised because we know that Norway has no influence in the matter. An example of this is the conflict between Palestine and Israel. Maybe our involvement

could have some effect on one particular case, but that is all”, explains “D.Brown” in an interview 08.03.2012. By concentrating on cases where Norway has some international political influence, AIN avoids using a lot of time and energy on something that does not give much result. Also, according to “D. Brown”, “it is difficult to persuade a state to fight for a cause they know they will not be able to change anyway. Amnesty has little leverage in cases where the MFA can simply say that they have no power in the matter.” What AIN will do, however, is finding alternative ways to create political pressure. This was done in a meeting on the 10th of February 2012 between the secretary general of Amnesty International in London, Salli Shetty, and Jonas Gahr Støre, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The topic that was most discussed was the human rights situation in Syria. Even though Norway has no power to influence the actions of Syria, they do have a close relationship with Russia. Shetty therefore asked Støre to pressure Russia to exercise political pressure for changes in Syria. AIN can thus use Norway’s connections to push for change even in places where Norway has no direct influence. However, AIN is still dependent of the diplomatic connections of the state.

5.3.2 AIN focuses on areas where the MFA is already involved

The second way in which the government’s priorities direct the focus of AIN is that the organisation chooses its battles according to where Norway is already involved. In a meeting where AIN’s lobbying strategies were planned, one of the questions they asked themselves was “Where can we contribute with support and knowledge”? By assisting in cases where the government was already involved, AIN were sure to gain influence. One way to exercise influence is to work alongside the government, says “S.Edwards” in an interview 27.02.2012; “In the work with our “power leads to responsibility”-campaign²², Norway was already heavily involved. What Amnesty did, therefore aligned with the actions of the MFA”. In this case, Amnesty lobbied through campaigns and the media to gain awareness around the human rights responsibilities of Norwegian companies. At the same time, the organisation sat in meetings with the government and other NGOs discussing the same issues. When working towards the same goals, it is easy to collaborate with the government.

²² Original name of campaign was “makt forplikter”, translated by author.

Another way to work on cases where the interests of the organisation and the government align, is to actively lobby the MFA in cases where AIN knows they will be heard. “Norway works hard to abolish the death penalty, so when we know that Norwegian delegates are going on an official visit to Sudan, we arrange a meeting beforehand and give them a list of things that we demand that they discuss with officials in Sudan²³” (“E. Fields” in an interview 29.02.2012, Oslo). By pursuing the cases where the MFA invites the organisation to give their inputs, AIN ensures to take full advantage of those situations where they know they have influence. However, AIN’s role is to push for improvement of human rights situations in those places where the government is not looking. It was even stated at a strategic lobbying meeting; “we have to work on those cases where the doors to political cooperation are not wide open as well. There are areas where Norway could improve”. Despite this, the focus of the organisation often follows that of the government.

5.3.3 AIN will usually pursue cases/ areas where the MFA has stated a will to act

My third point is that AIN focuses on areas where Norway has stated a will to act. As stated by “S. Edwards” in an interview 27.02.2012; “It is clear that Norway’s self appointed role as a human rights defender makes it easier for us to exercise pressure. We take advantage of the fact that the MFA themselves have official target areas (this is now the death-penalty, rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people, and minority-rights). The stated priorities of the government also map out what we will focus on”. Amnesty uses the official statements of the government to gain leverage and exercise pressure. If the government has said that it will do something, it is easier to follow up on this and push for change in areas that have been neglected. According to the MFA they welcome the inputs and expertise within organisations such as Amnesty in cases where the government have stated a will to act. “K.Clark” said in an interview 08.03.2012. “There are areas where we value Amnesty’s contributions. Amnesty has been, and still is, especially important in our work on the death penalty. On this particular theme we have invited Amnesty International Norway to

²³ Quote translated by author

meetings”²⁴. This is another example of how the government opens doors to AIN, and the organisation willingly follows. However, to draw further on the image of the open door, AIN may also function as a door-stopper, making sure that promises are held, and that the government does not forget previous commitments. In a strategy meeting, this particular role was enhanced, and plans were made to bring the MFA back into negotiations that had been avoided by the Ministry. In this way AIN might use the words of the government to gain influence, however this requires an already stated will to act, meaning that the MFA essentially made the first move.

Based on the arguments made above, we can conclude that the power relation between AIN and the state is asymmetrical. The government’s priorities and their will to include civil society draw the borders within which NGOs can act. This is nothing new to the people in AIN. As “D.Brown” explains in an interview 29.02.2012 “The Norwegian government will always put the interests of the nation before anything else. For example; signing an agreement on the placement of borders in Barents Sea is more important than criticising the many breaches of the human rights in Russia. On such points, the government will most likely have the public on their side as well, and thus Amnesty is left with little leverage to fight for improving the human rights conditions in our neighbouring country”²⁵. The government lays the premises of how AIN can operate, however, as we shall see, the organisation is not completely at the mercy of the government.

²⁴ Quote translated by author

²⁵ Quote translated by author

6. Collaboration between state and NGO

Contrary to the humanitarian organisations mentioned in the theory about the Norwegian model, Amnesty International does not depend on the government financially. They do, however, depend on political will and information. In return, the government depends on the knowledge and expertise within Amnesty International. Here one can draw parallels to the Norwegian model.

