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How critical is the event? Multicultural Norway after 22 July 2011

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ABSTRACT
It is commonly assumed that insecurity experienced by citizens in the wake of a terror attack gives rise to public demands for strong countermeasures, which political leaders must respond to. This article asks how Norwegian society was affected by the 22 July 2011 attacks against the government office complex in Oslo and Labour Party youth camp on Utøya. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, it analyses political impact, examining post-22 July public debates and related policymaking. A dataset of newspaper op-eds and commentaries was created to determine the significance of key issues debated in the print media after the attacks, and changes over time in the intensity of debates. Key issues were then followed up in a qualitative analysis of policy implications. The study further investigated the discursive framing of the attacks, and the problems and possible solutions evoked in the debates. Was this a ‘critical event’ as Veena Das has theorised, bringing about new sorts of action through the reworking of traditional categories, codes or meanings? Public security emerges as the key frame within which the 22 July attacks have been debated. Arguments over police reforms and alleged inaction by authorities stand out as the most lasting debate.

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Introduction
On 22 July 2011, at 15:25 CEST, a car bomb exploded at the main office complex of the Norwegian government, leaving eight people dead and several seriously injured. The massive explosion was heard and felt throughout central Oslo. Less than two hours later, a gunman attacked the summer camp of the Labour Party’s youth wing on the island of Utøya, killing 69, mainly teenagers. The perpetrator, Anders Behring Breivik, was soon identified as a home-grown right-wing extremist with an anti-Islamic, anti-immigration agenda.

These tragic events, known in Norway simply as ‘22 July’, made a deep impression on the fabric of Norwegian society. There was an immediate sense that Norway would never be the same. The Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg of the Labour Party, made emphatic speeches promising that the response would only be ‘even more democracy’ and that
Norway would remain ‘recognizable’ (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011a, 2011b). However, after the next parliamentary election in 2013, the Labour Party-led government was replaced by a right-wing coalition made up of the Conservative Party and the right-wing populist Progress Party, the latter entering government for the first time after capturing an unprecedented 16.3% of votes. Commentators in the international press were struck by the newfound popularity of a party in which the Utøya shooter was once active. As the coalition government is approaching the end of its term, it is time to reflect on the political aftermath of 22 July 2011 (hereafter ‘22 July’). What debates were engendered, what were the policy changes, and in light of the Prime Minister’s pledge, is Norway ‘recognizable’? In short, what was the political impact of 22 July on Norwegian society?

The initial bomb blast struck at the heart of the Norwegian government: the high-rise that housed the prime minister’s office. It was immediately clear that the attacks were of national concern. For the prime minister’s party and the socialist movement, Utøya was as iconic, having brought together generations of Labour Party youth from across the country. In the following days, mass vigils and marches were held to express sympathy for the victims, also appealing for unity. The largest of them, held in Oslo on 25 July 2011, was attended by more than one third of the capital’s population.

In the days and weeks after 22 July, reporters tried to compare and contrast the Norwegian reactions with American responses to terrorism. This prompted the Norwegian political scientist Bernt Aardal to explain that Norway is a small country in which ‘people tend to band together in the face of attacks’, whereas ‘the belief in punitive reactions […] is much stronger in Britain and the United States’ (Reuters, cited in Friedman, 2011). A number of researchers have since put such assertions to the test. Some have focused on post-22 July attitudinal changes (Andersson, 2012; Ezzati & Erdal, 2017; Fimreite, Lango, Læg gereid, & Rykkja, 2013; Jakobsson & Blom, 2014; Myrdahl, 2014; Rykkja, Lægreid, & Fimreite, 2011; Solheim & Kvaal, 2013; Wollebæk, Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, & Ødegård, 2012) others on existential issues (Leer-Salvesen, 2013; Lied & Bakke, 2013). Notably, Wollebæk et al. (2012) compares survey data from Norway pre- and post-22 July and the United States pre- and post-9/11, to analyse levels of civic engagement, trust and fear of terror in the two countries. Wollebæk (2012) corroborates Putnam’s (2002) findings, indicating increased post-terror levels of civic engagement and trust. The main difference between the United States and Norway is found in the reported experience of fear, in which there was little increase in Norway post-22 July (Fimreite et al., 2013; Wollebæk et al., 2012).

