

# Consensus or Conflict? A Survey Analysis of How Norwegians Interpret the July 22, 2011 Attacks a Decade Later

by Øyvind Bugge Solheim and Anders Ravik Jupskås

## Abstract

*The dominant narrative about the right-wing terrorist attacks in Norway on July 22, 2011, suggests that they were an attack on the Norwegian democracy, that the perpetrator was motivated by right-wing extremism and that Norway reacted by emphasizing tolerance, democratic values, and inclusion. Surveys carried out in the aftermath of the attacks show that this narrative received widespread support. In this article, we use a nationally representative survey to analyze how Norwegians interpret the July 22 attacks today – a decade later. We find significant levels of consensus, but also traces of conflict. While there are high levels of agreement regarding many of the interpretive frames, some of the frames are more contested. Moreover, some of these contested interpretations are associated with three conflicting narratives about the terrorist attack: the democracy narrative, the diversity narrative and the far-right narrative. These narratives are all characterized by a distinct understanding of why the attacks happened, who was targeted and how society reacted to the attacks. Given that the support for the different narratives varies according to ideological beliefs, partisanship, levels of trust and, to some extent, emotional reactions, we argue that discussions about July 22 today are likely to be politically polarizing – or even irreconcilable. The article shows how terrorist attacks that appear uniting in the short run may become more divisive in the long run, mirroring other existing political conflicts in society.*

## Introduction

Terrorist attacks are often met with strong displays of unity. The citizens rally around their political leadership[1] and around values they perceive to be at stake.[2] The aftermath of a terrorist attack is also often characterized by a lack of dissent from other elite actors such as the media and the opposition.[3] Consequently, the public, the political elite and the media converge on one interpretation, or narrative, of the terrorist attacks. Whether or not this suspension of politics is gradually replaced by conflict, however, is less clear. Thus far, most studies of the effects of terrorism on the public have looked at the first period of unity; few studies are focused on the long-term consequences of terrorist attacks. Similarly, prior studies on interpretations of terrorism have emphasized elite interpretations rather than the interpretations by the general public.

This article fills these gaps by studying the July 22, 2011, attacks in Norway. In the attacks, a right-wing extremist first detonated a bomb in the government district of the capital city, Oslo, before carrying out a shooting spree at the Labor Party's youth wing's summer camp on Utøya Island outside Oslo. 77 people were killed in total, 69 of them participants of the summer camp (for more information, see the introduction to this Special Issue by Bjørge and Jupskås). The response to the attacks has been described as entering the "consensus sphere", "where critical discussions of public and political institutions were temporarily suspended." [4] Is this still the case? What happens when the memory of the attacks becomes weaker in the everyday life of most citizens and politics return to normality?

In this article, we use a unique representative survey to measure how the attacks are interpreted a decade after they took place. More specifically, the article looks at (1) the extent to which citizens agree or disagree on how to interpret the causes and consequences of the July 22 attacks, (2) whether citizens support distinct narratives about the attacks, and (3) whether these narratives are associated with ideological beliefs, partisan belonging, levels of trust and emotions. Is the perceived unity of the first months still present, or have the attacks become a point of political contention? We argue that to understand the overall level of conflict and consensus in society one must investigate the extent to which the different interpretations relate to distinct narratives and, in turn, to what extent these narratives overlap with ideology, partisanship, trust and emotions. Although the article does not aim to offer a causal explanation of the support for different narratives, the key assumption is that the

first three of these factors (ideology, partisanship and trust) are likely to influence how citizens interpret the attacks, whereas emotions are better seen as the outcome of specific interpretations. The emotional dimension is included because different emotions are associated with different forms of political mobilization, and therefore may contribute to the overall level of conflict in society.

We find that the Norwegian population tends to agree on many aspects related to the July 22 attacks. In general, Norwegians believe that the terror attacks were the act of a crazy person *and* that he was at the same time motivated by right-wing extremism; that Norway handled the attacks well; that the attacks made national values stronger; and that they did not result in less freedom of speech. At the same time, there is significant disagreement as to whether the Labor Party has tried to exploit the attacks for political gain, and whether the attacks should be understood as a backlash to Norwegian immigration policy or a consequence of parental neglect. We find that this disagreement is associated with three different narratives about the attacks: *the democracy narrative*, *the diversity narrative* and what we refer to as *the far-right narrative*. We use these labels because they communicate the essence of who are perceived to be the main victims. While Norwegian democracy is perceived to be the victim in the first narrative, 'diversity' is understood as the victim in the second. The third narrative turns the interpretation on its head, emphasizing that the attack itself is not related to politics, but that 'the left' politicizes the attack for political reasons. Thus, the victims in this narrative are those who share some political ideas, albeit in a moderate form, with the perpetrator. All three narratives have a specific understanding of why the attacks happened, what the main target of the attacks were and how the societal and political reactions to the attacks have been. Moreover, they are strongly associated with specific ideological beliefs, party preferences, levels of trust and, to some extent, the emotional reactions evoked by the attacks. Significantly, we find that the divisions over how to interpret the attacks ten years after the event mirror major political cleavages in Norwegian society. In short, the diversity narrative and far-right narrative represent a left-wing and a right-wing critique, respectively, of the more centrist democracy narrative.

The article makes two important contributions. First, in contrast to most existing studies which have a top-down approach focusing on conflicting interpretation among elites, our study has more of a bottom-up perspective, looking at (dis-)agreement among ordinary citizens. This is important, because—as Verovšek[5] argues—collective memory exerts its influence not only in a top-down manner, “as statements by public figures place certain events into the national consciousness while silencing or forgetting other,” but also as a more bottom-up phenomenon, as ordinary citizens are not always passive ‘memory consumers’ but active producers of alternative narratives. This is particularly the case in the age of social media, where the elites and the established media have less control of the public discourse. This article seeks to provide insights into the underlying dynamics of the negotiations between the elites and the ordinary citizens. Second, by studying the interpretations a decade after the event took place, our study looks at whether the dominant narrative, which often emerges as a collective response to an act of terrorism in the immediate aftermath of an attack, becomes (more) challenged as time passes by. If this is the case, the long-term effects of terrorism might differ significantly from the short-term effects in the sense that initial unity is gradually replaced by growing division.

This article is structured as follows. First, we introduce some key concepts and theoretical perspectives, and present our research questions. Second, we discuss our method and data. Third, we turn to the empirical analysis, which includes assessing levels of (dis-)agreement on specific interpretations of the attacks, and explores the extent to which ideology, partisanship, trust, and emotions correlate with specific narratives. Fourth and finally, we summarize key findings and discuss some implications of our findings.

### ***Terrorism, Narratives and Counter-Narratives***

Although terrorism is seen as a form of communication, there is little information in the terrorist violence itself. Accordingly, terrorist attacks require interpretation to make sense. These interpretations of terrorist attacks often constitute specific *narratives*. The narratives create meaningful links between past, present and future, and “determine which aspects of the past event become meaningful points of reference in the aftermath, and which don’t.”[6] In other words, narratives create more or less coherent connections between interpretations of

the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s), as well as of the cause(s) and the effect(s) of the attacks.

The construction of narratives does not only apply to the discursive responses to terrorism but also to the terrorist tactic itself. In fact, seeing terrorism as performative acts, Alexander[7] claims that terrorists are trying to influence politics by using violence to promote a specific narrative. The terrorists' narratives typically provide both an explanation for why the terrorist attacks were necessary and legitimate, as well as pointing to some expectations about what it is that the terrorist(s) would like to achieve politically. However, given the brutality of terrorism, and the general fear it often generates, the narrative of the perpetrator is almost immediately challenged. Key actors in society, including political elites and the media, create a counter-narrative describing how the attacks should be understood and what the response should look like.[8]

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the counter-narrative often becomes hegemonic, or at least dominant, in the initial aftermath of the terrorist attack. While the terrorists' own message seldom reaches the public, the aftermaths of terrorist attacks are often characterized by a very strong dissemination of the messages and interpretations given by the political leadership. On the one hand, the public rallies around the central politicians in response to terrorism.[9] On the other hand, both the media [10] and the opposition [11] take on different roles than under normal circumstances. Seeking to recreate the national community, both temporarily put their critical role aside and support the heads of government in efforts of 'meaning-making' after acts of terrorism. Whether or not the dominant narrative receives public support, however, depends on the extent to which it resonates with cultural and political values in society.[12]

The terrorist perpetrator of the July 22 attacks distributed a manifesto to the media in an effort to spread his own narrative. According to the perpetrator, Norwegian elites collaborated to "import" Muslims to Islamize the country. Consequently, "indigenous" Norwegians had to start a civil war, and elite "traitors" had to be put on trial. The perpetrator thought his attacks would mobilize the population and, in the long run, spark a civil war. Although his narrative was far more extreme than any views politicians had expressed in public debates, representatives from the Progress Party—a major right-wing populist party [13], which has been represented in parliament since the 1970s—had been expressing hostility towards the Labor Party and voicing concern that Norway was experiencing an ongoing 'stealth Islamization'. The perpetrator himself had also been a member of the youth wing of the Progress Party between 1997 and 2007 but quit because he thought the party had become too mainstream. Targeting the Prime Minister's office and the Labor Party's youth organization, the July 22 terrorist attacks sent strong signals to mainstream Norwegian politics.