6.1 Exchange of knowledge

The MFA and AIN are often involved in the same issues, and Norwegian delegates see AI as an important resource as they may add knowledge or experts that are of good use to the Norwegian delegates²⁶. In return, government officials may give information on what is going on in the diplomatic world, and give tactical advice and access to meetings and information. For example, in the work with the Arms Trade Treaty AIN wanted to push for an inclusion of military-, security- and police equipment, so-called MSP-equipment. Norwegian diplomats informed people at AIN that at the present, it was even problematic to include ammunition in the treaty. Pushing to include MSP-equipment would only lead to a loss of credibility, and making AIN's other claims less powerful. AIN could then use this to change tactics. This fact does not mean that AIN will drop the demand of including the MSP-equipment, but the information given by the MFA allowed the organisation to find better strategies. The exchange of information goes both ways, and although the MFA do not rely entirely on information from AIN, they find it valuable. A representative from the MFA admitted that information from Amnesty had been especially appreciated in areas where the Norwegian government had difficulties in acquiring trustworthy information. She did, however, emphasise that Amnesty International was not their only source of information. "We use information from Amnesty to support our image of situations. NGO's such as Amnesty can be useful in the work on countries where we have a limited access to information ourselves. Still, sometimes it might be better to use local NGO's that have a lot of local knowledge" ("K. Clark" in an interview 08.03.2012, Oslo) The importance of exchanging information between

²⁶ Interview with "D. Brown" 29.02.2012, Oslo and "K. Clark" 08.03.2012, Oslo

bureaucrats and people at AIN was emphasised by one of the political advisors at AIN. It was pointed out that being an international organisation has its advantages. People within Amnesty International have eyes and ears everywhere, as well as a very big network of very competent people. This is something that the MFA values. “D Brown” explains how one Norwegian representative came to him and said “the information we got from you on South Sudan was crucial to our work in the region”²⁷. People in other branches of Amnesty may also provide AIN with useful political knowledge that they can pass on to the MFA. A person at Amnesty in one country may say something about how their government view an issue. This information can be useful to the Norwegian government. For example when Norway was working on a proposition on war crime investigation in Sri Lanka. USA had been working on such a proposition simultaneously, but they had found out that in order to be effective, western countries had to take on a much more passive role. This was an approach that would work better than the Norwegian proposition. Amnesty could inform the MFA about the situation, and the MFA could reform their proposition accordingly²⁸. The collaboration between AIN and the MFA does have a lot in common with the relationship between humanitarian NGOs and the Norwegian government. The difference is that their relationship is purely political, and there are no financial ties. In addition to a mutual need for the exchange of information, Amnesty International Norway can also be a support to Norwegian delegates in diplomatic discussions.

6.2 Acting as support to the Ministry of foreign Affairs

Amnesty International Norway provides Norwegian delegates with reports and facts to support them in diplomatic discussions. This serves as extra leverage in a debate, and as a less confrontational way of bringing up discussions. Bringing Amnesty reports and the like strengthens delegates’ positions in discussions. As a worker at the MFA explains; “We will gladly point at Amnesty- and Human Rights Watch reports in meetings. It is a strength to us to show that there are several actors behind a case. It creates another type of pressure” (“K. Clark” in an interview 08.03.2012, Oslo) Referring to demands made by Amnesty International Norway and the like is a way of bringing up controversial subjects. It is a way of becoming more of a messenger than

²⁷ and²⁷ Interview with “D. Brown” 29.02.2012, Oslo

an exhorter. Although government officials do not rely on statements from NGOs in diplomatic discussions, having the civil society on your side can strengthen their case. This effect can also be seen in discussions in the UN. A political advisor at AIN said “The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs often asks Amnesty to lobby for them in certain cases”. Amnesty’s impartial role in international discussions makes their arguments more universal. Thus, being backed by Amnesty can make Norwegian delegates’ arguments less partial. This relationship resembles that of the Norwegian model, where MFA representatives can give extended access to people from AIN, and where the backing of Amnesty International can strengthen Norwegian arguments. Although our main focus is to look at the relationship between the MFA and AIN, it is important to note that the support of AIN can also be helpful when it comes to domestic politics, as it shows a peculiar form of collaboration.

6.3 Acting as a facilitator for political change

AIN can push for political changes that politicians were reluctant to make because of public critique. This means that by arguing for the need for certain changes AIN may change the public opinion in favour of actions by the government. This could be seen in the aftermath of AIN’s work with violence against women. When AIN released a report about the lack of trauma centres and services to women who had experienced domestic violence and rape, the critique led to new priorities in government funding. The critique in the media made it possible for municipalities to use money on improving conditions for traumatized women instead of giving more money to things the public prioritized before the critique, such as improvement of roads and so on²⁹. A public debate with the government on one side and NGOs on the other may in some cases be a carefully planned strategy. This means that politicians count on NGOs to take the stand that the politicians themselves could not front.

As we have seen in the second part of this thesis, the MFA can affect the work of AIN both directly, by cooperating more or less with AIN on the national and international stage, and indirectly, as AIN adapts its strategies according to the priorities of the Norwegian government. We have also pointed out the different ways in which the

²⁹ Interview with “D. Brown” 29.02.2012, Oslo and “E. Fields” 29.02.2012, Oslo

MFA and AIN cooperate. However in the examples of state – NGO cooperation, we find evidence that the state is indeed the strongest part. In the first example, I mentioned that there is an exchange of knowledge. One could argue that this gives AIN the power to affect the policies or actions of the MFA, and to a certain extent it does. However, what is important to note is that the MFA will only seek the advice of AIN in cases that such advice is welcome. The same goes for the second example, where AIN reports and statements are used to *back up* the arguments of Norwegian representatives. It is not until the last example that we see that an initiative from AIN has political consequences. Although this particular example showed how such an initiative in the end supported the state, it shows that Amnesty International Norway has the power to change public opinion, and thus change policies. We will get back to this in chapter 10, but first we shall take a look at the authority of the organisation.