There is also a sizeable scholarship on Breivik’s Eurabia ideology, detailed in his 1500-page online ‘manifesto’, 2083 – A European Declaration of Independence (e.g. Bachmann et al., 2012; Bangstad, 2012, 2013, 2014; Berntzen & Sandberg, 2014; Buuren, 2013; Fekete, 2012; Gardell, 2014; Henkel, 2012; Hervik & Meret, 2013; Von Brömssen, 2013). The focus of that literature is largely on Breivik’s Eurabia rhetoric as an example of neo-racism, in the context of anti-Islamic right-wing extremism as a political fringe phenomenon, or as related to the more mainstream anti-immigration discourse of Norwegian politicians and sections of civil society, or in the nexus between them. Some have interpreted the historical breakthrough of the Progress Party in the 2013 parliamentary election as a sign of growing xenophobia in Norwegian society post-22 July (Wiggen, 2013).

While the literature on Eurabia and anti-immigration sentiments are touched upon in the present study, the focus is less on anti-immigration discourse, and more on the
political implications of the attacks. In other words, this article tries to identify key policy changes that have been put into effect in Norway post-22 July. In focusing on public debates and policy impacts, I aim to shed light on the long-term effects of a tragic, highly emotive and violent terrorist attack. Assuming that such attacks are what Veena Das has termed ‘critical events’, we might expect them to be transformative in the making of society, as events ‘by which people’s lives have been propelled into new and unpredicted terrains’ (Das, 1995, p. 5). As time goes by, the question is further what happens ‘when the memory of such events is folded into ongoing relationships’ (Das, 2007, p. 8). Drawing on Bhabha (1990, p. 5) one could easily see 22 July as a potential source of new ‘foundational fictions’ of nationhood, where the ‘national text’ is interrupted and the nation must be re-contextualized, and reconfigured as a cultural and political space. As argued here, however, the national text of Norway was left uninterrupted by the 22 July tragedy. Nor were traditional categories, codes or meanings reworked. Rather, there was an overwhelming social mobilization in response to the trauma of the violence itself, followed by a stifling political silence and inertia. Initially, there was a consensus among all political parties to postpone their campaigning for the 2011 local elections, scheduled to take place in mid-September. After the elections, the parties seemed to agree to remain silent on Breivik’s anti-immigration agenda. Silence soon engulfed other sensitive topics as well, including the police response to the shootings.

The government appointed a committee to investigate emergency responses to the attacks. With the August 2012 release of the Report from the 22 July Commission (NOU, 2012) it became evident that the police had failed miserably in their response to the mass shooting. They had no helicopter in the air until an hour after Breivik’s arrest, whereas the media’s helicopters had hovered over the island catching images of the gunman. Nor did the police arrive in time to rescue the hundreds of victims trapped on the island after the only ferry had left, commandeered by the leader of the Labour Party youth wing and carrying only eight passengers. While the police barely managed to find their way to the scene, local boat-owners rescued desperate people from the cold waters of the lake, and even picked up people calling for help from the shore. The volunteer rescuers also had to help the police SWAT team out of their sinking rubber dingy. The emergency call facility failed as well. Police officers were unaware that the perpetrator had called the emergency line twice to surrender, as early as 30 minutes before the SWAT team reached the island.

**National texts**

Did 22 July impact significantly on the making of Norwegian society, as one might expect of a ‘critical event’? Were traditional categories actually reworked so as to institute new modes of action? Or was 22 July followed by ‘business as usual’, political inertia and bureaucratic indecisiveness? This article interrogates these questions, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to enable an empirically grounded analysis of the political impact of Norway’s most devastating terror attack.

Terror attacks are designed to create panic and fear. It is commonly assumed that fright and insecurity experienced by citizens in the wake of a terror attack give rise to public demands for strong countermeasures, whether domestically or abroad, which political leaders must respond to. There are many cases that appear to support such an
assumption. In November 2015, a terrorist strike in Paris moved the French government to launch airstrikes against the Islamic State in Syria, and caused a six-month state of emergency that was extended after the Bastille Day truck attack in Nice. In India, policymakers reacted strongly to the Mumbai attacks of November 2008, with the Parliament enacting controversial amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and establish a new agency to investigate and prosecute acts of terrorism. In the USA, the 2001 PATRIOT Act was passed into law as a direct result of 9/11, while nearly 90% of Americans expressed support for the need to go to war in Afghanistan (Friedman, 2011).

While 22 July was just as shocking and motivated similar emotional reactions in the public sphere, the response of political leaders seems to have been much less fervent than one might expect. What then was the political fallout of 22 July in Norway? What actually happened in the field of policymaking, and did 22 July leave any mark on the Norwegian ‘national text’?