Existing research on the responses to the July 22 terrorist attacks shows how the terrorist narrative was challenged by a narrative promoted by then-Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, who at the time was also the leader of the Labor Party. His narrative was widely supported by the public across all parties. The counter-narrative put forward by Stoltenberg emphasized that July 22 was not primarily an attack against Norwegian social democracy, represented by the Labour Party in government and its youth wing, the Workers' Youth League of Norway (Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking - AUF), but was an attack on democracy and democratic values in general.[14][15] The perpetrator was a *political* terrorist, but not *party* political. Stoltenberg also argued that Norway would not respond to this act of terrorism with hate or mistrust but that "our answer to violence is more openness, more democracy ... but we will not be naïve". The attacks led to a spike in support for the government [16]—as many as 82 per cent of the population said they were positive to Stoltenberg's response.[17]

While a dominant narrative often emerges after terrorist attacks and becomes widely supported, it can still be expected to be contested by different groups. On the one hand, the victims or targets of terrorism may have their own interpretations of the attacks. This may be a different understanding of the shortcomings of security services and the state's response, a different (often more elaborate) understanding of the goals of the terrorists or a distinct understanding of the public's reaction to the attacks.[18] On the other hand, terrorists usually have an (imagined) constituency of people who are held to be supportive of the terrorists' cause or ideology.[19] These groups may be motivated to interpret the attacks in a different way [20], diminishing the importance of the attacks if they believe it is damaging to their cause or if the attacks cross the constituencies' "tolerance limit"

for violence.[21] Accordingly, even in the context of one dominant narrative, certain groups may hold other interpretations.

Again, there seemed to be support for some dissent after the July 22 attacks. Even if the ‘democracy narrative’ was dominant and widely supported in the early phase after the attacks, other narratives were present too. Lenz [22] identifies three other narratives, which to a varying degree challenge the narrative put forward by the perpetrator. These three narratives include the narrative of love, in which the attacks were seen as acts of hatred and evil to which ‘we’ – the Norwegians – responded with love; the diversity narrative, in which the perpetrator was part of an emerging extreme right or “counter-jihad” subculture, and that July 22 was an attack on Norway as a multicultural society; and the security narrative, in which the attacks were made possible by the lack of security measures and due to tactical mistakes by the police force. This last narrative was heavily reinforced after the government appointed the Gjørv-commission which concluded that attacks could have been prevented. In addition to these narratives, which to a varying degree have been present in the public discourse, existing research indicates the presence of dissenting voices that were suppressed in the initial phase after the terrorist attacks. Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou [23], for example, have argued that “editors’ alertness to the public mood accentuated their roles as guardians of appropriate discourse, weeding out deviant voices that could offend the (perceived) majority”. In other words, terrorist attacks, including those of July 22, can be seen as a symbolic struggle in which the narrative put forward by the perpetrator is challenged by several counter-narratives. Usually, one of these tends to become dominant while the others are more peripheral or only gradually emerging.

We anticipate that people will support different narratives depending on their political attitudes. The July 22 attacks were strongly connected to the Norwegian political parties and people’s interpretations may depend on their partisanship.[24] In addition, there may be a more general connection with political ideology.[25] While the link between the perpetrator and the Progress Party was obsolete, the fact that he was motivated by anti-Muslim sentiments was clear when reading his manifesto.[26] This motivation was also emphasized in the media coverage of the event.[27] Thus, the ideological leanings of the respondents may influence their views. Support for the narratives presented by the political leadership and especially by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg could also be expected to be dependent on political trust.[28] Finally, much terrorism research emphasizes the emotional effects of terrorism.[29] While emotions might be important for how people react to attacks, we include emotions mainly because they are likely to affect the mobilizing potential of specific narratives. For example, anger is more associated with political mobilization than fear and we expect narratives related to anger to mobilize to a higher extent than other narratives.[30]

Based on these theoretical perspectives and empirical observations, we ask the following three questions:

1. First, are the interpretative frames of the July 22 attacks a decade later characterized by agreement or disagreement?
2. Second, are there distinct narratives about the nature of the attacks, their causes and consequences?
3. Third, are these narratives associated with ideological beliefs, partisanship, levels of trust and emotional reactions?

### **Data and Methods**

To gauge the different interpretations of the July 22 attacks in the Norwegian public, we use survey data from a survey conducted in December 2020. The survey was fielded by Kantar TNS to their web-panel of a representative sample of Norwegians. The response rate was 44 percent and more than 2,000 respondents had answered.[31]

Our survey had a large battery of questions about July 22, which measured the respondent’s view on four different aspects of the terrorist attack. First, we asked questions about how they interpreted the *target selection* of the attacks. The respondents could choose between four different options: democracy, Labor Party and its

youth wing, multicultural Norway, or the left wing. They could also respond that it had little to do with politics or that none of the options mentioned were appropriate. Given that some of these targets are not mutually exclusive, they were allowed to select as many categories as they wanted.[32]

Second, we asked the respondents about the reasons *why* they think the attacks of July 22 happened. We included all of the key hypotheses put forward in the public debate, including that it was caused by an extreme right ideology, by mental health issues (i.e., that it was the act of a crazy person), that it was related to parental neglect or that it happened as the result of Norwegian immigration policies. The first two of these played an important role during the trial, while the third received less media attention, but was emphasized in one of the first comprehensive biographical accounts of the perpetrator.[33] The fourth thesis, that it was the result of Norwegian immigration policies, has typically been advocated by some, but not all, far-right actors.[34] We also asked whether they believed that there was more than one perpetrator behind the attacks. Again, these explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but some might be seen as more important than others. Respondents were therefore allowed to evaluate each statement on a 7-point scale from disagree completely to agree completely. Unfortunately, the survey did not include explanatory statements tapping into the security and love narratives identified by Lenz (e.g., that July 22 was the result of either poor security measures and/or were the consequence of evil). Our study cannot rule out the presence of additional narratives, which is a limitation we should keep in mind when interpreting the results.

Third, we asked the respondents how they viewed the social and political *reactions* to July 22. We were interested in mapping support for some of the arguments put forward in public debates by various elite actors. Two of the statements, which have been advocated by right-wing populist and (to some extent) conservative representatives, argues that the Labor Party has exploited (“slått politisk mynt”) the attacks for political gains, and that it has become more difficult to express oneself after the attacks. Two other statements, voiced by representatives from the Labor youth wing and other left-wing actors, focused on the alleged lack of confronting right-wing extremism—that July 22 was a “missed opportunity” [35]—and that there has been too little discussion about July 22 in Norway. We also included one general statement about the extent to which Norway has dealt with the terrorist attacks in a positive way.

Fourth, the respondents were asked about their emotional reactions to, and cognitive awareness of, the event. In terms of emotional reactions, we asked whether thinking about July 22 makes the respondents feel angry (“sint”), afraid (“redd”) or sad (“trist”). Cognitive awareness was measured by using a question from the Norwegian Citizens Panel—namely, how often a respondent thinks, reads, or talks about July 22, ranging from “never” to “weekly”. The last question about July 22 asked whether the respondent had participated in any commemorative events after the attacks, such as the so-called “rose marches”, which were organized (more or less) spontaneously across the country in the days after the attacks.

Finally, in addition to these specific questions about July 22, the survey included many questions tapping into various political belief systems associated with the far-right, including nativism, xenophobia, racism, and authoritarianism. The number and variety of different indicators allow us to construct fine-grained indices, reflecting different degrees of ideological extremism. We constructed three additive indices, two of which are based on a principal component analysis of all the political variables mentioned above. The solution gave three indices that we have called right-wing extremism,[36] populism and anti-immigration.[37] We include the first and last of these indices since they are more associated with the ideological motivation and the political goal of the perpetrator. Finally, we constructed an index for political trust based on questions pertaining to trust in political institutions (parliament and government). Table 5 in the Appendix shows the distributions of responses on these four indices.

