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Insane or evil? How Norway's *Dagbladet* and *Aftenposten* newspapers covered the perpetrator of 22 July 2011

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Abstract

This article investigates how the two Norwegian newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* framed the reporting about Anders Behring Breivik (henceforth Breivik) in the aftermath of the terror attacks at the government building in Oslo, leaving eight dead behind, and the killing of 69 young people at the AUF youth summer camp on Utøya on 22 July 2011. On the basis of critical discourse analysis, Robert Entman's framing theory and theories about enemy images, we have analysed a selection of articles from a total sample of 1323 articles covering landmark periods related to the attacks of 22 July 2011: the immediate reaction (22–29 July); the meeting in court to prepare the trial (14–15 November); and the presentation of first psychiatric report (29–30 November). Did the media speculate, before Breivik's identity was known, on the possibility that Muslim extremists were responsible? An analysis of the editorials in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* concludes that *Aftenposten* hypothesized that Muslims might be behind the attack, while *Dagbladet* mostly avoided such speculation. The divergence in representation is reiterated in the interviews the authors conducted with the two newspapers' editors. After Breivik's identity became known we found three dominating frames, the perpetrator as a 'right-wing extremist', as an 'insane person' or as an 'attention-

seeker'. The framing analysis show that the 'insane' frame was the most usual in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*, followed by the 'extreme right wing' frame and 'the attention-seeker' frame. The article discusses how this framing might have influenced the long-term consequence for public debate in Norway.

Keywords

terrorism

Muslim threat

right-wing extremism

enemy images

22 July Norway

conflict coverage

Introduction

It is generally accepted that the mass killing on 22 July 2011 by Anders Behring Breivik (henceforth Breivik) will always be a watershed in Norway's history. However, there are large variations of opinion about the conclusions Norwegian society should draw from the horrific occurrence, and about how well the media lived up to its reputation of critical watchdog even in times of crisis.

Everyone seems to agree that the media played a crucial role in framing the event at the time and determining how it will be understood and explained in the future (Østerud 2012). The aim of our project is to investigate how the media described and explained the events immediately after they had happened. The emphasis will be on an investigation of how two of Norway's most influential newspapers, *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*, represented and explained the phenomenon of Breivik to their readers.

The sample and methodology

We have analysed a selection of 290 articles from the total sample of 1323 articles in the period after the attack on 22 July (22–29 July), and then the meeting in court to prepare the trial (14–15 November) and finally the presentation of the first psychiatric report (29–30 November). Three different methods were used: (1) Content analysis of all 1323 articles about the attack on 22 July in the chosen period in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*; (2) Critical discourse analysis of the editorials in the chosen newspapers in the selected period; and (3) Interviews with most relevant decision-makers in the selected newspapers.

290 of the articles were selected because they were articles that discussed the perpetrator's personality and psyche. That means that we have excluded articles that do not mention the perpetrator at all, only mention him peripherally or only discuss his actions. The reason for that was we wanted to analyse how the perpetrator's personality was framed by the two newspapers. The 290 articles chosen for framing analysis were coded in SPSS according to the predefined frames. These time spots were chosen because the perpetrator's personality and psychiatric condition were constantly debated in public at the time. In the first hours after the bomb exploded in downtown Oslo, blowing up the government building, speculation started about an attack by Islamist extremists. When it became known that the perpetrator was a Christian ethnic Norwegian, speculation stopped. We are particularly interested in how this change in the public mood was framed by the media. Entman suggests that framing means selecting 'some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (1993: 52).

Two research questions are addressed:

1. Did the media speculate about whether the perpetrator might be an extreme Muslim before ABB's identity was known?
2. How was the perpetrator framed after his identity was known?

Literature review and previous research

Numerous books, articles and other literature have been published since the dramatic events of 22 July 2011. We will look more closely into the immediate reaction to the events and at some publications relevant to this early period when the nation was in shock.

In the first few weeks after 22 July 2011 there was a sense of unity in Norwegian society, partly inspired by the then prime minister, Jens Stoltenberg, who spoke of the need for unity, openness and democracy. Public sentiment and rallies all over the country strengthened this sense of unity (Østerud 2012: 11). During this period the media were reluctant to publish open criticism, even though some reproachful voices were raised among the relatives of the victims about issues such as the inefficiency of the police (Bromark 2012; Stormark 2011). At this time the media were analysing ABB's rationale and looking into his political past in the populist right-wing Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet). Special attention was given to Breivik's greatest source of inspiration, Fjordman, a writer active on anti-muslim websites like Gates of Vienna, later known as Peder Nøstvold Jensen (he was anonymous at the time) (Strømmen 2011; Sætre 2012). Critical attention was also drawn to the right-wing populist environment, including the website document.no on which both Breivik and Fjordman had published their articles. When the newspaper *Verdens Gang* revealed Fjordman's identity on 23 July 2011 and later published an interview with him, he became a public figure and clearly distanced himself from ABB. During this period there was also some critical attention to the treatment of Muslims, while media were speculating about whether Muslim extremists were behind the attacks (Stormark 2011). After a few weeks the

sense of harmony was replaced by outright criticism – for instance, in a series of articles by Per Anders Johansen and other colleagues in *Aftenposten*, which openly condemned the police. When the independent commission set up to investigate the events of 22 July 2011 published a report in August 2012, it concluded with harsh condemnation of national security in general and of the police in particular, stating that lives could have been saved if the police had been better prepared and more efficient in the rescue operation (NOU 2012: 15).

In preparation for the trial during the summer of 2012, copious attention was given to Breivik's mental condition and whether he could be regarded as insane and thus unable to serve time in an ordinary prison. Two psychiatric reports with conflicting conclusions were submitted prior to the trial, leading to questions about the soundness and future role of forensic psychiatry in Norway. Breivik was eventually sentenced to 21 years of preventive detention on 24 August 2012. One of the issues to be considered in light of our empirical findings is whether the heated debate over the mental condition of Breivik depoliticized the whole argument about what happened on 22 July. Even though Breivik himself tried to use the courtroom as a political tribunal, several of the suggested witnesses – including Fjordman, who could have helped to clarify ABB's political agenda – were dropped from the list of witnesses (Lippestad 2013). The court hearings were open to the public and well-documented through news media and several books (Hverven 2011; Schau 2012; Seierstad 2012).