The powers of Amnesty International Norway

Although I have argued that Amnesty International Norway lives in a state-centric world, that the organisation is built upon the same structures as states and that there are several ways in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can affect the work of the organisation, there is a set of tools that AIN uses to gain political influence and power, both internationally and domestically. They can be divided into three groups. Working through the international community, approaching the government directly, and working indirectly through public opinion. The core of the powers of AIN lies in the authority of the organisation, and that authority derives from that of Amnesty International, which holds both moral and political authority. This authority, as well as a political will to include civil society into political decisions in Norway provides Amnesty International Norway with enough leverage to affect the politics of the MFA.

7. The authority of the organisation

Amnesty International Norway has certain leverage because of the moral and political authority of Amnesty International. Authority is, according to Peter Willetts, “not a fixed possession of a political actor, but a role in a relationship. It may derive from (...) the possession of expert information and understanding, or from a widely accorded respect and status, which at its strongest is charisma (Willetts 2011, 127). For Amnesty International, authority comes from their position as an independent expert on human rights. “Because international institutions are generally viewed as neutral parties who represent commonly-shared values, they are accorded a certain

degree of legitimacy in world affairs. This allows them to promote particular values and goals on a global scale. They derive additional authority from their control and coordination of technical expertise and information” (Sterling-Folker 2010: 127). According to Peter Willetts authority “is conditional upon the acceptance of its legitimacy” (Willetts 2011: 127). Amnesty International therefore has to be accepted as a *legitimate* human rights organisation.

7.1 Legitimacy

When speaking with people at Amnesty International Norway, the legitimacy of the organisation was a recurring theme. There is always a concern that actions or statements could damage the organisation’s legitimacy or credibility, and practices such as the ‘one Amnesty policy’ are in place to avoid such damage. The legitimacy of Amnesty International comes from their financial independence, political impartiality and their research and thorough knowledge on human rights situations around the world.

7.1.1 Knowledge

Amnesty International’s credibility is highly linked to the information the different sections base their arguments and actions on. Reliable knowledge about human rights issues is both the building block and the bargaining card of the organisation. To explain the high value of reliable information within Amnesty, one can point at the place of the researchers within the International Secretariat. In Stephen Hopgood’s book about Amnesty International, the researchers are described as “kings and queens” (Hopgood 2006, 24) and as the highest authority on their field, which is a country or a region. The information that comes from the research department at the IS needs to be trustworthy, and so the work of researchers is thorough. Based on descriptions by Stephen Hopgood (2006) and people at Amnesty international Norway, the researchers at Amnesty are a mix of journalists and interrogators. They gather information by talking to local human rights organisations, journalists and other sources that are deemed reliable. They interview victims of human rights abuses, their families, witnesses, and anyone else that may be relevant to the case.

One person at AIN, that had joined a researcher from the IS in the work in Syria told me that the interviews are so thorough that sometimes they resemble police interrogations. Every detail is mapped out about where and when things happened, who were present and where they were standing. Information is always double-checked and eyewitness accounts are cross-referenced³⁰. People at AIN describe the fear of basing arguments on invalid information. One political advisor explained how the people in the field always discover much more than they will tell journalists or write in reports. They know so much more than they dare to say publicly, because of the fear of stating something that turns out to be false³¹. Although reliable knowledge is crucial for the credibility of the organisation, so is impartiality and independence.

7.1.2 Impartiality and independence

Impartiality and independence are core values of Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2011). These values ensure that international bodies take information from Amnesty seriously. Steven Toulmin as cited by Hopgood “No one takes wholly seriously the moral opinions voiced – whether in outrage, sorrow or excuse – in the General Assembly or the Security Council of the United Nations, as they are always presented by official spokesmen of the Member States, whose status marks them as ‘interested parties’. The only institutions whose opinions command general respect and are generally heard as stating ‘the decent opinion of Humankind’ are Amnesty International, the World Psychiatric Association and similar organisations, which are devoid of physical power or armed force” (Hopgood 2006, 5). One way of ensuring impartiality is to be financially independent. Amnesty International relies entirely on donations from supporters and members. This practice ensures that the organisation can criticise any state at any time without the fear of losing important funding. “One well-publicised aspect of Amnesty’s claim to impartiality has been the rejection of government funds for its core work, and in the 1970’s this extended to foundations as well, the IS and IEC refusing funds from the Ford Foundation because of fears about its alleged links with the CIA (Hopgood 2006, 107). Traditionally, Amnesty reports have been as objective as possible, leaving out words that are emotional or leading. Making an impact is left to the campaigns and the media. Reports should simply state the facts, and then people can do what they want with those facts. Giving objective

³⁰ Interview with “N. Donaldson” 28.02.2012, Oslo

³¹ Interview with “D. Brown” 08.02.2012, Oslo

and accurate information is a way of ensuring that Amnesty stays impartial, and do not take sides with any one government. Their goal is the promotion of human rights everywhere, and they always take the side of the victims of human rights abuses. The impartiality of the organisation and what it stands for, has also led to a moral authority of Amnesty International.