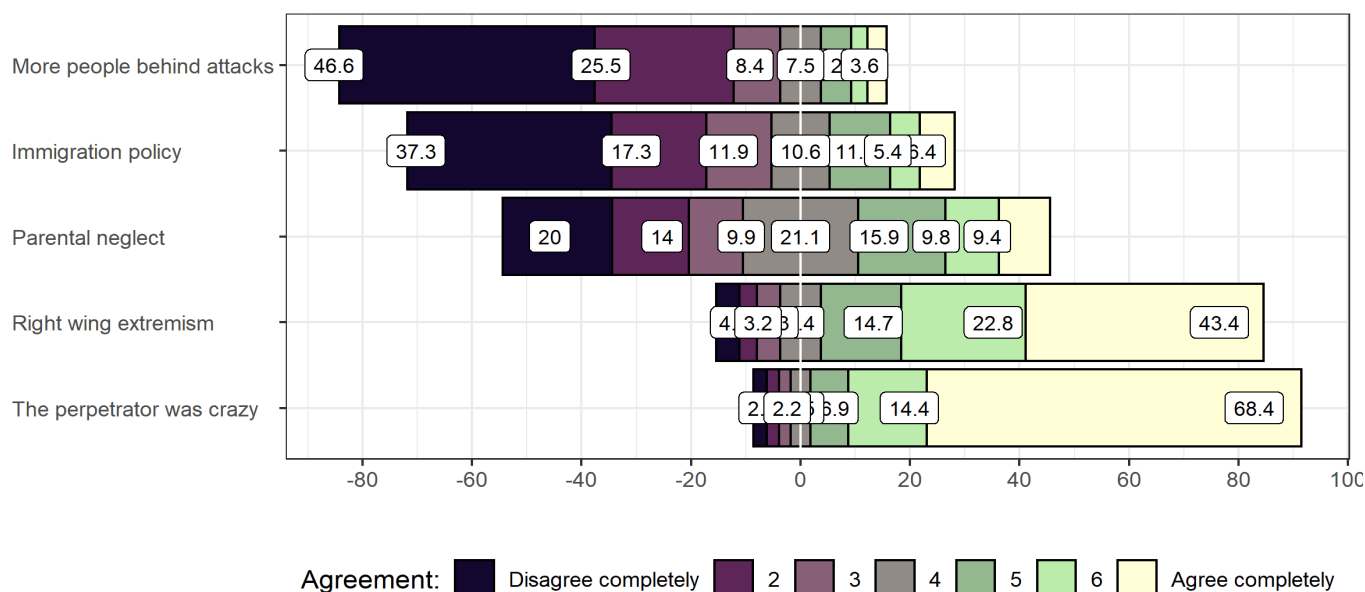
**Results**

*Agreement and Disagreement on Interpretative Frames*

In this first empirical section, we provide some simple descriptive findings from the various set of questions related to July 22: why it happened, who was targeted and how society reacted. The aim is to see whether interpretations of the terrorist event are characterized by agreement or disagreement.

Regarding the question of why July 22 happened, there are high levels of agreement among the respondents (see Figure 1). Most importantly, almost all respondents agree that it was an act of a ‘crazy person’. This is not particularly surprising, given that much of the trial was concerned with whether the terrorist was sane or insane. [38] While the first psychiatrists assessing Breivik concluded that he suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, the second team of psychiatrists argued that he was not clinically insane but a political terrorist with a vulnerable psychological profile characterized by dissocial and narcissistic personality disorder. In addition to the focus on mental issues during the trial, saying that Breivik was a ‘crazy person’ can also be interpreted as a more layman understanding of why a person could carry out such atrocities.[39] More than 80 percent of the respondents who agree completely with the statement that the perpetrator was crazy also agree at least somewhat with the statement that the attacks were caused by right-wing extremism. This finding provides some evidence that most Norwegians do not see the insanity and ideology hypotheses as mutually exclusive, and that Breivik could have been motivated by right-wing extremism while also being ‘crazy’ (legally unaccountable, or not) at the same time.[40]

**Figure 1.** What was the Cause of the Attacks?



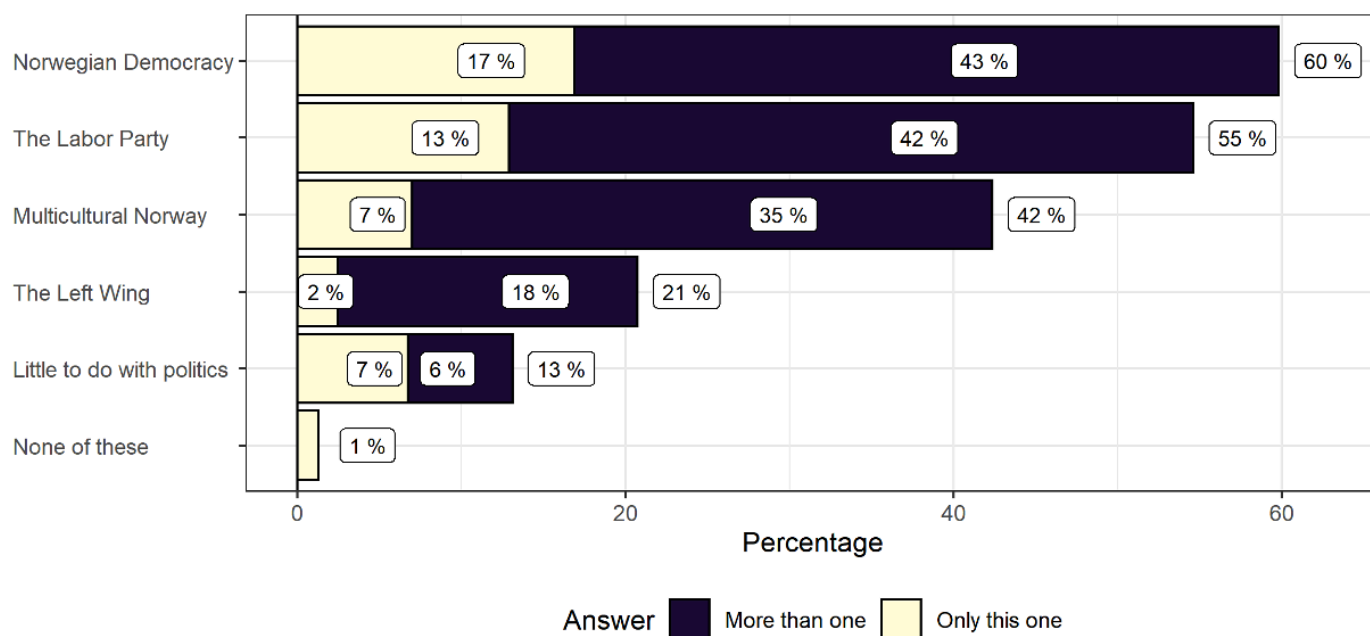
There is also consensus regarding the conspiratorial statement that more people were behind the attacks. Very few respondents support this statement and further analysis (not shown here) shows that most of these respondents probably interpreted the statements as a structural explanation (e.g., other right-wing extremists have inspired the terrorist) rather than as a conspiratorial one.[41]

Only two of the explanations produce some disagreement among the respondents. Although a clear majority of them do not see the attacks as a backlash against Norwegian immigration policy, a significant minority of about 23 percent do at least somewhat see it in that light. While such arguments were not advocated by any organized actor in Norway, some prominent far-right figures elsewhere—like the former leader of the French Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen did portray the attacks along these lines (see Berntzen and Ravndal in this

Special Issue). The other explanation with low levels of agreement concerned the question whether the attacks were a result of parental neglect: 36 percent agreed, while 43 percent disagreed. As mentioned previously, the idea that parental neglect and a difficult childhood are crucial to understanding why Breivik became radicalized, or at least developed a personality susceptible to radicalization, is the key argument in one of the most comprehensive assessments of Breivik’s life history.[42] However, high levels of respondents indicated not having a strong opinion either way (22 percent), and several others indicated “don’t know”, suggesting that disagreement perhaps reflects a lack of knowledge more than any high conflict potential. Additional analysis also shows that views about this statement, as well as the statement that more people were behind the attacks, are not strongly associated with any of the distinct narratives about the attacks (see Table 4 in the Appendix).

Turning to the questions of who was targeted, we find that there is also substantial agreement, though with some important deviations (see Figure 2). Not surprisingly, most respondents agree with the dominant narrative of July 22 promoted by the Prime Minister at the time, in which July 22 was an attack on democracy (60 percent). Many respondents also say that the Labor Party (and its youth wing) was targeted, but this does not necessarily mean the Labor Party as a *political* organization (54 percent). Given that respondents could select as many targets as they wanted, there is some overlap between the two. Still, nearly 3 out of 4 respondents chose one of these two options. At the same time, there are a large and a small minority who interpret July 22 as an attack against multicultural Norway (42 per cent) or the left wing (20 per cent), respectively. By doing so, they go beyond the cross-partisan metaphor of ‘democracy’ and what is arguably a less symbolic category ‘the Labor Party’, thereby moving towards a more ideological interpretation of the target selection. In this instance, the terrorist is not seen as someone who is only, or even mainly, targeting values and institutions characterized by consensus (democracies and political parties), but rather values and institutions that are more contested (multiculturalism and the left wing).

Figure 2. Who was the Target of the Attacks?