In many of the books published after the trial, attention was drawn to a psychological explanation of the acts of terror. Aage Borchervink (2012) published a report of a psychiatric investigation conducted on Breivik when he was a child. His difficult childhood and his relationship with his troubled mother, Wenche Behring Breivik, is also at the centre of attention in Marit Christensen's book (2013). This was a controversial publication, which the lawyer of the mother tried to stop before she died of cancer in 2012.

Several researchers in the field of media studies published work on the event during the course of the first year after the terror attacks. The media researcher Svein Brurås (2012) edited a volume of five different research projects about the attacks. One of the contributors, Kristin Grydeland (2012: 85–108), looked at the coverage by the TV channels NRK and Dagsavisen in the first 24 hours after the attack. Her findings corresponded with several of the findings in this article; her research shows that the original framing of the attacks disintegrated when it was revealed who was responsible, and what was first described as ‘terror’ was later referred to as ‘tragedy’, ‘disaster’ or ‘nightmare’. Grydeland (2012: 99) believes that by framing the actions as something ‘terrible’, the impression of the act as deliberate is downplayed. She also observed that the perpetrator was first described as a ‘terrorist’, but after his identity was known he was called a ‘killer’ or ‘murderer’, and the framing changed from a ‘terror frame’ to a ‘criminal frame’.

A comparison of coverage in *Dagbladet* and *Aftenposten*

We chose *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* as research objects. Both are major newspapers published in Oslo and therefore important for the public debate. *Aftenposten* is a morning paper with the highest circulation in Norway, mostly distributed through subscribers; it is owned by the biggest media company in Oslo, Schibsted. At the time of our analysis *Dagbladet* was owned by a private company, the Berner Group, but was sold to the Danish company Aller in July 2013. *Dagbladet* is mostly sold through single copies, and has few subscribers.

The media is often the only source to which ordinary people have access for information on important events, and how the press informs on events can have a major effect on the reader’s perception of a crisis (An and Gower 2008). According to Tuchman (1978), the reader’s understanding and knowledge of an event depend on how the story is framed –

thus the framing of the story will be essential in the analysis. We also want to look at the differences and similarities in *Aftenposten*'s and *Dagbladet*'s coverage, and at the differences and similarities between the online and print versions of the two newspapers. The media's perception of the perpetrator changed as the story developed in the early stages of the coverage, and how it changed over time will also be addressed. We start by analysing the coverage of the first hours after the attacks, at the point when the media did not know who was responsible. It was a chaotic situation characterized by shock, the pressure of time and rumours. Readers demanded answers at a time when journalists had little information. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that this first stage is not representative of the whole period of coverage.

The framing analysis

The overall sample for the framing analysis contains 290 articles: 144 from *Aftenposten* and 146 from *Dagbladet* (both online and print). We have only selected articles discussing the perpetrator's personality. On the basis of Robert Entman's theory of framing we selected three predefined frames regarding the image presented of Breivik.

1. The 'insane' frame

The perpetrator is framed as an 'insane' person if the newspaper article uses words or phrases like 'insane', 'crazy', 'mentally ill', 'obsessive compulsive disorder', 'mentally unstable', 'another reality', 'Breivik's universe' or 'psychotic' to describe him. The 'insane', if a newspaper article dwells on the perpetrator's psyche or is compared to other mentally ill counterparts.

2. The 'right-wing extremist' frame

Here, the perpetrator is framed as a ‘right-wing extremist’ if the newspaper uses the words or phrases ‘racist’, ‘Islam hostile’, ‘Islamophobic’, ‘cultural Marxist’ or ‘against multiculturalism’ to describe him.

3. The ‘attention-seeker’ frame

The perpetrator is framed as an ‘attention-seeker’ if the newspaper uses words or phrases such as ‘smug’, ‘grandiose thoughts’, ‘want attention’, ‘phony’, ‘false’ or ‘selfish’ to describe him. This frame also exists if the article says that the perpetrator’s actions, thoughts or attitudes are only a way of getting attention. The frame is applicable if the perpetrator’s acts, thoughts or attitudes are referred to as selfish, self-confident or self-serving.

To make the total material most comparable we chose to ignore *Aftenposten*’s evening edition, a local newspaper for the Oslo area. Both the newspapers publish their own magazines, *Friday Magazine (Dagbladet)* and *A Magazine (Aftenposten)*, which were included in the study because they were relatively similar in their scope, and were published around the same time.

In addition to a content analysis of the newspapers at the selected three time spots, we also conducted interviews with key decision-makers involved in news coverage in the two newspapers. Following were the people interviewed:

- Peter Markovski (30) – news director for domestic policy in *Aftenposten*’s print edition
- Helle Skjervold (26) – news manager for *Aftenpostens.no*
- Frode Hansen (39) – managing editor of *Dagbladet*
- Kristoffer Egeberg (37) – editor of *Dagbladet.no*.

Journalistic challenges: A complex situation

The chaos when the bombs hit on 22 July had in itself a strong influence over both newspaper coverage, especially on the first day after the attacks. The attacks hit Akersgaten, often called Oslo's Fleet Street, and historically the core centre for news buildings in downtown Oslo. The tabloid newspaper *VG* received a direct hit from the blast; the entire *VG* news staff had to evacuate the building and edit the newspaper from other buildings in the centre of Oslo. Speculation and rumours spread about whether a second blast could be expected. Since the police also based their work on this rumour, *Aftenposten* chose to evacuate its building as well. Many young and inexperienced journalists, working as summer replacements, were at their desks on 22 July 2011, and the evacuation meant that the editors spent a lot of time moving to new premises and reorganizing their staff. In addition, it was difficult working outside *Aftenposten*'s own offices where all the resources used for everyday news production were to be found (Markovski 2012; Skjervold 2012).