I started my research with in-depth interviews of six authors of op-eds or commentaries on the 22 July events, all published in major Norwegian newspapers. Among those interviewed, one was present at Utøya during the attack, while another sat through most of the Breivik trial (16 April–22 June 2012). None of them are cited, but they were nevertheless important in guiding the research.

As identified by the interviewees, five key topics of debate emerged in the aftermath of 22 July. The first was the debate on the police response, especially with regard to the shootings on Utøya. The second was centred on the related issue of whether the attacks could have been prevented, with a focus on surveillance and the work of the Police Security Service (PST). Thirdly, there was a debate on the trial, and the implications of the perpetrator’s possible insanity. Fourthly, the 22 July events brought new relevance to the debate on freedom of expression, fuelling both warnings against hate speech and calls for more inclusion of ‘extreme’ voices, to shore up against victim narratives of alleged ‘censorship’ of anti-immigration views. Finally, 22 July fed into ongoing debates about immigration, integration, ‘Norwegian’ values and the ‘multicultural Norway’.

Based on the interviews, five key topics of post-22 July public debate were identified: public security, surveillance, justice and the insanity defense, freedom of expression, and multiculturalism. A dataset of newspaper op-eds and commentaries was created to determine the significance of the key topics debated in the print media post-22 July, and changes over time in the intensity of debates. The dataset included opinion pieces (commentaries, letters and editorials) published in Norwegian newspapers between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2014, covering debates on Norwegian identity and nationhood including immigration and integration, citizenship, ethnic diversity and multiculturalism (PRIO, n.d.). The material was drawn from five newspapers, among them several of the largest in Norway, but also regional and more critical newspapers to capture the diversity of Norwegian news and views. After basic coding with the help of Nvivo™ software, the dataset was analysed for changes in the content and language of media debates.

The use of a particular terminology will of course refer to changing contexts and circumstances, making it difficult to compare debates over longer time periods. Nevertheless, we analysed our data for significant differences over time in the occurrence of selected search terms, each related to the five key topics of debate. For this we used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), which allowed us to test for significant increase
in the means between the frequency of combinations of search terms in the dataset after 22 July, and see how trends developed over the three years after 2011.

Textual analysis based on the occurrence of word combinations in a dataset, however large, says nothing about the substance of debates or their social or political contexts. However, such an analysis can help substantiate the assertions of informants about which topics were more actively debated at a given point of time. It can also show trends in the long-term significance of media debates, which can be analysed in relation to policy changes.

To identify actual policy changes in the key areas of debate after 22 July, I investigated post-22 July policymaking in each of the five areas of significantly intensified debate. Building on the quantitative analysis, the qualitative part of my study laid the groundwork for a frame analysis of public reactions to 22 July. Frame analysis has the potential to go beyond textual narratives and incorporate audio-visual reporting, artistic creations, exhibitions and performances (Bial, 2004). This makes it a useful interpretive tool.

**Public debate**

This section presents the results of searches on key terms in the dataset, to map changes in the intensity of key debates in the years after 22 July. For comparison, a subset was created containing materials in the dataset published during the first six months of 2011, in other words prior to 22 July 2011. Similar subsets were created for media content published during the same months in subsequent years, i.e. the first six months of 2012, 2013 and 2014. The occurrence of key terms in the 2011 (pre-22 July) subset was then compared with the occurrence of the same terms post-22 July 2011, year by year.

The total number of items in each subset was as follows: 2011: 1564 items; 2012: 1824 items; 2013: 1540 items and 2014: 1401 items. The increase in items in the 2012 subset suggests a greater interest in issues related to Norwegian identity in 2012, which then subsides to the pre-22 July 2011 level in 2013, followed by a further downward trend in 2014.