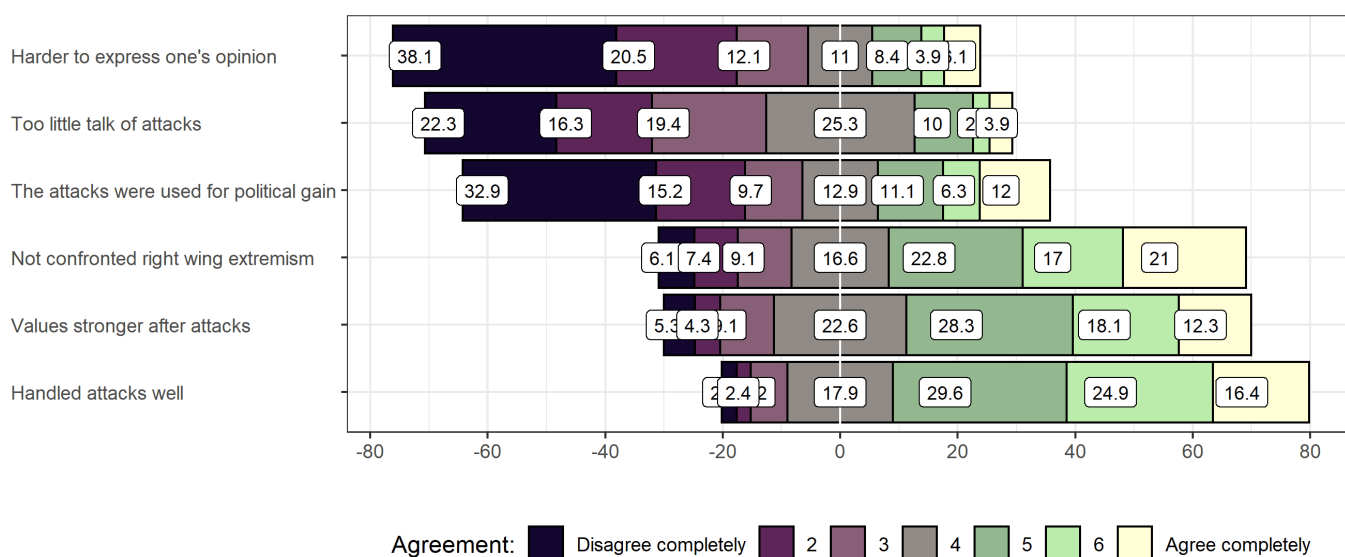
Our empirical findings also suggest that there is another minority (13 per cent)—though smaller than those who see July 22 as an attack on multiculturalism and the left wing—who believes that the terrorist attacks had little to do with politics. To be sure, some of these respondents may appear somewhat inconsistent given that they also believed it was an attack against the Labor Party or Norwegian democracy (6 per cent), but it does make sense with a more concrete and less abstract understanding of democracy and Labor Party. After all, it is difficult to ignore the fact that most of those who were targeted and killed were members of the Labor Party’s youth wing.

While there are relatively high levels of agreement regarding the question why July 22 happened and, to a lesser

extent, whom the terrorist targeted, there is more disagreement about how Norwegian society has reacted, politically and socially, to the terrorist attacks (see Figure 3). To be sure, on some of the questions, Norwegians are remarkably united: very few respondents believe that July 22 has resulted in political censorship in the sense that it has become more difficult to express one’s opinion. Most respondents think that our national values have become stronger in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks and most respondents agree that Norway has handled the attacks well. Yet, on questions related to the behavior of political actors in the period after the attacks, there is far more disagreement. This is particularly the case for a controversial and polarizing statement like “The Labor Party has exploited July 22 for political gain”. In the public debate, several prominent politicians from the two right-wing parties, the Progress Party and the Conservatives, have criticized the Labor Party for ‘playing the July 22 card’, suggesting that they are trying to exploit their status as victims of terrorism. While a significant minority (31 percent) disagree completely with this argument and many others disagree somewhat (15 percent) or a little (10 percent), as many as 30 percent agree to a greater or lesser extent. There is also conflict regarding whether or not July 22 has been addressed too little in the public debate and whether extreme right ideologies have been confronted well enough in the period after the terrorist attacks.

The analysis of the descriptive statistics shows that while there are large majorities to be found on most issues, there are some indications of minorities of respondents holding dissenting views. This polarization seems most clearly present when it comes to the most political issue, namely the usage of the attacks for political gain by the Labor Party. In the following section we explore whether the different attitudes are connected to each other to the extent that we can speak about different key narratives.

**Figure 3.** Respondents’ View of the Aftermath of the Attacks

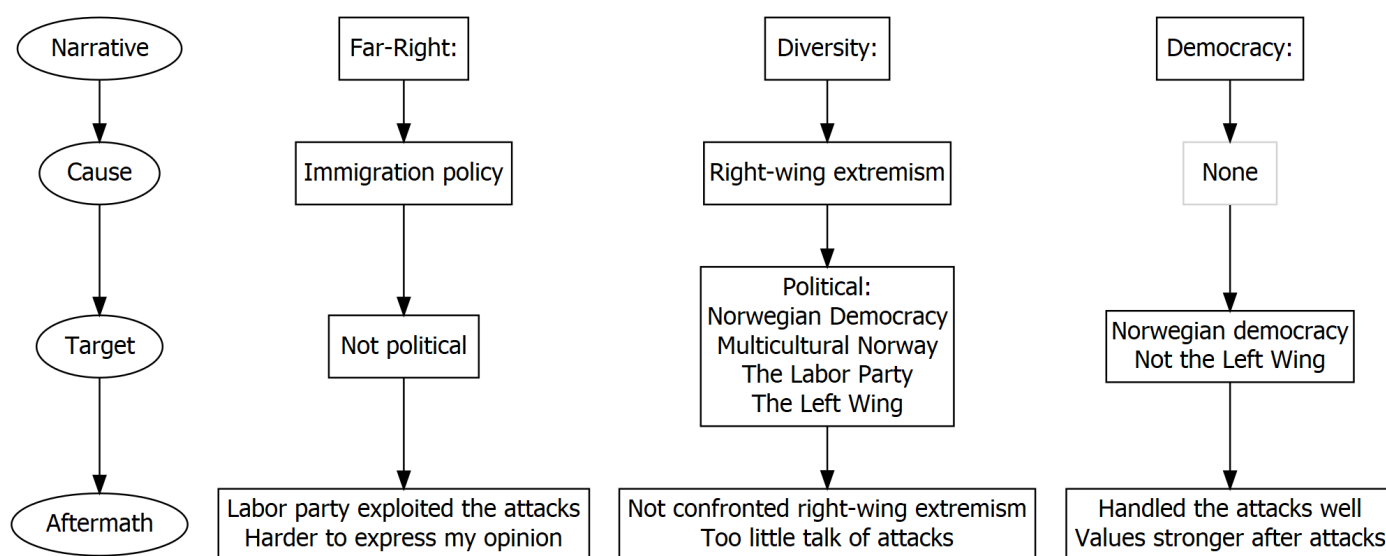


### Distinct Narratives?

To study how the different attitudes are connected, and whether they make up distinct narratives about July 22, we use Principal Component Analysis (PCA). This type of analysis explores the relation between different attitudes in the dataset and seeks to discover underlying factors that influence the respondents’ answers to individual questions.[43] Based on visual inspection of a Scree-plot and Kaiser’s criteria we find three factors (see Figure 6 in the Appendix).[44] Only three of our indicators did not correlate with any of these factors (i.e., statements related to insanity, parental neglect and whether more people were behind the attacks). This makes sense given that they were either lacking variation or remain largely depoliticized. Given that the three factors we identify are also empirically related to views on target selection,[45] we interpret these indices as distinct narratives about the attacks. To make the analysis easier to interpret, we use additive indices with the variables that load heavily on each factor in Table 3 in the Appendix instead of the factors from the PCA.[46] We recoded these indices to go from 0 to 1. The key structure of the three narratives is summarized in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Main Components of the Three Narratives



Two of the narratives are in line with previous research: the *democracy* and *diversity* narratives. According to our findings, the *democracy* narrative is (quite obviously) characterized by the idea that democracy was targeted. It also correlates with the idea that multiculturalism was targeted (though less so than the diversity narrative, see below), which makes sense given that values like “openness” and “tolerance” were emphasized in speeches after the terrorist attacks.[47] And it correlates negatively with both the view that July 22 had nothing to do with politics and that the left wing was the target. Moreover, and in line with the “proto-political”[48] response by the Prime Minister, in the sense that it emphasized core democratic values rather than partisan ideology,[49] those supporting the democracy narrative are not more likely to see July 22 as an attack on the Labor Party or the left wing more generally. Perhaps the most striking feature of the democracy narrative, however, is the idea that Norwegian society handled the attacks well and that values became stronger after the attacks. In general, the existence and content of the democracy narrative is very much in line with what the Prime Minister and his advisors wanted to achieve.[50] Stoltenberg’s speechwriter, Hans Christian Amundsen[51], writes in his memoirs that he felt it impossible to describe the attacks as a “political” massacre without it being perceived as self-pity. Furthermore, he writes that they saw the terrorist as a lone actor and not as part of a milieu. They wanted to ignore the terrorist and his political ideas, and instead invite the public to a defense of “our values”. Thus, the speeches seem to avoid emphasizing the right-wing extremist character of the attacks, presenting them more as an attack on our democratic values, leaving what was “political” to the prescriptions on how to react to the attacks (“with more openness and more democracy”). In other words, this narrative appears preoccupied with *how* we should react to terrorism rather than how we should explain *why* it happened. In fact, this narrative, in contrast to the other narratives, does not correlate with a distinct understanding of the causes of the attacks.