7.2 Moral authority

The credibility of Amnesty International has given the organisation authority in international discussions on Human Rights. Steven Hopgood (2006) spoke of the ethos of AI and the moral authority of the organisation. He defines moral authority as "(...) a special kind of theoretical authority. It combines two elements. First, privileged access to knowledge that is inaccessible to the ordinary person. (...) [Second] the words of these privileged intermediaries also claim to be a reason to act on that belief regardless of our own interests and inclinations. Moral authority tells us what we should do. (...) Essential to elevating this special class of authority to its moral status is that it convinces us it is more than merely a veiled attempt to promote the subjective preferences or advantages of some. It must claim a certain objectivity in speaking for the truth. (Hopgood 2006, 4) Moral authority is thus linked to the impartiality, independence and objective knowledge discussed above. By telling the stories of suffering, Amnesty can compel states to change behaviour simply because it is 'the right thing to do'. Amnesty's moral authority gives the organisation a strong voice that is heard in international discussions on human rights. However, according to Hopgood (2006) there has been a shift in the use of the Amnesty Ethos. As the organisation is beginning to take a stand in certain discussions, they are becoming more of a political actor than a moral compass. The organisation is starting to balance between their moral authority and a newer political authority.

7.3 Political authority

Amnesty is stepping out of their role as an objective observer, and into the role of a "legitimate representative of an interest or identity" (Hopgood 2006, 14) that takes part in political discussions. The newer generations of people within Amnesty are working to use the organisation's moral authority to push for political change. Contrary to moral authority, which is based on bearing witness and simply revealing human rights abuses, political authority means taking action. When taking sides in a

discussion, the authority moves from the objective moral sphere to the political and active one. For those who are working for a more political Amnesty, research is becoming the mean instead of the end. Now that I have established the authority of Amnesty International, and by deduction that of Amnesty International Norway, I will show in what ways this authority is used to influence the policies of the MFA.

8. Working through the international community

AIN leans on rules set by the international community, and effectively the same community becomes an important part of AIN's strategies to change domestic policies. Both the Norwegian promotion of itself as a fighter for peace and democracy, and international law are useful tools to an organisation that is pushing for change.

8.1 Using Norway's position in international politics

According to people at Amnesty International Norway, AIN actively uses Norway's position as a promoter for peace and human rights to push for improvement of domestic human rights conditions. AIN can challenge the Norwegian government by making the international community aware of human rights issues in Norway through the UN. Pointing out and spreading information about human rights problems in Norway is effective because of how the Norwegian state likes to portray itself in the world. The 'naming and shaming' method is therefore an effective tool. As Henrik Thune and Torgeir Larsen (2000) argue, "an important, yet often overlooked driving force in foreign policy is the representation of the state in the outside world, and whether the international reputation of a state aligns with its self image" (Bjørn Tore Godal cited by Thune and Larsen 2000: 71)³². Norway has a history of portraying itself as a supporter for peace, development and democracy. "If you look at different reasons for Norwegian 'engagement politics', it is hard not to be surprised by the

³² Quote translated by author

reoccurring connections between the work for peace and democracy, and the self image of the state. In a statement of a Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 1990's, it is said that 'the strength in our international human rights work comes first and foremost from a set of common values and a deep dedication with the Norwegian people... it has to do with Norwegian history' ³³ (Bjørn Tore Godal cited by Thune and Larsen 2000: 82). According to one of the staff at AIN it is easier to get a reaction when pointing at breaches of the human rights in Norway, than for example in Iran or Syria. This is because of the position Norway has as a fighter for human rights and a peace builder³⁴. Even when the critique comes from an NGO, people within the government take notice. One of the people at AIN told me that it has happened more than once that the telephone has rang in he AIN office after a critical article has been published in the papers³⁵. Norway has to keep its credibility if it wants to act as an authority and international commentator on human rights questions. This is why critique from an organisation such as Amnesty International will not lightly be brushed aside. However, an even stronger tool than critique from an internationally respected NGO, is when international law is involved.

8.2 Using international law

Norway has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and ratified many of its conventions. It is therefore bound to send periodic reports to the Human Rights Council every four years. In these reports one has to show what steps are taken to strengthen human rights' position in the country. These reports should "ensure the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations and national human rights institutions" (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2010: 21). According to both people at AIN and the MFA, this is respected, and the civil society is always invited to forward their views on UN-reports before the MFA send them in³⁶. This means that AIN has a say in how Norway presents itself to the Human Rights Council. They can, however, also go directly to the United Nations Organisations. As a human rights organisation, Amnesty can work with the different