Dagbladet chose not to evacuate their building, being slightly further away, and many experienced reporters were at work, including the chief editor and the news editor. Informants from *Dagbladet* felt that the situation was very chaotic during the first days, but that it was manageable (Hansen 2012; Egeberg 2012).

The challenges for online news in a crisis situation

The complex situation was a special challenge for online journalists. The head of online news in *Aftenposten* describes the situation just after the blast:

It was extremely unclear what was really going on, and you will try to cover it live, knowing that whole of Norway is following... You must at all times ensure that all items were updated with the latest news. It was of course very difficult, not least because of the extreme amount of stories published the first day... It's a tremendous

pressure to get stories out as they happen, but of course the advantage is that what we could cover the ongoing story live... (Skjervold 2012)

In other words, the Internet creates both challenges and opportunities for journalists. If a news story first appears online, it often takes only minutes before your competitors have published the same story. Quick publishing on the Internet has almost become a norm in online news journalism. A conclusion from a comparative study of the coverage by Norwegian and Danish online journals on 22 July concludes that being updated as fast as possible became a news criterion in itself (Kammer 2013: 306–07). Hågvar (2007: 196–97) underlines that speedy publication of new information helps to sharpen the competition between newspapers. Interviews conducted for this article, however, also revealed an opposite effect: competition between the media houses was reduced in the first few days. Skjervold explains it like this:

It is perhaps the first situation in my life as a journalist where I have not thought of competition... You are more focused on making information available to everybody, and I felt that it was totally insignificant whether VG or we had the news first... [Skjervold explains that this changed after the first week]... after that it has been tough competition to try to drive the issue further and provide the best journalism on the issue... (2012)

Egeberg of *Dagbladet* felt it was a collective responsibility to get the information out as soon as possible:

I felt a sense of collective spirit among colleagues when such a big thing happened. We had many newsroom visitors here. German, Danish, Swedish, French, Turkish colleagues who almost lived in the newsroom here... (2012)

Markovski of *Aftenposten* (2012) felt that there was a certain level of competition all the time. He believes that although the case was complex and the need for information overpowering, there was a determination to cover the events in the best possible way. Our informants said that they paid close attention to what other media chose to publish, but this had little effect on how they themselves chose to cover the happenings. Some of the informants told us that they chose to publish specific information about Breivik's manifesto earlier than they otherwise would have done because other media had already published it (Skjervold 2012).

Methodological challenges

In a situation of crisis, the shortage of time, the pressure to publish quickly and the constant need for new information offer the newsroom little time to make crucial decisions. Our quantitative content analysis of the coverage revealed that online articles both in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* were updated and edited regularly. A text can be perceived quite differently by the reader when it is first published, compared with the final version (Hågvar 2007: 195–217). It may be of great importance to the final research results whether the articles are analysed before or after they are changed and updated.

Our research looks at final edited articles. The main reason for this is that the archives used, such as Retriever or the newspaper's search engines, addresses the already changed online articles. We have made several attempts to obtain online articles as they were first published, but it seems impossible to trace exactly what changes have been made. *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* have their own archive systems and take a snapshot on the front page every

hour but since this only applies to the front page it is difficult to trace the changes in each article. Changes can also be made between each snapshot. The National Library in Mo i Rana takes screenshots of each article published on the web every day, but since the attacks happened on a Friday after normal working hours, only articles published online from Monday 25th of July were filed in the archive. We lack access to those articles collected after 25th of July because the National Library at the time of our research had not received the approval of the Norwegian Data Protection Authority to share published articles (Kjersti Rustad, responsible for web documents in the National Library, phone call, 8 November 2011). However, our informants claim that almost all changes were corrections of typos or of inaccurate information, or adding essential information (Skjervold 2012).

Enemy images in the media

The Norwegian psychiatrist Nils Johan Lavik believes that constructed or reinforced enemy images invite black and white thinking and might motivate aggression. Part of this picture is projecting your own aggression on others and overestimating your own abilities (Lavik 2001).

It is challenging for journalists to be on the borderline between what Rune Ottosen (1995) calls a situational and dispositional enemy image and defines as a 'negative stereotype of a nation, state, religion or/and their respective regimes and heads of states'. The enemy image can express itself through metaphors or other effects in the language or visual and graphical effects that create expectations of aggressive, hostile or inhuman behaviour.

When Osama bin Laden called for terrorist acts in the name of Islam, and we saw the terrible consequences in the United States on 11 September 2001, this is a situational enemy image. The dangerous disposition enemy picture arises when we expect that all Muslims are potential terrorists. When Americans of Arab origin claims that it has been difficult to be a Muslim in the United States after 11 September, it is a result of dispositional enemy images at

work. When the new anti-terror laws in the United States make it possible to identify people's reading habits by checking library loans and searching for users of Muslim literature, this can develop into a system of intolerance on the basis of dispositional enemy images (Ottosen 2012).

Media coverage of international affairs reflects journalists' and newsrooms' perception of events. Most Norwegian journalists try to provide a nuanced picture, but a number of conditions affect them, whether or not they are aware of it. Social conditions and hegemonic cultural norms influence the work of journalists to a much greater extent than many like to think. The media content is framed in a way that reflects the social and political background of the individual journalist (Tuchman 1978). In his book *Inventing Reality: The Politics of Mass Media* (1986) Parenti describes journalism as 'invented reality'. Parenti's analysis implies that the real power relations are made invisible in everyday reporting.