In the *diversity* narrative the target selection is considered to be more ideological compared to the democracy narrative. Although those believing in this narrative mention democracy as one of the targets of the attacks, they are more likely to believe that multicultural Norway and, to a lesser extent, the left wing and the Labor Party were targeted. They also have a much more distinct understanding about the causes of the attacks, namely that it was the result of right-wing extremism. To be sure, many of these respondents also believe that Breivik was/is ‘crazy’, yet they also believe that the perpetrator was motivated by a specific ideology. Furthermore, and perhaps not surprisingly, given the emphasis on ideology as an explanatory factor, this narrative is characterized by a more negative evaluation of the aftermath of the attacks compared to those mainly supporting the democracy narrative. These respondents believe both that Norwegian society has not sufficiently confronted right-wing extremism and that there is too little discussion regarding the attacks. In other words, the attacks have not been politicized enough. In many ways this narrative resembles the views advocated by Raymond Johansen, the Labor Party’s secretary at the time of the attacks. Together with many in the Labor Youth and the Labor Party,

he saw a confrontation with the far-right more broadly as necessary after the attacks, but faced pushback both by others in the Labor Party’s leadership and in the public debates following different attempts at starting such a discussion.[52]

We also find support for what we call *the far-right narrative*. This narrative was not one of the four narratives identified in the initial aftermath of the attacks [53], probably because it did not—for obvious reasons—feature prominently in the public discourse. As previously mentioned, Norwegian editors were very reluctant to publish dissenting voices in the period after the attacks.[54] Those supporting this narrative are much less likely to see July 22 as an attack on multiculturalism, the left wing and even democracy and far more likely to think that the attacks had nothing to do with politics. They are also more likely to choose none of the options provided in the survey, or to not respond at all to the question on target selection. At the same time, this narrative includes a strong feeling that the attacks have been politicized too much, as they believe that the Labor Party has exploited the attack for political gain and that it has become more difficult to express one’s opinion after the attacks. This narrative is also related to seeing the attacks as not caused by right-wing extremism, but by immigration policy. Arguing that the attacks had little to do with politics and at the same time saying that it was caused by Norwegian immigration policies is indeed somewhat inconsistent, but narratives do not have to be consistent to make sense for those believing in them. In fact, the logic of this narrative gets very close to the delegitimized ideological sphere of the terrorist, in which the de-politization can be considered a strategy of disguise (comparable to “communication latency” in research on antisemitism).[55]

Table 1 indicates how much support and opposition there is for each narrative. We have divided the respondents by their levels of support and opposition for each narrative. It should be noted that support for the different narratives is not mutually exclusive, which means that they can add up to more than 100 percent. As one could expect, based on its’ centrality in the aftermath of the attacks, more than four in five citizens are still supportive of the democracy narrative ten years after the attacks (40 percent agree strongly, and 44 percent agree somewhat). However, there is also widespread support for the diversity narrative. As many as three in four of the respondents are supportive of this narrative, though fewer citizens strongly support this narrative (only 25 percent compared to 50 percent of respondents who support it somewhat). For the far-right narrative the picture is reversed. Almost half of the respondents oppose this narrative completely. Still, a little more than one in four of the respondents are supportive of this narrative (8 percent are very supportive, and 19 percent are somewhat supportive).

**Table 1.** Levels of Support for the Three Narratives [56]

Support	Far-right	Diversity	Democracy
Full support	8%	25%	40%
Some support	19%	50%	44%
Some opposition	28%	18%	13%
Full opposition	45%	8%	4%

### ***Who Believes in What?***

To further investigate the polarizing potential of these narratives, we employed linear regression with the three indices as dependent variables. We use four sets of independent variables and control for age group, gender, and education. While we do not have strong hypotheses concerning these control variables, we are interested in seeing how age affects attitudes towards the attacks, and especially if the so-called “Utøya generation” supports different narratives than others.[57][58]

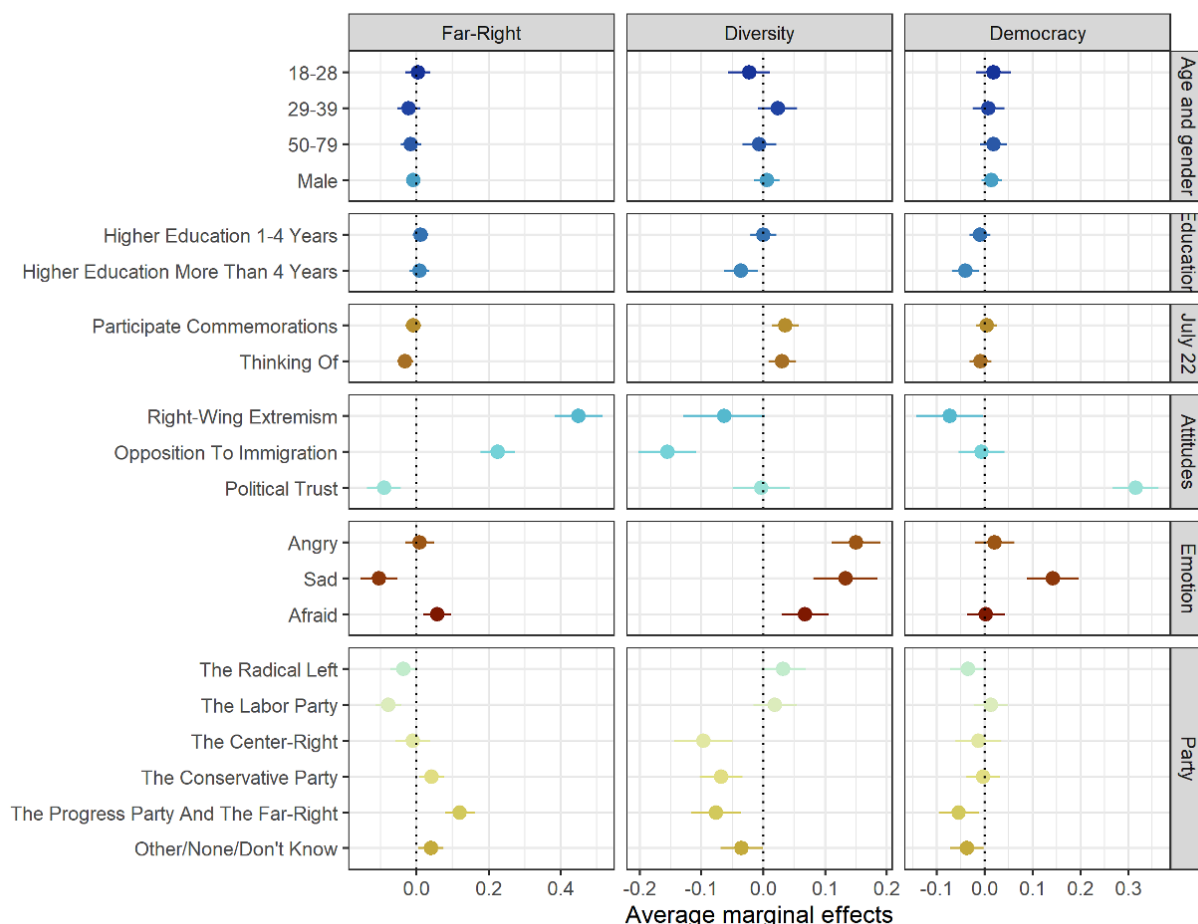
We first include variables on the respondents’ personal connection to the attacks. These items ask whether the respondents participated in the commemorations afterwards the attacks,[59] how often they think of the attacks today and what emotions the attacks make them feel (angry, fearful, or sad). Existing research has shown that terrorist attacks are likely to produce different emotions, which in turn are associated with different patterns of behaviour.[60] For example, fear is likely to result in less political participation, while anger can produce the opposite. Our initial assumption is that both participation and emotions will correlate negatively with support for the first narrative and positively with support for the two others, particularly with the diversity narrative.[61]

The second type of independent variables cover political attitudes. The first is partisanship. The July 22 attacks were very much connected to Norwegian political parties, with both the victim being the Labor youth and the Labor Party and the perpetrator having a prior membership in the right-wing populist party, the Progress Party, and its youth wing. Partisanship may therefore be a crucial determinant of how people interpret the attacks. However, a correlation between partisanship and attitudes may have another explanation as well. In the ten years that have passed since the attacks, they have been debated from time to time, and the different parties have to a certain extent signalled different interpretations of the attacks. Partisan differences in the interpretations may stem from this kind of signalling from the political elites.

While partisanship may be one important part of people’s interpretations of the attacks, there is also reason to believe that more general ideological leanings of the respondents may be important. After all, there is widespread agreement that the perpetrator was motivated by right-wing extremist ideology. Jakobsson and Blom [62] hypothesize that their findings of increased support for immigration was caused by cognitive dissonance experienced by people having similar attitudes as the terrorist. Here we might expect the effect of cognitive dissonance to be in the opposite direction. We can expect that respondents with right-wing extremist or anti-immigrant attitudes may be less likely to see the attacks as caused by right-wing extremism. We have used a wide set of questions on political attitudes (with an emphasis on far-right attitudes) in a principal component analysis (see the methodology section above). We include two of the indices in this discussion, right-wing extremism and anti-immigration. Finally, we have included a measure on political trust, creating an index from two questions on political trust (trust in the government and trust in the parliament - see the Appendix). While we do not have strong expectations regarding how trust affects support for the three narratives, the first narrative may be assumed to be negatively correlated with trust and the third positively.[63] The first narrative contains some questions associated with distrust (using the attacks for political gain) and the third some questions that could be associated with trust (that Norwegian society handled the attacks well).

Figure 5 shows average marginal effects from the OLS regressions with support for the three narratives as dependent variables. The first column shows the results with support for the *far-right* narrative as dependent variable, the second support for the *diversity* narrative and the last for the *democracy* narrative.