³³ Quote translated by author

³⁴ and ³⁴ Interview with "S. Edwards" 27.02.2012, Oslo

³⁶ Interview with "K. Clark" 08.03.2012, Oslo

human rights committees in the UN. They have the power to point at human rights issues in Norway (as well as other places), and make official recommendations. Working with international human rights monitoring bodies is an important tool³⁷. In addition to the reports written by states to the Human Rights Council, the different treaty-monitoring bodies conduct their own investigations and write their own reports. In the process of writing these reports, NGOs, such as Amnesty International, may play an important role. “NGOs regularly participate in United Nations’ working groups. (...) NGOs also participate in the process by sending in reports on States. This can present quite a different view from that of the State report (...)” (Smith 2010 p. 156). Amnesty International Norway uses the collaboration with the treaty-monitoring bodies to create extra pressure on the Norwegian government. An example of this comes from AIN’s work with the problem of gender-based violence in Norway. As one of the political advisors at AIN explained, it has been difficult to get the authorities to listen to AIN in the case of gender-based violence. Pointing to something that disputes the equality between men and women in Norway is generally not well received. Nobody wants to acknowledge that there is such a thing as ‘gender-based violence’. However, when the women’s committee in the UN (CEDAW) states that there is a lack of will to see and act upon differences, it gives AIN the leverage they need in approaching the Norwegian government³⁸. By using their position as consultants in UN organisations and leaning on international law AIN has support from the international community to push for changes in Norway.

³⁷ and ³⁷ Interview with “E. Fields” 29.02.2012, Oslo

9 Approaching the Ministry of Foreign Affairs directly

AIN use their knowledge to affect policies in official or informal meetings with representatives from the MFA. Such meetings have three purposes. The first is to bring demands to the MFA and argue for why they must act on certain issues. The second is to exchange information and the third is to establish personal relationships with bureaucrats.

9.1 Official meetings

Official meetings are used to clarify what Amnesty wants the MFA to do. They invite Ministers and other representatives from the government to meetings where AIN informs them of their demands in different cases. This is also done through formal letters. AIN also gets invited to meetings where MID wants to have some input from the civil society on plans of action on particular areas such as the death penalty or minority-issues. These are usually long seminars, where one can also meet informally³⁹. According to one of the political advisors in AIN, formal meetings are not a big part of their lobbying work. Meetings on the top level between the secretary general of AIN and ministers only happen a few times a year. It is at informal meetings that most of the lobby work is done, in form of exchange of information and private conversations⁴⁰.

9.2 Informal meetings

AIN gets valuable information at informal meetings with government representatives that can be used to lay lobbying strategies. By being in the loop on what is going on within the Ministry, AIN can see where their involvement would be most effective. “S. Edwards” explains how “informal meetings are often a part of a strategy. We may attend seminars just because we know that so-and-so will be there, and strike up a conversation during lunch. Meetings over coffee between our political advisors and bureaucrats in the MFA are not uncommon. Here, one can talk freely and exchange

³⁹ Interview with “S. Edwards” 27.03.2012, Oslo

⁴⁰ and ⁴⁰ Interview with “L. Anderson” 06.03.2012, Oslo

knowledge about where MFA stands on different cases” (Interview 27.03.2012, Oslo). Another AIN representative says that much of what is considered lobby work is informal communications with people in the MFA, such as text messages, e-mails or phone calls. Informal meetings may be meeting people at conferences and the like. It can also mean getting a phone call from the MFA before diplomatic meetings, where they want to know where AI stands on certain issues⁴¹. “These meetings are based on mutual respect and trust, where one exchanges information in confidence” (“L. Anderson” in an interview 06.03.2012, Oslo)⁴². The information that AIN get from people within the Ministry can be used to plan further lobby work. The MFA might admit that they are concerned with some issues, but that these issues will not be discussed at present because of these and these reasons. Such information is useful to Amnesty in planning lobby-strategies. There are, for example, cases where AI and the MFA agree, but where other ministries are working for the opposite cause. The MFA can let AIN know where the resistance lies, and thus AI can concentrate on lobbying this particular party, person or other strong actor. This goes the other way around as well. AI can give the MFA information that can be useful in political arguments, such as knowing that other countries agree with the MFA’s way of thinking⁴³. Mutual trust between AIN representatives and government officials is a key word. You have to trust that the information you share will not be misused, and you have to know that those you work with will keep you updated on relevant issues. This is why it is important to develop personal professional relationships with those ‘on the other side’.

9.3 Personal relationships

Developing relationships with the people you want to collaborate with can both create commitment and make it easier to plan out lobbying strategies. When you know whom you are up against, it is easier to understand whom you can contact to lobby in a specific case. In the words of one in the MFA that works with human rights “It is important to interact with each other in person, something that often happens at informal meetings. This is where you may build trust, learn priorities, who are

⁴¹ Quote translated by author

⁴³ Interview with “L. Anderson” 06.03.2012, Oslo

concerned with what, what kind of competence people have and what kind of analysis they have done⁴⁴” (“K. Clark” in an interview 08.03.2012, Oslo) .One of the political advisors in Amnesty Norway calls this kind of interaction “strategic alliance building”⁴⁵. You have to learn whom you have on your side, and who can give you useful information. This is important in relation to other NGOs as well. It is good to know anyone that can be on your side and argue your case. When it comes to the relationship between people in NGOs and politicians, Norwegian NGOs are in a particular favourable situation according to one at AIN. The relationship is close and not as characterised by bureaucracy as in other countries. People move back and forth between positions in the civil and political life. Because Norway is a small country, people often know one another from different settings. This allows for an open but professional dialogue⁴⁶. Personal meetings can also lead to a sense of commitment between people in the Ministry and those in AIN. One of the people at Ain explains; “Direct dialogue is important. Media can create pressure, but it can also create distance. Although pressure through media might be effective and have big results, it cannot replace personal meetings. Meeting people in person bring parts closer together, and may create a more binding/committing communication. It is also important to have the opportunity to speak ‘off the record’, because one can speak more freely. It is important for Amnesty to be in the loop on what is going on, even though we might not use this information to exercise pressure⁴⁷” (“N. Donaldson” in an interview 28.02.2012, Oslo). This means that when you have had close contact with one in the Ministry that works on, say, child rights, it would be natural that either side inform the other on important changes or happenings in that field.