It may also be relevant to look at previous research on media coverage of terrorists other than ABB. Ivar A Iversen (2004) looked at how the American news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek International*, framed Osama bin Laden and Timothy McVeigh (responsible for the attacks in Oklahoma). Both acts of terror were carried out in the United States. Both were explained by the perpetrators as revenge attacks on the US government. There is, however, a significant difference between the two: McVeigh was an American, whereas bin Laden was a Saudi Arabian. Iversen found that

In the portraits, Timothy McVeigh is America's lost son, a paranoid man who chose to steep out of the safe American collective to become the face of terror. Osama bin Laden is portrayed as an evil manifestation of the oriental 'other': a devil and a mesmerizer, a mysterious ghost hovering through the media coverage of the War on Terror. (2004: 77)

Iversen believes that the terrorists' original geographic and cultural identity has a major influence on the media's framing of them. The actions of 22 July also have many similarities with school massacres. Researchers at the University of Tampere in Finland studied the Finnish media coverage of two school shootings in Finland over a period of three years (Raittila et al. 2010). One of the ethical dilemmas that the research discusses is the media's use of videos and photos that perpetrators posted online before the massacres; when the media publish such material it offers the perpetrators publicity that they have already planned and desired and stimulated the so-called 'copycats', performing similar actions to achieve the same publicity. On the other hand, the study shows that readers need information to understand events and their consequences, and details about the perpetrators and their thoughts is necessary for an understanding of how such a situation could occur. The researchers point out that there are no clear answers for how such situations should be handled and one must make an individual assessment each time.

We also saw similar ethical dilemmas after the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. Then, the US media were confronted with the dilemma to whether, and to what extent, al Qaeda and its leader, bin Laden, should be published and quoted. The US government cautioned against video footage of Osama bin Laden, fearing that the videos might contain coded messages that could inspire others to carry out new terrorist acts. The American media conducted self-censorship and did not publish that video. Yet, other media such as the Arab news channel Al Jazeera did publish it (Taylor 2003: 101).

In the first hours after the horrific terrorist attacks in Oslo and at Utøya on 22 July 2011, the British tabloid *The Sun* ran a front page with huge headlines claiming: 'Al Qaeda Massacre – Norway's 9/11'. The quality newspaper, the *New York Times*, also pointed immediately at likely Muslim perpetrators. Norwegian online newspapers like *VG-Nett* wrote

in their first editions that tracks pointed in the direction of Islam-inspired terror. As early as 68 minutes after the bomb went off in the government building, the Norwegian Broadcasting Company (NRK) published an article on its website entitled 'Experts on terror believe al Qaeda is behind the terror attack', in which the Swedish expert Magnus Ranstorp is quoted as making that claim. The article refers to Norway's involvement in Afghanistan and the conflict between the West in general and radical Islam. ABC News (2011) published a similar article entitled 'Terror experts believe al Qaeda is behind the attack' in which the terrorism expert Atle Mesøy believed it to be a 'high probability'. Mesøy also believed that it is less likely that the attack was carried out by an individual or the 'Helpers of the Global Jihad' (a terrorist group that took the blame for the attacks). It soon became known that a white Norwegian right-wing extremist was responsible, and the examples mentioned above indicate that several newsrooms had employees with a dispositional enemy image of Muslims who drew too hasty a conclusion about the background of the perpetrator (based on Ottosen 2012).

The media coverage of 22 July 2011 is similar in many ways to the American media's coverage of the Oklahoma bombing on 19 April 1995. In the first hours and days after the attacks in Oklahoma, the media speculated that Muslim extremists were behind them. Numerous expert sources were interviewed, and most believed that this was the case. The events were also compared to several previous similar attacks. When it became apparent that it was the American Timothy McVeigh behind the attack, speculation about Islamist perpetrators quickly came to an end (Nacos 1994: ix-x).

Aftenposten and *Dagbladet* had only a few articles surmising that the perpetrator could be a Muslim. *Aftenposten* had this frame in 4.2 per cent of articles and *Dagbladet* in 2.1 per cent. *Aftenposten* implied to a larger extent than did *Dagbladet* that the perpetrator could be a Muslim. This is particularly evident in the editorial 'Terror objective Norway', published in *Aftenposten*'s print edition on 23 July 2011.

Comparisons between *Aftenposten*'s and *Dagbladet*'s editorials on 23 July 2011

In order to understand how the perpetrator is portrayed in the media, it is essential to study the contents of the text itself. Fourteen articles most relevant for the research questions were picked out for a more in-depth study based on critical discourse analysis.¹ Of those were the editorials to be analysed more in-depth here. The reason why we decided to analyse the editorials on the 23rd of July was because we wanted to have a closer look at how the two newsrooms covered the perpetrator before his identity was known. The editorials was one of the first articles written about the attack and therefore a natural selection for our study.

Editorials often try to convince the reader of certain points of view and the argumentative function is therefore more prominent here than in many other genres. If the journalists had some pre-assumptions about who the perpetrator might be, we would expect it to be described much clearer in an editorial than in other genres. We will analyse *Aftenposten*'s and *Dagbladet*'s editorials on 23 July 2011, on the basis of Fairclough (2003), Hågvar's (2007) and Jørgensen and Phillips's (1999) understanding of critical discourse analysis. According to Norman Fairclough, texts and words are always part of a larger context. Reality is defined in the interaction between text and context (Fairclough 2003). Both Fairclough (2006) and Jørgensen and Phillips (1999) explain discourses through linguistic elements. Jørgensen and Phillips (1999: 9) define discourse as a process where the language is structured in different patterns, according to the interpretation of our understanding of the world. Yngve Hågvar (2007) is especially useful for us since he underlines how journalists define norms, values and understanding through the choices of words and language. How a threat is defined says something about the journalist's own perception of the threat (Hågvar 2007: 18). Hågvar often uses a template when he is conducting a discourse analysis. He says that it makes it easier to compare two or more texts (Hågvar 2007). Not all of the bullet points in Hågvar's template is

relevant for our study, but we have been inspired by his method. In this discourse analysis we have focused on what context the text was in. Have there been any external elements that have influenced the text? How is this text compared to the other texts in the newspaper? We have also looked at the verbal language in the text. Has the journalist had some pre-assumptions when writing the text? What kind of words are being used to describe the perpetrator?