**Public security**

A text search with the terms ‘terror*’ and ‘emergency preparedness*’ (Norwegian: beredskap*) in the four subsets gave the following results: 2011 (pre-22 July subset): 7 items; 2012: 50 items; 2013: 46 items and 2014: 26 items. These figures confirm what one would expect, which is a highly intensified debate on police preparedness in response to terrorism after 22 July, peaking in 2012 and then gradually diminishing. It should be

| Table 1. ANOVA analysis of the difference in variance between searched term occurrences. |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| ANOVA: 2011 baseline                 | 2012 Coef (SE) | 2013 Coef (SE) | 2014 Coef (SE) |
| Public security                      | 7.167*** (1.554) | 6.500*** (1.554) | 3.167* (1.554) |
| Surveillance                         | 6.000* (2.938)   | 2.667 (2.938)   | 2.333 (2.938)  |
| Justice and the insanity defense     | 20.667*** (3.720) | 0.500 (3.720)   | −0.333 (3.720) |
| Freedom of expression               | 4.833 (3.115)    | −1.000 (3.115)  | −2.500 (3.115) |
| Multiculturalism                    | 6.333** (2.819)  | 3.833 (2.819)   | 2.000 (2.819)  |

Note: Significance level: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.
noted that a number of the 2014 items are related to a debate on the risk of terror attacks by foreign fighters returning from Syria. One-way analysis of variance in the occurrence of search terms (ANOVA) shows a strong significance of $p < 0.01$ in 2012, continuing at the same level in 2013, and a significance level of $p < 0.1$ in 2014 (see Table 1).

**Surveillance**

A text search with the terms ‘PST*’ (the acronym for Norway’s police intelligence agency) and ‘terror*’ in the four subsets gave the following results: 2011 (pre-22 July subset): 25 items; 2012: 61 items; 2013: 41 items and 2014: 39 items. ANOVA analysis of the search terms shows a significance level of $p < 0.1$ in 2012. As above, the figures indicate increased debate on surveillance and intelligence gathering in connection with terrorism after 22 July, peaking in the 2012 subset and then decreasing slightly. The changes here are more moderate, which also reflects far less debate on the role of the intelligence agency as compared to the performance of the police. The debate on this topic in 2014 was again related to foreign fighters returning from Syria.

**Justice and the insanity defense**

A text search with the terms ‘legally insane*’ (Norwegian: *utilregnelig*) and ‘judicial*’ (Norwegian: *retts*) in the four subsets gave the following results: 2011 (pre-22 July subset): 2 items; 2012: 126 items; 2013: 5 items and none in 2014. ANOVA analysis of the search terms shows a significance level of $p < 0.01$ in 2012. This reflects the huge surge of interest and debate on the insanity defense in connection with the Breivik trial (April–June 2012). Though not captured in the subset compiled for this study, there was a renewed debate on this topic in the autumn of 2014, when a committee set up to review the insanity defense submitted its recommendations on how to reform Norwegian legislation pertaining to the liability of the insane (NOU, 2014).

**Freedom of expression**

A text search with the terms ‘freedom of expression*’ (Norwegian: *ytringsfrihet*) and ‘terror*’ in the four subsets gave the following results: 2011 (pre-22 July subset): 45 items; 2012: 74 items; 2013: 39 items and 2014: 30 items. ANOVA analysis here shows an insignificant increase in 2012. The figures still show increased debate on freedom of expression as related to terrorism after 22 July, again peaking in the 2012 subset and then diminishing, though only slightly over the last two years. Much of the continued debate on this topic in 2014 was related to the bicentennial anniversary of the Norwegian constitution, decreed on 17 May 1814.

**Multiculturalism**

A text search with the terms ‘immigr*’ (Norwegian: *innvandr*) and ‘threat*’ (Norwegian: *trussel*) in the four subsets gave the following results: 2011 (pre-22 July subset): 38 items; 2012: 76 items; 2013: 61 items and 2014: 50 items. ANOVA analysis shows a significance level of $p < 0.05$ in 2012. This indicates increased debate on ‘threats’ related to
immigration after 22 July, again peaking in the 2012 subset and then slightly decreasing, though not to the pre-22 July level. Adjusted for the number of items in each subset, the debate intensity decreased only very slightly after 2012.

Table 1 shows the coefficients for 2012, 2013 and 2014 for all the searched terms using 2011 (pre-22 July) as the baseline. A positive coefficient indicates an increase in the occurrence of search terms as compared to the baseline (pre-22 July).

Post-22 July politics

This section describes policy changes in post-22 July Norway related to the same key areas of debate as described above: public security, surveillance, justice and the insanity defense, freedom of expression, and multiculturalism.