As argued, AIN has ways of approaching the MFA directly. They create international pressure by attending international meetings and approaching international organisations where Norway is a member. They also have a consulting part in the writing of reports to the Human Rights Council. Back home, they have both formal and informal meetings to clarify demands, and exchange information. However direct lobby work is only one part of how AIN tries to affect the policies of the MFA. In the

⁴⁴ Quote translated by author

⁴⁵ Interview with “E. Fields” 29.02.2012, Oslo

⁴⁶ Interview with “D. Brown” 29.02.2012, Oslo

⁴⁷ and ⁴⁷ Quote translated by author

words of an AIN employee; “One has to use different approaches simultaneously, and think ahead. One should not be content with a meeting, but one has to follow up and plan ahead”⁴⁸ (“N. Donaldson” in an interview 28.02.2012, Oslo) By creating pressure from different angles they get the most results, and indirect influence is a big part of Amnesty’s lobbying strategy.

10 Influencing policies indirectly by affecting public opinion

In a democratic society politicians will always be concerned with the opinions of their voters. By affecting public opinion, NGOs such as AIN can indirectly influence political policies. AIN uses both media and activism to influence public opinion, thus pushing for political changes. Media and activism have four important aspects. The first is to create visibility, the second is to name and shame, the third is to set the public agenda and the fourth is to change public opinion. These things combined along with the advantages of having long term goals, create a pressure for political change.

10.1 Visibility

By reaching out to as many people as possible, AIN becomes a strong organisation that gets noticed by the government. This means that the organisation has to be visible in the media and on the streets. Being visible ensures that the organisation and what it stands for is well known in the public. This can generate support for the cases that Amnesty are fronting, as well as recruit more members. One of the political advisors in AIN believes that Amnesty is important because they get attention through large campaigns and thus create political pressure. The authorities cannot ignore them, because they are able to reach a large part of the voters. And because AIN has fairly easy access to the media, it is strategically important to deal with the organisation⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ Interview with ”D. Brown” 29.02.2012, Oslo

In the daily work of AIN, visibility is a main concern. When organising actions the question is always ‘How will we get the most people to listen to what we have to say?’. The time and place of actions are planned carefully to attract the most people. At the regional office in Oslo one chose to have a big happening in Son rather than Oslo on the 8th of March to mark the international women’s day. The reason was that there was already too much going on in the capital, and thus Amnesty’s message would get lost in the crowd. It would be easier to get the message across to more people in Son, where AIN was not outnumbered by other organisations. The regional offices are encouraged to come up with ideas on how to get the most attention around the main actions. Along with big actions, a very effective way to be seen is to be present in the media. Taking a part in public discussions is a way of getting both attention and support, which creates leverage in political debates. “(Being exposed in the media) allows us to be present and visible to people, as well as getting our opinions across to the public. We have to show that we are relevant in the current news and we have to reach the Norwegian public. We use the media both proactively, to get attention on specific cases and to be a part of public discussions, and reactively, being an actor in foreign as well as domestic politics⁵⁰” (“N.Donaldson” in an interview 28.02.2012, Oslo). Being visible is not just about getting the Amnesty name out there. It is also a matter of getting people interested in particular situations. When discussing activism and press releases, the concern is always how to get people interested in what AI wants to say. This is indeed the very essence of the organisation; to shine a light on inhumane treatment of people and human rights issues. It is about making breaches of the human rights as visible as possible, because a major interest among the Norwegian people, AIN members and the media creates leverage⁵¹. Being visible creates engagement, and if enough people are interested in one particular issue it will eventually be put on the political agenda. This leads us to the second role of using media and activism, namely setting the agenda.

10.2 Setting the agenda

When AIN has large actions and when they get involved in discussions in the media, they manage to affect the public agenda. They use the media and activism to tell

⁵⁰ Quote translated by author

⁵¹ Interview with “E. Fields” 29.02.2012”

stories that might get people involved with human rights issues. “Amnesty tries to make things important to the public. If it is important to the public, it will be important to the government⁵²” (“N. Donaldson” in an interview 08.02.2012) Here activism and media goes hand in hand. When there was focus on one action, the political advisors with the most knowledge in the field were asked to write something for the papers. This, along with the use of facebook and twitter, creates a large forum of discussion that eventually reaches the government. In the words of one of the political advisors; “You cannot deny that what is talked about in the media, becomes a part of politicians’ agenda⁵³” (“E.Fields” in an interview 29.02.2012, Oslo) Creating public debate and raising awareness is a major part of Amnesty’s work. They hold debates, organise information-meetings, do research and write and send out reports. They have campaigns to gather signatures, keep in touch with UN-organs such as the women’s committee, contact the media and generally try to inform the public about the state of human rights. The challenge with trying to bring discussions about human rights to the public, is that some cases are difficult to ‘sell’. They might be very complicated, such as the issue of Norway’s reluctance to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It might also be a lack of interest because other issues seem more important, such as in the case where human rights violations in Russia was not mentioned in the discussions around where to draw the border in the Barents Sea. However, in most cases, AIN manages to set human rights issues on the public agenda through activism and media. And the most notable examples of how statements from Amnesty create large public discussions, is when they publicly name and shame politicians or people involved in human rights violations.