Norway the terror target, editorial in *Aftenposten* of 23 July 2011

The attacks were naturally important news for *Aftenposten* on 23 July 2011. The importance of the case took up the whole editorial that day. This editorial tries to convince the reader that the attack may have been mounted by an Islamist group. The article can be divided into three parts. The first part is a summary of what has happened, and expresses how far removed the actions are from those of a 'peaceful Norwegian'. The sequence plays on what Vagle (1995: 181) calls a nation-building rhetoric through words and expressions such as 'we', 'us' and 'shocks us all'. *Aftenposten* speaks on behalf of all the readers, who must self-decide whether they wish to be part of this national 'community' (Vagle 1995: 181). The words 'we' and 'us' contribute to personifying the readers and in this way the editorial stimulates a conversation discourse (Jørgensen and Phillips 1999: 94).

The second part of the editorial tries to answer the question: who can be behind the attack? What is interesting about this sequence and the editorial in general is that it is based on the conviction that the perpetrator must be a Muslim. There is not a single word about whether he might be a Norwegian, right-wing extremist, mass murderer or insane. This one-sided argument is evident in the second part of the editorial:

... The aim was obviously to attack the country's political center. Therefore people who condemn the Norwegian engagement in bloody conflicts as in Afghanistan and Libya could have carried out the attack. In that case Norwegian society has for the first time been struck by international terror of the same kind that has struck other western cities. But late last night it was not certain that the explosion in Oslo or the shootings on Utøya are tied to international terror. All options are still open. (Anon. 2011b: 2)

Aftenposten believes that people against Norway's participation in Afghanistan or Libya could have performed the acts of terror. The conflict in Afghanistan began in 2001, when the United States started a military operation to capture Osama bin Laden and destroy his network, al Qaeda. The conflict in Libya started as a revolt against Muammar Gaddafi and developed into a civil war when NATO joined to establish a no-fly zone over Libya. Norway had been involved in both these conflicts (Ottosen et al. 2013). In addition, the text compares the bombings in Norway with attacks targeting other western cities, several of which were carried out by extremist Islamic groups. *Aftenposten* gives no specific names but indirectly conjectures that members or supporters of al Qaeda or the Gaddafi regime could be behind the attack, presuming that the reader knows about these conflicts and violent attacks. To balance the discussion, *Aftenposten* could, for instance, have mentioned other attacks conducted by Islamist groups, by Theodore Kaczynski the 'unabomber', or the school massacres in Finland. *Aftenposten* does, however, point out that 'all options are still open'.

The last section explains what the terrorist aim could be. *Aftenposten* thinks it is to 'create fear and uncertainty' when it goes on to describe the extent of the event: 'It does something to us to see all the windows in the government quarter blown out, with seriously wounded getting medical help on the street outside and us receiving messages about the dead.'

It confirms that the terrible event has actually happened'. Such descriptions play with the readers' pathos; the reader can more easily 'see' the situation – the agent in this editorial is 'the terrorist', while the victim is 'the Norwegian society'. 'Norway has been exposed'; 'A terrorist attack has taken lives in Norway for the first time since the Second World War'; 'Norwegian society has been struck by international terror for the first time'. Words such as 'exposed', 'taken' and 'struck' signify that Norway has been a victim. The 'we' and 'them' perspective is quite common in war journalism; the enemy is perceived as the cause of evil and inhumanity, while our own side is perceived as a victim, free of guilt (Eide and Ottosen 2008: 11).

There are several pre-assumptions in the text. One of the most interesting is that the attacks were conducted by several people: 'Therefore the terrorist attack could have been conducted by people'; 'by those who fight in Afghanistan or Libya'; 'who they might cooperate with'; 'the terrorists have won'. It may indicate that the general discourse about terrorism assumes implicitly that terrorist attacks are performed by groups and not by individuals. However, the articles also use words such as 'maybe' or 'possibly' to modify the thought of several perpetrators.

Y. B. Hågvar (2007: 102) believes that one should not overestimate the social consequences of a single text. It might be interesting to look at how the text portrays the world. *Aftenposten* tries to go to war against what it sees as terrorists and tries to convince readers to do the same. After 9/11 George W. Bush (quoted in Hågvar 2007: 90) said, 'You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists'. *Aftenposten*'s text has similarities with Bush's statement. You are either with us or against them is portrayed as the only appropriate option. This manner of argument is called 'condemnation of options' – a well-established argumentative trick. If *Aftenposten* had included different arguments in the text, it might seem

that they are arguments against themselves. Therefore, it is very common to exclude other arguments to strengthen their own view of the case (Hågvar 2007: 90).

Several articles in *Aftenposten* on 23 July 2011 report that an ethnic Norwegian man had been arrested (Anon. 2011c, 2011d). One of the articles even discusses the possibility of a right-wing extremist group to be behind the attacks, but it adds that the group has not been regarded as major threat by the Norwegian secret police (PST) (Anon. 2011c).

The editorial argument that the perpetrator is a Muslim extremist group is therefore inconsistent with some of the other news articles in the paper. However, there are three articles that hint the culprit is a Muslim extremist group (Anon. 2011e, 2011f, 2011g). These three articles are about the international threats Norway faces, with a special focus on Norway's involvement in Afghanistan and Libya.

In a crisis situation there is a tremendous pressure on the media to provide society with fast and continuous information (Skjervold 2012). Web pages have the advantage as they can quickly and easily publish new articles or update existing articles, whereas print newspapers usually only publish once or twice a day. The articles might be news when they go to print, but old news when the paper is out on the street. This was also the case for this editorial. When the paper was released on the morning of 23 July 2011 several other online newspapers, radio and television channels already had extensive coverage of Breivik. *Aftenposten's* speculation of an Islamic radical group to have masterminded the attacks was therefore inconsistent with the rest of the media at that time. *Aftenposten's* head of news for the paper edition, Peter Markovski, explains,

... For the print edition... we let the speculation be printed because quite early it became clear that there was one single perpetrator... I think that in a similar complex situation, I would do it again... Should we in retrospect have included

several things in the threat perception, should we have written about the extreme right...? Yeah maybe, but I think that it would be completely wrong of us to speculate in major news story in print or on the web at an early stage. I think it would be a mistake to pursue another line of interpretation that is to say that until we get some official information, we will not write anything about threats against Norway or similar actions...