Public security

The ‘22 July Commission’ was appointed by the Government of Norway in consultation with the parliament (Storting) on 12 August 2011, mandated to critically examine what happened during the attacks and draw lessons from the response to the attacks. Presented one year later, the commission’s report had six main conclusions, of which the first three were devoted to public security. First, the commission found that the attack on the government office complex could have been by security measures that had already been approved, though not yet implemented at the time of the attack. Second, it found that authorities failed to adequately protect the victims on Utøya. The police could have responded faster, and the perpetrator could have been stopped earlier. Third, the commission concluded that more security and emergency preparedness measures should have been in place. Fourth, the commission found that health and rescue services cared well for the injured and the next of kin in the critical phase. Fifth, the government communicated well with the general public, while the various ministries managed to continue their work effectively. The sixth and final finding was devoted to the work of the PST, described in the section below.

On receiving the report, Prime Minister Stoltenberg admitted that it revealed extensive problems in the police, and promised that the government would initiate a thorough review. He further promised that the government would present new measures for strengthening emergency preparedness following the recommendations of the report, subsequently presented in a white paper (NOU, 2012). Stoltenberg also stated that the government had already implemented measures based on lessons learned from the attacks on 22 July (Office of the Prime Minister, 2012a). According to Stoltenberg, the police and security services had been allocated additional resources, helicopter readiness was strengthened, and cooperation between the Armed Forces and the police was enhanced. Finally, the central crisis management was improved in a number of areas, through regular emergency preparedness meetings at the government level, round-the-clock manning of the crisis support unit, measures to enable the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to take a more proactive role, and the establishment of a special security department in the Ministry of Government Administration and Reform.

Ground realities are of course much more manifold and complex. At the time of writing, more than five years after the tragedy, the Police Emergency Response Center (Norwegian:
Beredskapssenteret) commissioned soon after 22 July is still not constructed. The current Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, has described the situation as a ‘nightmare’ of delays due to bureaucratic floundering and indecision (Skarvøy, Johnsen, & Solberg, 2016). According to the same ‘brutally honest’ report, the plan to purchase another police helicopter is currently on hold.

**Surveillance**

The 22 July Commission report devoted its last key conclusion to the work of the PST. Though the commission did not find grounds to contend that the PST had failed its mission, it did state that better working methods could have alerted them to Breivik’s preparations. In an address to the Norwegian parliament on the government’s follow-up of the Commission’s report, then Prime Minister Stoltenberg announced that the government had initiated an external review of the resources available to the PST, while a new red alert system was under consideration and would be implemented ‘as soon as possible’ (Office of the Prime Minister, 2012b). Due to lack of transparency on the work of PST and other intelligence agencies, it is difficult to ascertain what changes the red alert system would actually introduce.

**Justice and the insanity defense**

A study by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (De Graaf, van der Heide, Wannemaker, & Weggemans, 2013) carried out in Oslo during the Breivik trial examined to what extent the trial met the expectations of the Norwegian public. The common perception was that the ‘fair way in which Breivik was treated was the ultimate answer to Breivik’s acts’ (De Graaf et al., 2013, p. 16). Survey respondents largely supported the prosecution’s strategy, with the major exception that they objected to Breivik being declared insane, rather than criminally liable. The prosecution’s insanity defense provoked strong reactions (see also Roth & Dager, 2014). After the trial, a review of legislation related to the insanity defense was commissioned by the government. Popularly known as the Rieber Mohn Commission, the committee was mandated to assess the scope of the defense and the need for improved guidelines for cooperation between psychiatrists and lawyers.

As in most other countries, psychiatrists and lawyers in Norway share the burden of deciding whether the insanity defense is applicable. The psychiatrist makes the diagnosis, but the judge decides whether the diagnosis concurs with the legal concept of ‘psychosis’. The Norwegian insanity defense differs from that of most other countries by its lack of a prerequisite to establish a causal connection between insanity and the crime in question (Aarli, 2014). The possibility of a causal connection, and the fact that such causal connection is hard to rule out if the defendant is proven to be insane, is considered sufficient in itself to justify the insanity defense. The recommendation of the Rieber Mohn Commission was to diminish the scope of the insanity defense and introduce a requirement to establish a causal connection between the insanity and the criminal offense as a prerequisite for exemption from penalty. The possibility of evading criminal liability by successfully raising the insanity defense has been easier in Norway than in other Scandinavian countries (Aarli, 2014). This may change after the proposed reform has been completed.
**Freedom of expression**

Within hours after the bomb exploded in central Oslo, several major newspapers closed or restricted their online debate forums for fear of hateful comments (Eide et al., 2013). The main concern was to protect Muslims against harassment, as major networks like CNN and BBC reported a possible Al Qaeda or Jihadi attack. Nevertheless, the online debate intensified in the days and weeks to come. A key question was how a democratic, open discussion could be ensured without encouraging extremism. In one view, ‘Islamophobic’ and ‘xenophobic’ websites and forums were seen to have encouraged Breivik’s attitudes (Andersson, 2012, p. 423). Hate speech on the Internet was hence partly to blame for Breivik’s fanaticism. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the terror attacks only proved the need for more freedom of expression, while free speech was threatened and in need of extra protection after the attacks (Andersson, 2012; Carle, 2013; Eide et al., 2013; Frey, 2013).