**Figure 5.** Average Marginal Effects from OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) with the Three Narratives as Dependent Variables



Starting with variables measuring involvement in commemoration and cognitive awareness of the attacks, the correlations with the three indices are relatively small. There does not seem to be a correlation between the far-right and democracy indices and participating in the commemorations nor with thinking of the attacks. However, both participation and thinking of the attacks are positively correlated with support for the diversity narrative. Also, for the three emotions the patterns differ between the indices. The first and last narrative are correlated with sadness, but in opposite directions. Feeling sad because of the attacks is correlated with lower support for the far-right narrative and higher support for the democracy narrative. Support for the diversity narrative is positively correlated with all three emotions, particularly anger and sadness.

Moving to party affiliation, there is a clear relationship with support for the far-right narrative, and this relationship seems to follow the parties' position on the left-right axis. People voting for the center party (reference category) have low levels of support for the far-right narrative, and the further to the right the higher is the support for this narrative. The diversity narrative shows the opposite pattern. The correlations with partisanship seem to follow the left-right-scale with people being less supportive of the diversity narrative the more right-wing their party is. For the democracy narrative, the relationship with partisanship does not appear to follow the left-right axis, but rather an inverse U-shape that separates the center from the two extremes. Supporters of parties both on the left and the right extreme of the left-right axis are less supportive of the democracy narrative.

On the ideological dimensions, both right-wing extremism and opposition to immigration are positively correlated with support for the far-right narrative. The correlation with right-wing extremism is particularly strong. The estimate for political trust is negative and statistically significant, but small. Regarding support for the diversity narrative, the correlations are all negative. Opposition to immigration is the most negative and

while the correlation with right-wing extremism is smaller, it is also significant. The correlation between support for the diversity narrative and political trust is close to zero. Finally, support for the democracy narrative is also negatively correlated with right-wing extremism, but the negative correlation with opposition to immigration is not significant. However, there is a strong and positive correlation between political trust and support for this narrative.

The correlations with the control variables are all small. There seems to be a small negative correlation between higher education and support for the two last narratives. This is a bit surprising, and the negative correlation with the highest level of education is not significant when only the control variables are included (see Table 4 in the Appendix). For gender and age, the correlations are small and insignificant at the 0.05 level. There are therefore no obvious signs of a “Utøya generation” effect in the data.

## Conclusion

This article set out to measure how Norwegian citizens today interpret the terrorist attack on July 22, 2011 a full decade after these attacks took place. Existing literature on responses to terrorist attacks, including the July 22 attacks, emphasizes that societies tend to produce a strong and united counter-narrative showing that it will not give in to the political demands put forward by the terrorist.[64] We wanted to explore whether unity remains intact in the long run, arguing that such a united counter-narrative might be particularly difficult when the political motivations of terrorists resemble ideological positions associated with major political parties. In this article, we distinguished between three specific questions: First, do citizens agree or disagree on how to interpret various aspects of the attacks? Second, do they hold distinct narratives about the attacks? Third, are these narratives associated with other ideological beliefs, partisanship, trust, or emotional reactions evoked by the attacks?

The results show relatively high levels of agreement among Norwegians in their interpretations of July 22, including not only holding that the perpetrator was ‘crazy’ and motivated by right-wing extremism, but also that Norway handled the attacks well and that our society’s core values became stronger because of the attack. However, there is also evidence of a certain level of disagreement on many of the questions we asked. This includes the issue of whether the attacks were related to parental neglect, whether they should be seen as a reaction to Norwegian immigration policies, and whether the Labor Party has exploited the attacks for political gain.

Furthermore, our analysis shows that there are clear patterns in how respondents interpret *the target selection* of the attacks, the reasons *why they happened* and *how society responded*. We interpret the interconnection between these dimensions as the existence of distinct narratives. The narratives are different, but internally coherent understandings where each element follows from the other. Based on the survey questions we included (questions which are arguably biased towards the *political* dimensions of the attack) we find support for three different narratives about July 22. The democracy narrative sees the attacks as attacks on Norwegian democracy, has a positive evaluation of the reaction by Norwegian society, and sees certain values as strengthened after the attacks. None of our questions about the reasons for the attacks are related to this narrative, though this might reflect the nature of the questions included in the survey.

The two other narratives reflect left-wing and right-wing critiques of the democracy narrative. The first, the diversity narrative, emphasizes the extreme-right motivation of the terrorist and sees the events of July 22 as attacks on multicultural Norway and on the left wing. Following from the emphasis on the political characteristics of the attacks, this narrative also sees the society’s response as not sufficiently confronting right-wing extremism and also holds that there is not enough discussion about the attacks. Finally, the last narrative, which we called ‘far-right’, sees the attacks as caused by Norwegian immigration policy and sees the targeting as not political. Following from this apolitical understanding of the attacks themselves, the evaluation of the aftermath of the attacks is negative: the Labor Party has exploited the attacks and it became more difficult to express one’s opinion after the attacks. In other words, the self-ascribed “apolitical” character of the July 22 attacks in the far-right narrative facilitates the double operation of interpreting the terror on the one hand as

not related to politics (and thus, legitimizing the motives) and of accusing political opponents of abusing the memory (and thereby de-legitimizing them).[65]

The regression analysis results show that the narratives are strongly associated with other political attitudes. This is especially the case with right-wing extremist and (anti-)immigration attitudes, but also with partisanship, trust, and emotions.

The democracy narrative is supported by centrist respondents, by those experiencing more sadness than others when thinking about the attacks and is supported more strongly depending on the higher political trust and the lower support of right-wing extremism the respondents have. These results underline the consensus character of the narrative, which probably explains why it is still widely supported. This narrative does not follow directly from the attacks, but primarily from the interpretation given by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and other prominent politicians. It is therefore no surprise that acceptance of this narrative depends on whether or not the respondent generally trusts political institutions like the government and the parliament.

The diversity narrative is supported by people who are generally positive towards immigration, by people who do not harbor right-wing extremist views, by people voting for the left-wing parties and by people who experience more anger, sadness and, to some extent, also more fear than others when thinking of the attacks. This narrative is the only one that seems to be connected to participation in commemorations and to regularly thinking of July 22 today. The narrative receives less support than the democracy narrative, but far more than what we had expected and far more than the right-wing critique of the democracy narrative (see below), with around 75 percent supporting, completely or partially, this narrative. The link between the diversity narrative and anger may indicate that this narrative has the largest potential for mobilization going forward. The current (2021) debate about establishing a commission on extremism, headed by the AUF and supported by the Labor Party, could be seen as support for this expectation.

The far-right narrative is supported more strongly by respondents with right-wing extremist views, respondents who oppose immigration, support right-wing parties, have lower levels of trust and who become less sad than others when thinking of the 2011 attacks. There is much lower support for this narrative compared to the two others, but (some or full) support from one in four of the respondents is far from negligible. Moreover, the results here are clear indications of the ideological and partisan basis for the far-right narrative. Although some of the elements of this narrative are also supported by citizens with more moderate views and by those voting for the mainstream political right and (to a lesser extent) other centrist parties, the full narrative is particularly strong among individuals whose ideology overlaps with the perpetrator's ideology – even if most of them do not support violence as political strategy.

Let us end by highlighting three implications of our findings. First, the results indicate that if the narrative created by the elites resonate well with the public in the immediate phase after a terrorist attack, it may have long-lasting impact on the dominant perception. As a result, society maintains a relatively high level of consensus regarding the narrative about the terrorist attack. This is perhaps even more likely in countries characterized by high levels of political trust or after attacks with a strong rally effect [66], where citizens generally trust the messages promoted by the government. Our findings show that those still believing in the dominant narrative are those with relatively high levels of trust.

Second, and at the same time, our results suggest that the democracy narrative is currently – and perhaps increasingly – challenged by those who believe the attacks have been politicized too little and those who believe they have been politicized too much. While there were exceptional high levels of unity in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, our results indicate a tendency towards more conflict as time goes by. Both of the two oppositional narratives include negative evaluations of the societal response to the attacks. Moreover, as the youth wing of the Labour Party becomes more articulate in pointing out the ideological motives of these terrorist attacks, the far-right narrative identified in the study can be expected to become a more pronounced push-back strategy.

Third, the (growing) polarization of how to interpret the terrorist attacks illustrates some of the weaknesses

in the democracy narrative and how it may have left the public discourse less prepared to negotiate tensions and handle contradicting interpretations in a deliberative mode. As we have seen, in our data, this narrative is less specific on some questions such as the reasons for the attacks, which makes it difficult to address the root causes of terrorism. Moreover, by insisting on its harmonic outlook, that Norway has dealt with the terrorist attacks in a good way, it may unintentionally contribute to the (far-right) delegitimization of the diversity narrative as “politicized”.

On a final note: The fact that the interpretation of the terrorist attacks today seems to mirror closely other political cleavages in Norwegian politics makes it even more difficult for society to ‘keep calm and carry on’. As recent debates in Norway have shown, public statements in favor of both of the two oppositional narratives seem to create heated exchanges. However, it remains an open question whether our results are generalizable to other terrorist attacks. While other memory research has shown that conflicts tend to emerge after a period of consensus, it may be even more difficult to maintain unity when the perpetrator is “one of us” [67] rather than “one of them” (e.g., a militant Islamist carrying out an attack in a Western country). This means that our findings might be valid only in cases where there is an ideological connection, however weak, between the terrorist and major political parties.