Markovski thus denies that *Aftenposten* has speculated on Islamist terror and believes it to be the duty of *Aftenposten* to inform about threats to Norway. Skjervold (2012) says police were quick to provide information about the culprit, and that very early on rumours were spread that Islamists were behind the happening. In response to whether *Aftenposten* speculated on Islamist group to be behind the attacks, Skjervold says,

In retrospect we could see that the information was wrong, but I do not quite understand that one cannot speculate on that either. I think it gets a little excessive to believe that it was domestic terrorism, and that it was wrong not to blame foreigners in light of PST's [Norwegian secret police] threat assessment... When witnesses had seen a blond, tall Norwegian man who was shooting on Utøya, then at least we in *Aftenposten* thought that the information was incorrect, so we didn't do anything about it. We just put the information far down on the news list and assumed that something was wrong. Afterwards we see that we might have had some preconceived ideas about what kind of terrorism we were dealing with, and therefore didn't read the event correctly... (2012)

'The calm after the blast', *Dagbladet* editorial 23 July 2011

Dagbladet's editorial on 23 July 2011 was also about the attacks. This editorial argues that we should not speculate before we have enough information. The text can be divided into three sections. As in *Aftenposten*'s editorial, the first part summarizes the events. It has been given considerable space: 'First you hear the distinctive sound of a bomb going off... the ground is shaking. Then it is quiet, so quiet, before the screams of the wounded takeover'. Such detailed descriptions make it easier for the readers to put themselves into the situation and make the events more real (Hågvar 2007). The second part discourages everyone from guessing who is responsible:

Only when we know what has happened and why, then we should have a political debate about the terrorist attack. Emotions will naturally come when we are dealing with wounded and those killed. Naturally people are wondering what has happened and they will have their own thoughts about the attack. But we shouldn't speculate before we have enough knowledge about the event. Now is certainly not the right moment to argue about immigration, or foreign security policy, nor crime control. Now is not the right time to close the borders. (Anon. 2011h)

The text compares the attacks to previous attacks bearing the hallmark of extremist Muslim groups: '... a bang that is so recognizable to those who have heard it before – Beirut, Jerusalem, Islamabad or Colombo – but not yet in Oslo or other Norwegian cities'. This sentence is taken from the first paragraph of the editorial, and it is therefore important for the reader's perception of the rest of the text.

Aftenposten and *Dagbladet* had a few articles pointing the finger at Muslim extremists as likely responsible. *Aftenposten* had this framing in six articles and *Dagbladet* in three articles.

Dagbladet early on pointed at Breivik as the guilty person. *Dagbladet* already had a close-up of Breivik captioned ‘Why does he hate ‘Stoltenberg Jugend?’’ (Jens Stoltenberg was the prime minister of Norway at the time) on its front page. Inside the newspaper, there are several articles which discuss Breivik as the perpetrator (Anon. 2011i, 2011j, 2011k) – contrary to the editorial that did not even mention him (this might indicate that the editorial was written earlier than the rest of the paper). When the paper was published, the readers already knew a lot about the perpetrator, thanks to the online newspaper and TV. However, the editorial matches one of the articles on *Dagbladet*’s online edition, where the responsible editor, Lars Helle, directly encourages readers – and especially media institutions – not to speculate (Anon. 2011l). Despite the fact that both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* have relatively few cases that hint at Islamic extremist groups, this analysis shows that *Aftenposten* goes further in this respect than *Dagbladet*.

Throughout the analysed period, *Dagbladet* encouraged readers and the media not to speculate about the perpetrator. Both Kristoffer Egeberg and Frode Hansen understand why the media imagined Islamic extremists, but they believe that NRK went too far. Egeberg (2012) is also sceptical about the sources some of the other media outlets were using when describing the suspect:

What I am reacting to the most is how uncritical some of the journalists were in the beginning, especially NRK who published things very early... What makes me skeptical is when Norwegian media use foreign experts as a source... Had this been in London, ok, then Sight (U.S. based expert, authors remark) would have been a good source for us. But we are here, we are home, we don’t have to use an American source... We saw in some cases that journalists quoted AP or Reuters on things that we could see with our own eyes. Where do you think AP is getting its information

from? They are getting it from Norwegian newspapers... At the time we didn't know who was behind the terrorist attack, so we should not speculate about it.

We didn't write about who the perpetrator might be. Simply because we didn't have enough information. Why speculate when we do not know? We might have done some interviews with some experts in the beginning, with pro and contra arguments...

Islamic terror was a natural track to follow. We also worked on that subject, but working on something is totally different from publishing something. We got the name of the perpetrator quite early, so we did not have to focus on it. (Hansen 2012)

Our analysis shows that many of the news articles were changed afterwards. Skjervold (2012) says that she personally would not have deleted any of the articles blaming Muslim groups for the attacks because she thinks it would be historically useful to see the reaction of society, and also how facts can be falsified at certain points of time because of lack of evidence. She says that when they knew that it was a right-wing extremist behind the attack, they removed all the articles blaming Islamic extremist groups away from the front page and put them far down on the webpage, but did not delete them. We have had access to both *Aftenposten's* and *Dagbladet's* front pages on the web from the first 24 hour after the bomb went off, but as far as we can see none of the articles mentioning Islamic extremism have been deleted.

A few Muslim voices

To get an idea of how the perpetrator is described in the media, it is important to look at wider coverage of the attacks. In the papers there is a very strong focus on the perpetrator's ideology and especially his hatred of multiculturalism, but despite this there are very few articles dealing with the response to the attacks by Muslims or immigrants. Only 1 per cent (14

articles) out of a total of 1323 is about ‘Muslim/immigrant reaction’, and until 25 July 2011 there were no articles leaning on the other side. Articles on this topic were never printed in the front page of both newspapers. Half the articles sourcing Muslim immigrants were buried inside the papers, in page six and beyond. Our analysis shows, in other words, that the media downgraded coverage on Muslims’ or immigrants’ responses.