In his manifesto, Breivik referred to the anti-Islamic blogger ‘Fjordman’ (Peder Are Nøstvold Jensen) as an important source of inspiration. In June 2013, the Freedom of Speech Foundation (Norwegian: Fritt Ord) granted NOK 75,000 to the blogger to write a book on the Breivik case. However, no Norwegian publisher has been willing to publish Nøstvold Jensen’s *Vitne til vanvidd* [Witness to Madness].

In a comprehensive study of voices and viewpoints in the Norwegian media post-22 July, Figenschou and Beyer (2014, p. 27) find that ‘the anti-Islamist online sphere, activist groups and organizations that were largely ignored in the mainstream media before the attacks’ were more or less forced into the media spotlight after 22 July. This was because Breivik ‘extensively quoted their texts, discussed their projects and wrote about his relations to key individuals in his manifesto’ (Figenschou & Beyer, 2014). As a result, key individuals and ‘ideologists’ from the anti-Islamic (or ‘contra-jihadist’) deviant sphere increasingly voiced their opinions in the mainstream media post-22 July.

Despite intense debate on the freedom of expression in Norway, no new policies have been introduced, nor have any reviews been commissioned on this issue in the aftermath of 22 July.

**Multiculturalism**

The dangers of multiculturalism and imminence of ‘Eurabia’ were the key topics of Breivik’s manifesto, which essentially accused the Norwegian ‘multiculturalist’ Left of betraying the nation. As in many other European countries, the Norwegian debate about ‘multiculturalism’ revolves mainly around immigration and integration policies. The argument is between those who embrace a multiethnic and multicultural Norway, and those who see Norway’s immigration policy as too lax, warning of ‘cultural problems associated with immigration’ and even ‘ongoing “Islamization” of Norway’ (Andersson, 2012, p. 424). Among the political parties, the Progress Party has been the main proponent of anti-immigration rhetoric.

In July 2011, political parties were ready to start campaigning for municipal elections, to be held in mid-September. Due to the terror attacks, all political parties agreed to defer their campaigning until mid-August. Stoltenberg appealed to the media to ‘tone down anti-immigrant rhetoric’ and also to ‘avoid assigning blame to a particular political
party’ (Wiggen, 2013), obviously referring to the Progress Party. Leaders of the Progress Party admitted publicly that the inflammatory anti-immigration rhetoric they had previously used should stop. On the other hand, Progress Party leader Siv Jensen declared that ‘the party accepted no responsibility for the heinous crimes committed by Breivik’ (Wiggen, 2013, p. 603).

During the first months after 22 July, Progress Party politicians and sympathizers tried to distance themselves from any views that might be construed as similar to Breivik’s. However, it was difficult to ignore the similarities between anti-immigration arguments used by Progress Party politicians and those expressed by Breivik in his manifesto. By the 2013 elections, the Progress Party had successfully repaired any reputational damage it may have suffered from its association with Breivik. Although the shadow of 22 July reemerged briefly after the 2013 election, Norwegian newspapers carried reports on the Breivik connection only when it was brought up in the international media.

As confirmed by the interviewees, no new policies on immigration or integration, nor any government white papers, evaluations or reports can be linked specifically to post-22 July debates on Norwegian immigration policies and/or integration measures. Rather, the Labour Party-led government made every effort to avoid controversy on these issues while in government, and has continued a risk-avert, non-confrontational approach in opposition.

**The framing of 22 July**

Veena Das (1995) explains how a ‘critical event’ such as the Bhopal industrial disaster in India brought about ‘new modes of action’ that ‘redefined traditional categories such as codes of purity and honour; the meaning of martyrdom; and the construction of a heroic life’ (Das, 1995, p. 6). If we understand terror attacks as similarly ‘critical events’, we should expect new modes of action to appear in their aftermath.