10.3 Name and shame

As argued, the name and shame method can be effective in international politics when pointing at specific countries. This method is also effective in domestic politics. This was clearly seen in 2005 when Amnesty International criticized the U. S government in the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay by calling the detention camp a gulag. “ It clearly stung U.S. officials, forcing the Bush White house into the open to

⁵² and ⁵³ Quote translated by author

defend itself. It is a sign of Amnesty's moral authority that it can name and shame in this way" (Hopgood 2006, 204). Back in Norway both representatives from the government and AIN point to the fear of being exposed to the media. One advisor in the MFA says "We are concerned with what is written in the media, and it is important to us to answer to any critique. Sometimes facts may come up in the press that we did not know about that are interesting, and that we check up on. It is, however important to note that there are a lot of things that we work on that is not mentioned by the press⁵⁴" ("K. Clarck" in an interview 08.03.2012, Oslo). The secretary general says that because the government is afraid of loosing votes on behalf of critique in the media, public naming and shaming can be a more effective tool than discussing issues in meetings. This view is supported within AIN, where one employee explains that they use the media along with other ways of lobbying. Demanding action from the MFA can be more effective if thy do this through the media as well as through meetings or correspondence. This is also true when trying to get the authorities to take responsibility⁵⁵. Although it is a powerful tool, critique in the media can however only go so far. When talking about the relationship between bureaucrats and representatives from AIN, a political advisor from the organisation admitted that "A bureaucrat could simply tell you that 'this is not something that we are going to work with. Feel free to criticise me in the media, but this will not change our standpoint'⁵⁶" ("N. Donaldson" in an interview 29.02.2012, Oslo) There are things that the government is not willing to change, regardless of the critique from the press. However, voters have a lot of power over politicians. If there is a general opinion that someone in the government is no doing their job, they will not get re-elected. Affecting public opinion is therefore an effective way to exercise indirect political pressure.

10.4 Change public opinion

In a democracy, the public has the power to change policies, and if AIN can affect the public opinion, they can indirectly affect political decisions. In the words of a worker at AIN; "The most effective kind of lobbying that we have now, is to affect the public

⁵⁴ Quote translated by author

⁵⁵ Interview with "N. Donaldson" 28.02.2012, Oslo

⁵⁶ Quote translated by author

opinion through the press” (“S. Edwards” in an interview 27.02.2012, Oslo). The same person also explains that much of the government’s work with human rights is about defining what human rights are, and how these definitions should be interpreted into law. Here, the opinion of the voters is important. One concrete example of how a massive pressure from the press and the public lead to a change in Norwegian law, is the case of Maria Amelie. She was a Russian woman that had lived most of her life as an illegal immigrant in Norway. Despite the fact that she did not have identity papers, she managed to get an education and a job in Norway. When the government wanted to deport her, AIN as well as many others went to the press to exclaim how wrong this particular deportation was. The massive critique lead to a change in the immigration law (Skjervold, Tollersrud and Vederhus 2011) .The case about Maria Amelie is a good example of how the press helped bringing the public on our side on a difficult and controversial question. Maria Amelie became a symbol of paperless immigrants in Norway⁵⁷. A change in public opinion will over time lead to a change of attitude in the government as well. By bringing in human rights, AIN can redefine problems and change how the public views different issues. If a problem is defined as a human rights issue, it can generate more engagement in the public and increase the pressure for political changes. One example of this is how Amnesty in Norway defined the problem with sex-based violence and rape as a human rights issue. By changing the discourse, AIN may change how the government views problems, and thus open up for alternative solutions. A political advisor that has been working specifically on women’s rights and the problem with rape and sex-based violence in Norway said “When it comes to the work on rape in Norway, what we have succeeded in is changing the public discourse. From the norm being; ‘women need to take responsibility, drink less or dress more appropriately’, the baseline is now that women are never at fault⁵⁸” (“E. Fields” in an interview 27.02.2012, Oslo). The advisor also explained that AIN has worked 10 years to change attitudes within the government towards the question of violence against women. The battle is not yet won. However, when the public accepted the link between sex-based violence and women’s rights, it became easier to talk to the government about solutions that placed the responsibility for the problem with the government, and not the women themselves. Changing public perceptions of a problem and gaining public support is a

⁵⁷ Interview with “S. Edwards” 27.02.2012, Oslo

⁵⁸ Quote translated by author

powerful tool to AIN when pushing for political change. The drawback is that this can take time. This leads us to the final card in AIN's sleeve, namely taking their time.

10.5 Working with long term goals

AIN has the time to work towards long-term goals, which makes it possible to obtain political changes in the long run. Contrary to the government, Amnesty International Norway has to be loyal to its members, rather than to voters. This means that AIN can work for the same goals for decades, and not plan their work according to upcoming elections. Taking your time can be a strength when pushing for political change.