Inger Anne Olsen is a journalist in *Aftenposten* and member of its editorial board. Her expertise is in Islam, migration, human rights and crime. She has only written a few articles about the attacks, specifically covering the first week since their occurrence. However, she has 35 years of experience in the field and is therefore a useful source of information. She cannot say why so few articles were written about the reaction of immigrants and Muslims:

I can assume that *Aftenposten*’s is pretty homogeneous in many ways. I don’t know how many Muslims work here – personally I only know one. It’s a bit like when the men ran the newspaper editorials alone and the women were absent. The newspaper was biased towards the male world-view. It is still biased. (Inger Anne Olsen, e-mail, 26 April 2012)

Our study shows that Muslim people were rarely used as a source. Most sources were official: from the government, parliament or of similar origin. The Muslim ‘man on the street’ rarely plays a role in media coverage. Olsen thinks the reason could be that

It’s easier to make a phone call or send an e-mail to an official person, than to go out on the street and talk to people, especially if you don’t know or associate with the group you are writing about.

Olsen adds that she herself has chosen not to categorize Muslims as a unique group. She wants to refer to people independently of their ethnic, religious or economic status. She says that ‘Norwegian Muslims’ are a very diverse group and that it is wrong to categorize them as a homogeneous group. Our analysis substantiates her arguments. Muslims were not described as a homogeneous group but, rather, as one of ‘us’. It is rarely pointed out that this was an indirect attack on immigrants in the way Breivik (2011) describes it in his manifesto.

Framing the perpetrator

To clarify how the perpetrator was reported after his identity was known, we analysed a selection of articles from the chosen periods mentioned earlier, relevant for the predefined frames. The sample for this part of the study contains 290 relevant articles (144 from *Aftenposten* and 146 from *Dagbladet*). We have only selected articles discussing the perpetrator’s personality and have excluded articles that only mention him peripherally.

When the right-wing extremist Breivik was arrested, the speculation of Muslims being potentially responsible was instantly stopped. Instead, the papers developed three significant frames about who the perpetrator was and how the acts of terror are explained. The frame used most was the ‘insane person’ frame. Of the 144 articles we analysed from *Aftenposten*, 49 articles used this frame; *Dagbladet* used it in 53. In general, there was a huge focus on Breivik’s psychological condition and he was called ‘insane’ after the psychiatric statement was published. *Aftenposten* had no articles with this frame before 25 July 2011, while *Dagbladet* already had two articles with this frame on 23 July 2011.

The second frame, the ‘extreme right’ frame, was used by *Aftenposten* in 46 of the articles and by *Dagbladet* in 38 – from which we can see that *Aftenposten* used this frame more frequently than did *Dagbladet* (Andenæs Bull 2012).

The third frame was ‘attention-seeking’. *Aftenposten* used this frame in 36 articles, while *Dagbladet* used it in 37. This frame and the ‘insane person’ frame were dominant in the coverage of the first open prison meeting in the court, and during the period of the publication of the psychiatric statement report where the conclusion was that Breivik was not in a mental state to serve an ordinary prison sentence. Because of strong public reaction when it was known that Breivik might end up in a mental hospital rather than in prison, a second report was produced with the conclusion that he was mentally fit to serve in prison. The final court ruling came to the same conclusion.

Figure 1

Most of the articles are written within a ‘western identity discourse’, in which Norway is portrayed as a country where terrorism does not occur. Therefore, the attack must have been conducted by an insane person, who does not belong to Norwegian society – but he is not framed as a direct enemy of society. There are few attempts to understand Breivik as ‘one of us’, a Norwegian. In his manifesto, Breivik describes himself as a Christian person (Breivik 2011), but very few articles explicitly mention this. Grydeland (2012: 102) reached similar findings and showed in her study that neither NRK nor Dagsavisen mentioned the fact that the perpetrator is Christian.

Several articles seek explanations of how a Norwegian man could manage to become such an extreme person. Some of the explanations have been linked to gambling problems, a difficult childhood, lack of a father figure and that he had no friends. Other articles describe him as someone who had decided to withdraw from society. That he was not a part of Norwegian society is also clearly stated in the choice of words in the articles. *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* often use ‘them’ or ‘he’ to describe the perpetrator, while readers are referred to as

‘us’ or ‘we’. Iversen’s (2002: 128–32) studies show the same tendency: both bin Laden and Timothy McVeigh, responsible for the bombing of a government building in Oklahoma in 1995, killing 168 people, were referred to as ‘the others’. Bin Laden is easy to classify as ‘an evil person’ who comes from the ‘outside’ and attacks ‘us’ – he is an obvious ‘other’, dark, foreign and Muslim. What is interesting is how Breivik, who was born and raised in Norway, has the Nordic look and should belong to ‘us’, has left the Norwegian community and is now referred to as a part of ‘them’. Iversen believes that the fact that McVeigh was classified as mentally ill was a consolation for ‘us’ (the United States). The person is blamed, not the society. This might explain why Breivik is often framed as an insane person.

Summary and discussion

1. Did the media speculate about whether the perpetrator might be an extremist Muslim before his identity was known?

The chaotic and dramatic situation had a major influence on the media coverage on the first day. Particularly affected was *Aftenposten*, which had to evacuate its premises. The public needed constant and frequent information about the terrorist attack, and the newspapers had to do their best to give it to them.

Our analysis shows that *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* both made presumptions about the perpetrator’s identity before it became known.

Indirectly, the newspapers claimed that an ‘international terror’ group was behind the attacks. *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* published few articles that directly speculated Islamic extremists to be behind the attacks, but one could still see traces of a dispositional enemy image, especially in *Aftenposten*’s editorial of 23 July 2011.

Norway was portrayed as an innocent victim, free of guilt – a peaceful country where terrorism does not normally exist. The perpetrator was described as a brutal terrorist hostile to Norway's democratic society.