### ***Acknowledgments***

We wish to thank Tore Bjørgo, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Tore Wig, Cathrine Thorleifsson, Audun Fladmoe, other members of the FREXO-project and participants of the Nordic Conference on Violent Extremism 2021, as well as two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

### ***About the Authors:***

**Øyvind Bugge Solheim** is a post-doc at C-REX - Center for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo. He studies the consequences of terrorist attacks for political attitudes, right-wing extremism and the usage of social media by the far-right. His work has been published in journals such as *West-European politics*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

**Anders Ravik Jupskås** is a senior researcher and deputy director at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), University of Oslo. His work covers right-wing extremism, populism and party politics. He has published articles in *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *Swiss Political Science Review* and *Norsk statsvitenskapelig tidsskrift*, as well as chapters on far-right politics in recently published edited volumes on ECPR Press, Palgrave and Routledge. He is the author of *Ekstreme Europa* (Cappelen Damm, 2012/2017).

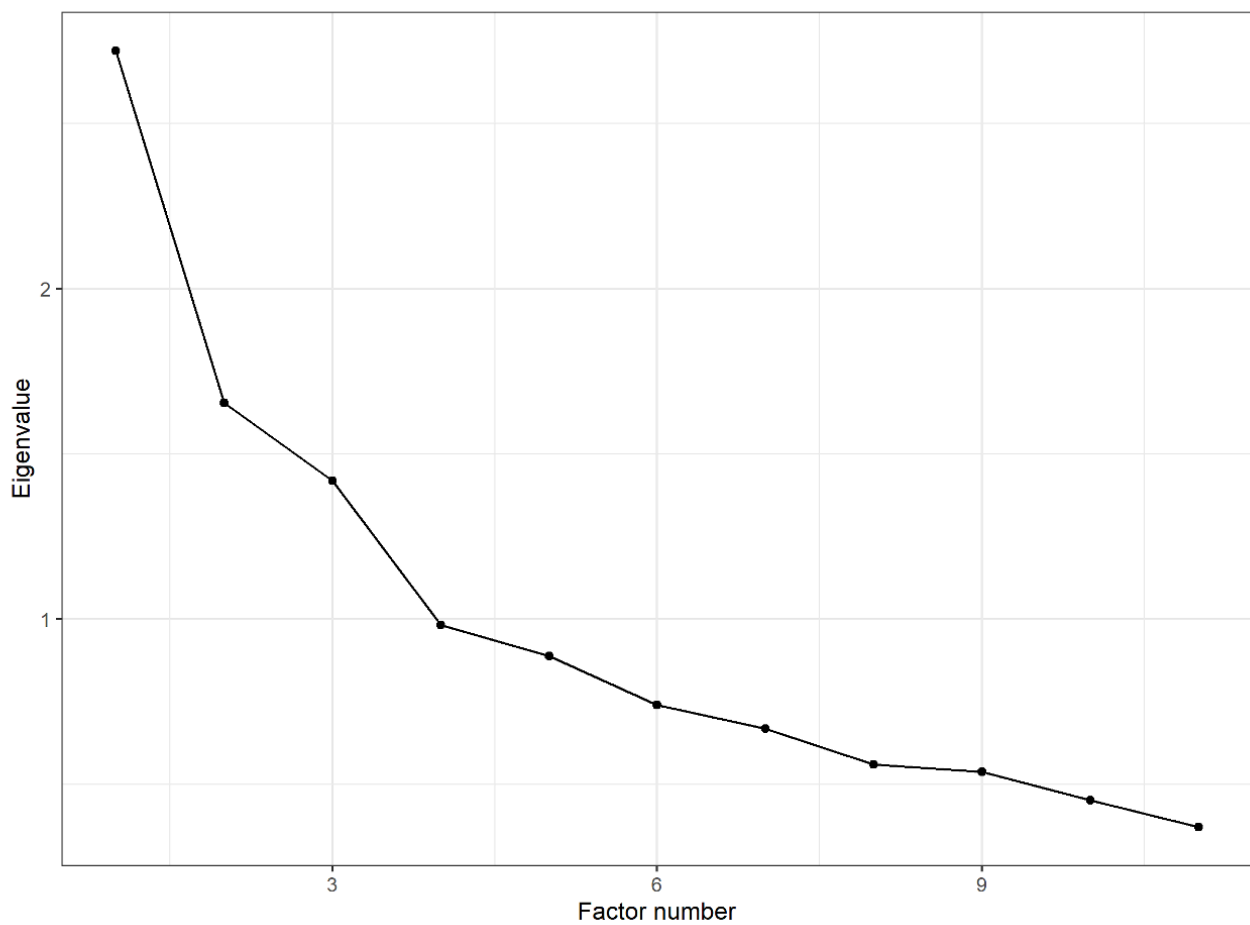
**Appendix**

(selected Tables and Figures referred to in the text)

**Table 2.** Number of Targets Chosen by the Respondents

Number of targets chosen	Percent
0	7%
1	44%
2	24%
3	16%
4	9%
5	1%

**Figure 6.** Scree-plot of the Eigenvalues of the Different Factors





**Table 3.** Factor-Loadings from a Principal Component Analysis (PCA)  
with Varimax Rotation (orthogonal)

	<b>Far-right</b>	<b>Diversity</b>	<b>Democracy</b>
<b>Views on the aftermath of the attacks</b>			
Used for political gain	0.68		
Difficult to express one's opinion	0.76		
Not confronted right wing extremism		0.56	
Too little talk of attacks		0.67	
Handled attacks well			0.54
Values stronger after attacks			0.82
<b>Reasons for the attacks</b>			
Perpetrator was crazy			
Right wing extremism		0.51	
More people behind attacks			
Parental neglect			
Immigration policy	0.57		

**Table 4.** Results from the OLS regression with the Different Narrative Indices as Dependent Variables

	Far-right		Diversity		Democracy	
	Controls	Full model	Controls	Full model	Controls	Full model
<b>(Intercept)</b>	0.34**	0.23**	0.61**	0.46**	0.63**	0.33**
	[0.3, 0.38]	[0.17, 0.3]	[0.58, 0.64]	[0.39, 0.53]	[0.6, 0.66]	[0.26, 0.4]
<b>Male</b>	0.069**	-0.009	-0.068**	0.0056	-0.02.	0.015
	[0.044, 0.094]	[-0.03, 0.012]	[-0.089, -0.047]	[-0.015, 0.026]	[-0.041, 2e-04]	[-0.0063, 0.036]
<b>Age (ref: 40-49)</b>						
<b>18-28</b>	-0.075**	0.004	0.027	-0.023	0.031.	0.019
	[-0.12, -0.029]	[-0.031, 0.039]	[-0.01, 0.064]	[-0.057, 0.011]	[-0.0059, 0.068]	[-0.017, 0.054]
<b>29-39</b>	-0.033	-0.022	0.017	0.023	-0.016	0.0083
	[-0.075, 0.0092]	[-0.054, 0.0098]	[-0.018, 0.052]	[-0.0082, 0.055]	[-0.051, 0.019]	[-0.025, 0.041]
<b>50-79</b>	-0.023	-0.016	0.013	-0.0065	0.041**	0.019
	[-0.06, 0.014]	[-0.044, 0.012]	[-0.018, 0.043]	[-0.034, 0.021]	[0.01, 0.071]	[-0.0098, 0.047]
<b>Education (ref: No higher)</b>						
<b>Higher Education 1-4 Years</b>	-0.028*	0.011	0.0021	-0.00	-0.00037	-0.0094
	[-0.055, -0.00024]	[-0.01, 0.033]	[-0.021, 0.025]	[-0.021, 0.021]	[-0.023, 0.022]	[-0.031, 0.012]
<b>Higher Education More Than 4 Years</b>	-0.1**	0.0078	-0.0018	-0.036*	-0.00014	-0.04**
	[-0.14, -0.068]	[-0.02, 0.035]	[-0.032, 0.028]	[-0.064, -0.0083]	[-0.03, 0.03]	[-0.068, -0.012]
<b>July 22</b>						
<b>Participate Commemorations</b>		-0.009		0.036**		0.0044
		[-0.031, 0.013]		[0.014, 0.057]		[-0.018, 0.027]
<b>Thinking Of</b>		-0.032**		0.031**		-0.0083
		[-0.054, -0.0095]		[0.0084, 0.053]		[-0.031, 0.015]
<b>Angry</b>		0.009		0.15**		0.02
		[-0.031, 0.049]		[0.11, 0.19]		[-0.021, 0.062]
<b>Afraid</b>		0.057**		0.067**		0.0027
		[0.018, 0.097]		[0.029, 0.11]		[-0.037, 0.042]

Table 4 (continued)