In contemporary Norway, there is a massive cultural production on the events of 22 July, including books, documentaries and a controversial memorial site, all feeding into the framing of the events. A museum was set up in 2015 in the bombed out government building, displaying the twisted and blackened parts of the car that carried the bomb, and portraits of the victims. The Labour Party and its youth wing have been engaged in a disputed reconstruction of the buildings on the island of Utøya, while youth wing members have been called on to ‘take Utøya back’ as the annual summer camp was revived.

Presumably, tragedy is in particular need of a meaningful story. Though not necessarily about codes of ‘purity and honour’ or ‘the meaning of martyrdom’ (Das, 1995, p. 6), a powerful story should tell us who we are, and what distinguishes us from others. It should reflect somehow on the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’, and be a guide to action. If we look at other examples of ‘terror stories’, warfare often appears as a key frame. Particularly obvious is the post-9/11 ‘War on Terror’, which featured extensive use of the terminology of warfare by the media as well as authorities (see Sheperd, 2008). A similar narrative was employed during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, when major Indian newspapers used headlines such as ‘the battle of Mumbai’ and ‘Mumbai under siege’, framing the attacks as a war between terrorists and security forces on the ‘battlefield of Mumbai’ (Kolås, 2010, p. 96). The Mumbai attacks also spurred the main opposition party (now in government) to call for ‘speedy prosecution of terrorists’. To engage the public, the BJP party
staged mock ‘hangings’ where a straw figure represented the surviving perpetrator (Ajmal Kasab, later executed).

Obviously, nothing of this sort happened in Norway. Rather, the streets were filled with roses and burning candles. The Prime Minister and Crown Prince asked the public to meet violence with democracy, and unite against hatred. During the largest mass vigil for the victims, Crown Prince Håkon simply stated: ‘Tonight the streets are filled with love.’ Memorial bracelets sold on the streets of Oslo bore the text: ‘If one man can show that much hatred, imagine how much love we can show together.’

While there were no allusions to Norway being ‘at war’, several commentators noted that political violence of such a magnitude was unprecedented in Norway since World War II. There were also hints to the Norwegian WWII resistance in the prime minister’s speeches, in which he called for national unity and adherence to ‘Norwegian’ values declaring that: ‘Nobody can bomb us to silence. Nobody can shoot us to silence. Nobody can ever scare us away from being Norway’ (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011a). Prime Minister Stoltenberg focused ardently on values such as openness and democracy, remaining silent on the stated purpose of the attack as a ‘part of a war against Norway allegedly becoming a diversified (multicultural) society, part of a future “Eurabia”’ (Eide, 2012, p. 274).

As noted by Solheim (2012, p. 2), the Labour Party was Breivik’s intended target, but Stoltenberg emphasized that the national ‘we’ and Norwegian values were at risk. To the extent that there was any ‘battle’ going on, it was symbolic, centred on how the Norwegian nation would respond to violence. In front of a huge gathering outside Oslo’s city hall, Stoltenberg declared: ‘There will be a Norway before and after 22 July. But which Norway is our own decision. Norway will be recognizable. [...] It’s us. It’s Norway. We will take our confidence back!’ (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011b).

The Norwegian media were careful to avoid a war-on-terror frame on the attacks (Falkheimer & Olsson, 2015). On the contrary, the 22 July media coverage functioned as a way of ‘depoliticizing the terror attacks’ by portraying them as conducted by a ‘lone lunatic in contrast to a politically motivated and strategic individual or group’ (Falkheimer & Olsson, 2015, p. 82). The perpetrator as lunatic was particularly evident in reporting on the Breivik trial, which took place in Oslo District Court in the spring of 2012. Attracting massive attention, the trial was a spectacle in its own right. Breivik confessed to the charges but denied criminal guilt, claiming the defence of necessity (jus necessitatis), and declaring the court as illegitimate. The perpetrator’s mental health became a hugely controversial issue. One team of forensic psychiatrists diagnosed Breivik as paranoid schizophrenic, and thus legally insane, while a second team declared that Breivik was legally sane, and liable for his crimes. Again, the trial can be seen literally as a performance of justice, in which the keen focus on the perpetrator’s sanity directed attention to a psychological rather than political frame, highlighting the personality of the perpetrator and the ambiguous nature of ‘sanity’. In a frame analysis perspective, terrorist trials can be seen as performative spaces that ‘re-imagine and contest acts of terrorism in the judicial proceedings and the verdict as well as through the media and society’ (De Graaf et al., 2013, p. 1). As explained by De Graaf et al. (2013), such trials are meant to address societal and political needs including restoration of peace, deterrence and closure for victims, all of which the Breivik trial achieved. Here it is worth noting another aspect of the trial’s performative dimension, namely as a framing device, contrasting the violent perpetrator with a non-
violent, civilized society. The Breivik trial was widely perceived as a testimony to the ‘democratic values of Norwegian society – in stark contrast to Breivik’s values’ (De Graaf et al., 2013, p. 1).