2. How was the perpetrator framed after his identity was known?

When it became known that there was a Norwegian right-wing extremist behind the attack, all speculation ended quickly. Instead, the perpetrator was perceived as an 'insane person', an 'extreme right radical person' and, to a lesser extent, an 'attention-seeking person'.

Conclusion

Looking back at the observations made in the literature review at the beginning of this article one could ask if there is a relation between the recent trend to put more emphasis on the psychological rather than the political aspects of Breivik's behaviour and act of terror, and the tendency in the early stage of the media coverage to put more emphasis on ABB's sanity than on his political agenda. One can only speculate about whether the tendency to look for a psychological explanation would have been so strong if the acts of terror had been conducted by Muslims with a clear anti-western agenda.

After the election of 2013, in which Breivik's former political party, the Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet), garnered enough votes to be represented in the government for the first time, together with the Conservative Party (Høyre), several foreign media made a point of the fact that Breivik's former party was ruling in Norway. International news outlets, including the British newspaper, the *Independent*, asked how this could be possible so soon after 22 July 2011. This reaction created a sense of national unity and a special press conference was conducted by Fremskrittspartiet in the parliament building to 'explain' to foreign journalists that it was 'out of line' to connect Breivik to his former party. Several

Swedish media tried to connect Breivik's hatred of Muslims to Fremskrittspartiet's restrictive immigration policy and hostile view of Muslims. Even the former Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, in a prominent talk-show (Skavlan) broadcast in Sweden and Norway (*Aftonbladet*, 15 November 2013) defended Fremskrittspartiet against this line of reasoning. Could the reason for this sudden 'national unity' and desire to defend Fremskrittspartiet's 'honour' have something to do with Norwegian media – somewhere along the road – having 'forgotten' Breivik's political past? In an interesting essay, the Norwegian journalist and author Simen Sætre points to the paradox of the attacks 22 July that turned Breivik's political role model Fjordman into a well-known public figure. Before 22 July, Fjordman had written only anonymously on the right-wing website 'Gates of Vienna', but because Breivik quoted him so extensively Fjordman commanded the attention of the mainstream media. In the early stage of the coverage, Norwegian media suggested that Fjordman should take some responsibility for inspiring ABB. The editor of the right-wing website document.no, Hans Rustad, who had published both Fjordman and Breivik, distanced himself from them after the attacks of 22 July. Geir Lippstad, Breivik's defence lawyer, claimed that Fjordman was partly responsible – and since then Fjordman has used every opportunity he could to claim his right to respond to the 'attacks against him', to distance himself from Breivik and to repeat and continue his anti-Islamic rhetoric.

Sindre Bangstad in his book, *Anders Breivik and the rise of Islamophobia*, claims convincingly that Breivik's mindset and platform to fight the future vision of Europe invaded and controlled by Muslims (Eurabia) has a wider support among certain politicians and intellectuals than has earlier been admitted (2014). The website document.no has again started to write respectfully about Fjordman and to encourage his writings. Simen Sætre reflects on the irony that Fjordman, with his extreme views, has gained access to the mainstream press and has even received a scholarship from the Freedom of Expression Foundation to publish

'his side of the story'. Breivik states clearly in his manifesto that the main reason for his act of terror was to draw attention to his political and ideological agenda and to the writings of Fjordman. Sætre concludes, 'When Jensen today is an active, established discussant with increased respect, an ice-cold awareness is forced upon us. It might be that Breivik is smarter than we like to think' (author's translation from Sætre 2013: 71).

One suggestion for further systematic research is to conduct a content analysis of the framing of Islam and Muslims before and after 22 July. Another is to examine how the politics of ABB are described in the period from 22 July to the present, with emphasis on the relationship between political and psychological motivations for his behaviour. The research question could be: How is the relationship between ABB and his former party Fremskrittspartiet explained? And, finally: how have the media contributed to the creation of Peder Nøstvold Jensen as a public figure?

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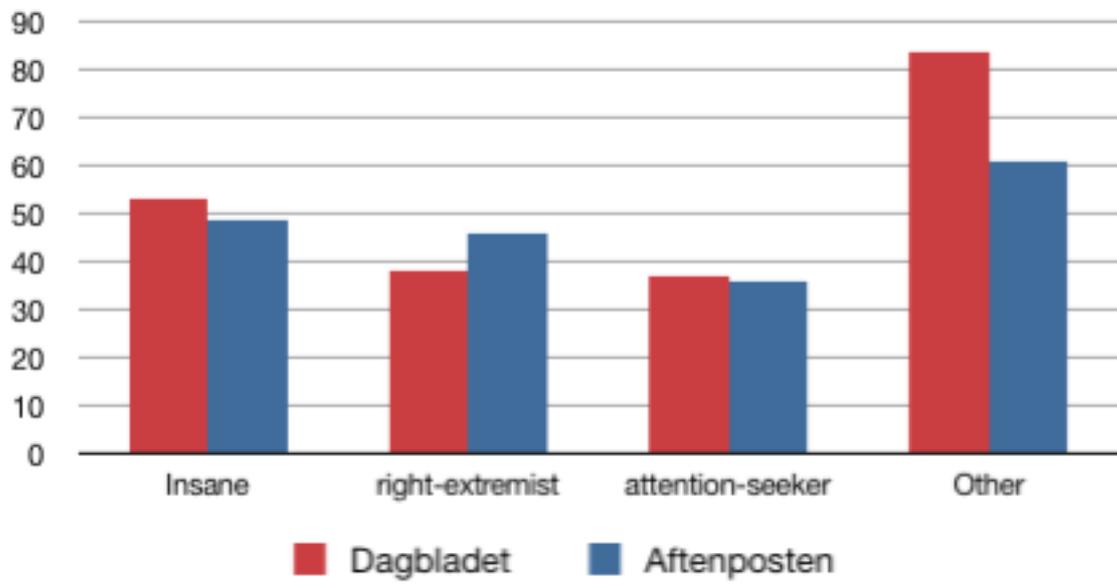
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Figure 1: The main frames of the perpetrator.



Note

¹ For a more detailed analysis of all the articles see Andenæs Bull (2012).