There are, of course, situations that call for immediate action. Stopping an execution, freeing prisoners from torture and releasing prisoners of conscience are all examples of cases that Amnesty International works with, and where time is an issue. However, the overarching goal of Amnesty International is to improve human rights situations. AIN's focus on long-term goals has also been noticed by the MFA; "Amnesty used to come directly to us with appeals and demands. Now, we do not see them that often. It seems that they are working on a more structural level, more long term. There are urgent cases when they come directly to the MFA, and then we are always willing to see what we can do. Especially in cases involving the death sentence⁵⁹" ("K. Clark" in an interview 08.03.2012, Oslo). By combining different lobbying strategies with a reluctance to give up, AIN has achieved results. The change of discourse around rape mentioned above is an example of a steady pressure has lead to change after a long time. Keeping a steady pressure on one case, area or government over a long time is can affect public opinion or redefine terms, and eventually lead to political change.

In the third part of this thesis I have shown that despite the power of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AIN has both the authority and the tools to change political policies. Internationally, AIN leans on international legislation as well as the method of naming and shaming. In Norway, the people within the organisation use both informal meetings and the development of personal relationships to obtain information that is used in lobby-work. Perhaps more effectively, people at AIN use media and campaigns to spread information about their demands to the government, and thus

⁵⁹ Quote translated by author

they manage to change policies indirectly by changing public opinion. This effect is also obtained by changing the public discourse through discussions in the media, and by working with long-term goals.

Conclusions

During my research I was surprised to see how much power the MFA had over AIN, because Amnesty International Norway is an organisation that at first glance seems like the symbol of the power of NGOs. As a human rights organisation they place themselves within the area where NGOs have been an important part of the creation of norms and policymaking. Their work is about criticising governments for breaching the human rights, and they have refused to accept government funding, just so they can be sure to be free to criticize any state at any time. From the outside AIN seem like the perfect opponent to the Norwegian state. However, when taking a closer look at the structure and procedures of the organisation, the image of an organisation that is free to fight against states to make them change their ways begins to crack. I set out to research the power relations between Amnesty International Norway and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I asked myself three questions; Who has the most power between Amnesty International Norway and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Are there other ways than through financial support in which the Norwegian state gains power over an NGO? And If the MFA has the most power how can AIN still affect political decisions and policies? And I have answered these questions by investigating how AIN tried to influence the policies of the MFA.

I discovered that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had the power over AIN in three ways. First of all, AIN supports the state system, both when it comes to an intergovernmental organisation, and the structure of the Norwegian bureaucracy. On an international level, we see this though AI's active role in the UN, which is an international organisation run by states, as well as their mirroring of the UN structure.

On a national level we see that the AIN is a bureaucratic organisation that mirrors the state in form. This means that although the NGO acts like a challenger to the state on the international and national arena, it supports and maintains the state system by incorporating it into the organisation. Thus AIN operates in a world constructed by the state, giving the MFA (as a part of the Norwegian state) the power to define the system in which AIN operates. Secondly, I found that there are ways in which the MFA directly influences the work of AIN. The Norwegian government has the power to regulate AIN's room for action through its attitude towards human rights. By openly supporting what Amnesty International Norway works for and by being more or less cooperative, it gives the organisation room and leverage to work to influence the MFA. This way of opening or narrowing AIN's room for action is also present in international discussions, as the MFA has the power to widen or narrowing down AIN's access to meetings in the UN. Thirdly Amnesty International Norway chooses what cases to pursue according to the actions of the MFA. They are more likely to work on areas or situations where the Norwegian state can make a difference, where the MFA are already involved, and where the Norwegian government has stated a will to act. The three ways of the MFA to influence AIN prove two things; In the power balance between the MFA and AIN, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs comes out on top. And there are several ways in which the MFA can influence AIN, despite the fact that the NGO is financially independent. Even in cases where the MFA and AIN seem to cooperate, this happens on the terms of the MFA. However, this does not necessarily mean that AIN works at the mercy of the state.

Amnesty International, and with it Amnesty International Norway, is seen by states as a legitimate international actor with moral and political authority. Amnesty International Norway uses this authority in three principal ways to lobby for policy changes of the MFA. The first way of lobbying for change is through international fora. If AIN can point to cases where the government hinders the promotion of human rights, AIN can threaten Norway's international reputation. Thus, AIN can push for changes in policy through naming and shaming. Second, on a more domestic level, informal meetings and personal relationships between government officials and people at AIN are important in AIN's lobby work. These are meetings where AIN can argue for why certain policies are needed. They can also get information on whom to pressure. Personal relationships will also generate a feeling of commitment and

responsibility that can be used in AIN's advantage. Thirdly, and perhaps the most affective way to push for political changes is by affecting public opinion through campaigns and the media. AIN is a visible and active participant in public debates and in the public in general. They have a presence that makes it possible to get attention in many different parts of society. AIN can point at specific people or policies that challenge human rights both at home and abroad, and thus place the blame for certain human rights breaches. Through the media Amnesty International Norway can affect what is being talked about in the public, but also *how* it is being talked about.

Changing the public discourse can lead to political changes. In conclusion we see that AIN lives in a state-centric world where, although opponents, they play by the rules made by the states themselves. The MFA draw the lines and define the room for action of Amnesty International Norway. However within this room there are several ways in which AIN can affect the policies of the MFA. Despite the powers of the state, AIN is a powerful political actor with the means to push for policy changes.

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List of abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
AIN	Amnesty International Norway
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
GA	General assembly
HRC	Human Rights Council
IC	International Council
IEC	International Executive Committee
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
IS	International Secretariat
ISP	Integrated Strategic Plan
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
POC	Prisoner of Conscience
UN	United Nations