Framing requires the active selection and highlighting of evidence supporting the frame in question, and silence on any counterevidence (Ferree, 2008). After a terror attack, there is reason to expect a particularly careful framing, as well as fixing and disciplining of narratives (Sheperd, 2008). A few days after 22 July, Justice Minister Knut Storberget gave a press conference in praise of the SWAT team’s response on Utøya, maintaining that ‘Norway has a special unit to be proud of’ (Stenerud, 2011). When Storberget resigned on 11 November 2011, the Prime Minister refused to link the resignation to 22 July. A similar attempted disciplining was also apparent in debates between ministries and the police on the lack of protection of government buildings prior to 22 July. The 22 July Commission’s interviews with government bureaucrats were initially classified, and even the parliament’s Standing Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs was denied access to the interviews.

Conclusions

The events of 22 July 2011 gave rise to intense debates in Norwegian print media. Quantitative analysis confirms that the most significant and lasting of these debates was related to public security and policing. However, as the qualitative review of post-22 July policymaking suggests, reports from investigations and evaluation committees were the most tangible outcomes. It is difficult to find any correspondence between the problems identified in the public debates and perceivable outcomes, beyond government reassurances that something will be (or has been) done. Despite numerous promises to reform and upgrade the Norwegian police force by two different governments, political inertia and bureaucratic inaction continue.

When the Breivik trial was about to commence, there was a huge outcry against the perpetrator’s reported intent to use the courtroom as a forum to propagate his political views. Moreover, there were heated warnings about the dangers of hate speech, as well as calls for more freedom of speech. Authorities tried to calm the public, requesting those attending the trial to show emotional restraint as well as respect for the court. Under these conditions, there was hardly any room for dispassionate public debate on multiculturalism. The ‘lone lunatic’ frame came to the forefront as court-appointed experts took Breivik’s ideas about the threat of multiculturalism as a decisive sign of his insanity. With this, the perpetrator’s politics became virtually untouchable, while 22 July was depoliticized. Some even doubted whether it deserved to be called a ‘terror attack’ at all, due to the lack of a political motive. Since Breivik was a ‘lone wolf’ acting entirely on his own, a state of emergency was out of the question. The only issue left to debate was policing.

The intent of this article is to describe the political impact of 22 July, or the influence of 22 July on the Norwegian ‘national text’. While I have studied public debates as a way to illuminate this topic, it should be clear by now that there are no simple causal connections between a terror attack, a public reaction, debates in the media, and political change or policymaking. To be able to discern any possible impact, it is necessary to consider the role of the agenda-setters among the political elite, who have the power to use the
media and their own information channels to influence debates by a combination of silencing and disciplining, to make particular frames irrelevant, and not the least by shaping the narrative and telling the stories. How the audience reacts to these stories, and engages in public debates, is of course another difficult question.

Prime Minister Stoltenberg responded to the events of 22 July 2011 with a promise of more openness. His key message was that the use of violence, however traumatic and lethal, should not be allowed to change Norwegian society. The best reaction to the event that ‘changed everything’ was therefore not to change at all, but to remain as before. In the midst of the ordeal, this story made sense. In the long run, however, it ran into trouble. ‘Remaining unchanged’ would have been wonderful if Norwegian society was perfect and there was nothing to correct. In the context of a devastating tragedy such as 22 July, ‘remaining unchanged’ offered a poor story, no sense of purpose, nor any guide to action. The prime minister’s key message failed to satisfy the need to make 22 July matter, whether in the sense of learning from past mistakes, becoming more alert to vulnerabilities, or reconfiguring the Norwegian national identity.

There is no reason to doubt that 22 July was a ‘critical event’ (Das, 1995), nor that it had the potential to change the ‘national text’ (Bhabha, 1990). The need for a powerful story was obvious, making silence and the disciplining of narratives all the more difficult. The single most undeniable fact, strongly corroborated by the Report from the 22 July Commission, was that the police had failed to protect the victims. This may also help to explain why public security and policing took centre-stage in the post-22 July debate, and why it has continued to preoccupy the Norwegian public.

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