<b>Sad</b>		-0.1**		0.13**		0.14**
		[-0.16, -0.053]		[0.081, 0.18]		[0.088, 0.2]
<b>Attitudes</b>						
<b>Right-Wing Extremism</b>		0.45**		-0.063.		-0.073*
		[0.38, 0.52]		[-0.13, 0.003]		[-0.14, -0.0031]
<b>Opposition To Immigration</b>		0.22**		-0.16**		-0.0066
		[0.18, 0.27]		[-0.2, -0.11]		[-0.055, 0.042]
<b>Political Trust</b>		-0.091**		-0.0035		0.32**
		[-0.14, -0.044]		[-0.05, 0.043]		[0.27, 0.36]
<b>Party (ref: The Center Party)</b>						
<b>The Radical Left</b>		-0.037*		0.032.		-0.034.
		[-0.073, -0.00017]		[-0.004, 0.069]		[-0.071, 0.0028]
<b>The Labor Party</b>		-0.078**		0.019		0.013
		[-0.11, -0.042]		[-0.016, 0.054]		[-0.023, 0.049]
<b>The Center-Right</b>		-0.01		-0.097**		-0.013
		[-0.058, 0.038]		[-0.14, -0.05]		[-0.061, 0.035]
<b>The Conservative Party</b>		0.042*		-0.068**		-0.0034
		[0.0071, 0.077]		[-0.1, -0.034]		[-0.038, 0.032]
<b>The Progress Party And The Far-Right</b>		0.12**		-0.077**		-0.054*
		[0.079, 0.16]		[-0.12, -0.036]		[-0.096, -0.011]
<b>Other/None/Don't Know</b>		0.04*		-0.035*		-0.037*
		[0.0044, 0.075]		[-0.069, -0.00066]		[-0.072, -0.0023]
<b>N</b>	1683	1461	1782	1517	1661	1436
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.05	0.51	0.02	0.32	0.01	0.22
<b>. p &lt; 0.1, * p &lt; 0.05, ** p &lt; 0.01</b>						

**Table 5.** Results from T-tests Testing the Difference Between those Choosing a Target and those not Choosing that Target in the Three Narratives

Target	Far Right	Diversity	Democracy	Number of supporters
Norwegian Democracy	-0.15***	0.11***	0.076***	1687
The Labor Party	-0.057***	0.049***	0.0062	1521
Multicultural Norway	-0.095***	0.1***	0.02*	1185
The Left Wing	-0.07***	0.051***	-0.027**	569
Little to do with politics	0.044**	-0.072***	-0.048***	367
None of these	0.25***	-0.23***	-0.21***	41
Not chosen any of the options	0.11**	-0.058*	-0.043.	200

**Table 6.** Distributions on the Three Indices Measuring Ideology and Trust

Support	Right-wing extremism	Anti-immigration	Political Trust
Support/Trust	2%	30%	45%
Some support/ Some trust	9%	28%	41%
Some opposition/ Some distrust	27%	28%	9%
Opposition/ Distrust	63%	15%	5%

The groups used here are based on a division of the variables into four by level of support for the indices. The first group, ‘Support/Trust’ is the percentage answering 0.75 and above on the scale from 0 to 1. At the other extreme we find ‘Opposition/Distrust’. This is the percentage answering below 0.25. In the middle the categories are from 0.25 to below 0.5 and from 0.5 to below 0.75.

## Notes

- [1] Hetherington, Marc J., and Michael Nelson. 2003. "Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism." *Ps-Political Science & Politics* 36 (1): pp. 37–42; URL: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3649343>.
- [2] Abrahms, Max. 2018. *Rules for Rebels: The Science of Victory in Militant History*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- [3] Zandberg, Eyal, and Motti Neiger. 2005. "Between the Nation and the Profession: Journalists as Members of Contradicting Communities." *Media, Culture & Society* 27 (1): pp. 131–141; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443705049073>; Chowanietz, Christophe. 2010. "Rallying Around the Flag or Railing Against the Government? Political Parties' Reactions to Terrorist Acts." *Party Politics* 17 (5): pp. 673–98; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068809346073>.
- [4] Rafoss, Tore Witsø. 2015. "Meningsløs terror og meningsfylt fellesskap: Stoltenbergs taler etter 22. juli." *Sosiologisk Tidsskrift* 23 (01–02): pp. 6–28.
- [5] Verovšek, Peter J. 2016. "Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past: The Politics of Memory as a Research Paradigm." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4 (3): pp. 529–543; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094>.
- [6] Lenz, Claudia. 2018. "22. juli-fortellinger og forhandlingen om hva terroren skal bety for fremtiden." *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning* 17 (1): p.18.
- [7] Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "From the Depths of Despair: Performance, Counterperformance, and 'September 11.'" *Sociological Theory* 22 (1): pp. 88–105; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2004.00205.x>.
- [8] Alexander, op. cit.; Abrahms, op. cit.
- [9] Hetherington and Nelson, op. cit.
- [10] Schudson, Micheal. 2003. "What's Unusual About Covering Politics as Usual". In *Journalism After September 11*, edited by Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan. London/New York, NY UK/US: Routledge, pp. 44-53.
- [11] Chowanietz, op. cit.
- [12] Alexander, op. cit.
- [13] Jupskås, Anders Ravik. 2015. "The Persistence of Populism. the Norwegian Progress Party 1973-2009." PhD thesis, University of Oslo.
- [14] Lenz, op. cit.; Rafoss 2015, op. cit.; Rafoss, Tore Witsø. 2018. "Hva betydde rosetogene?" In: *Norge etter 22 juli: Forhandlinger om verdier, identiteter og et motstandsdyktig samfunn*, edited by Henrik Syse. Oslo, Norway: Cappelen Damm Akademisk; URL: <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.37>.
- [15] Interpreting terrorist attacks as attacks on democracy is a common theme by political leaders; see for example Abrahms, op. cit., 65; Sinkkonen, Teemu. 2016. "Can Political Leaders Make a Difference? Norwegian Versus Spanish Experiences in Responding to Terrorist Attacks." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39 (4): pp. 326–41; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1117330>.
- [16] Wollebæk, Dag, Bernard Enjolras, Kari Steen-Johnsen, and Guro Ødegård. 2012. "After Utøya: How a High-Trust Society Reacts to Terror - Trust and Civic Engagement in the Aftermath of July 22." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45 (01): pp. 32–37; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096511001806>.
- [17] VG, 2011 in Rafoss 2015, op. cit.
- [18] See e.g., Alonso, Rogelio. 2017. "Victims of ETA's Terrorism as an Interest Group: Evolution, Influence, and Impact on the Political Agenda of Spain." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29 (6): pp. 985–1005; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2015.1096783>.
- [19] Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. and expanded edition. New York, NY, US: Columbia University Press, p. 20.
- [20] Solheim, Øyvind Bugge. 2020. "Right-Wing Terrorism and Out-Group Trust: The Anatomy of a Terrorist Backlash." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32 (6): pp. 1206–1224; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1457526>.
- [21] Crenshaw, Martha. 1991. "How Terrorism Declines." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3 (1): 69–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559108427093>.
- [22] Lenz, op. cit.
- [23] Thorbjørnsrud, Kjersti, and Tine Ustad Figenschou. 2018. "Consensus and Dissent After Terror: Editorial Policies in Times of Crisis." *Journalism* 19 (3): pp. 333–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916657519>, p. 345.
- [24] Solheim, op. cit.
- [25] Shanaah, Sadi, Kumar Yogeewaran, Lara Greaves, Joseph A. Bulbulia, Danny Osborne, M. Usman Afzali, and Chris G. Sibley. 2021. "Hate Begets Warmth? The Impact of an Anti-Muslim Terrorist Attack on Public Attitudes toward Muslims." *Terrorism and*

- Political Violence*, forthcoming, pp. 1–19.; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.1877673>.
- [26] Berntzen, Lars Erik, and Sveinung Sandberg. 2014. “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (5): 759–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.767245>.
- [27] Rafoss 2018, op. cit.
- [28] Wollebæk, Dag, Kari Steen-Johnsen, Bernard Enjolras, and Guro Ødegård. 2013. “Rallying Without Fear.” In: *The Political Psychology of Terrorism Fears*, edited by Daniel Antonius and Samuel J. Sinclair. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 246–262.
- [29] See e.g., Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, Charles S. Taber, and Gallya Lahav. 2005. “Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (3): pp. 593–608; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.00144.x>; Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, and Christopher Weber. 2007. “The Political Consequences of Perceived Threat and Felt Insecurity.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 614 (1): pp. 131–53; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207305951>.
- [30] Vasilopoulos, Pavlos. 2018. “Terrorist Events, Emotional Reactions, and Political Participation: The 2015 Paris Attacks.” *West European Politics* 41 (1): pp. 102–27. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1346901>.
- [31] We use weights in the OLS-regression and when we measure support for the narratives. The weights are based on gender, age, region, and education (university-level or not).
- [32] As can be seen in Table 2 in the appendix, almost half the respondents only selected one of the options, while a quarter selected two options and another quarter selected more than two options. Finally, seven percent did not select any of the targets.
- [33] See Borchgrevink, Aage Storm. 2013. *A Norwegian Tragedy: Anders Behring Breivik and the Massacre on Utøya*. Translated by Guy Puzey. Malden, MA, US: Polity Press.
- [34] See Berntzen and Ravndal in this Special Issue.
- [35] Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2019. “Lessons Learned or a Missed Opportunity? Norway After the 22 July Terrorist Attack”. In: *Diversity and Contestations Over Nationalism in Europe and Canada.*, edited by John Erik Fossum, Riva Kastoryano, and Birte Siim, 269–284. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [36] The right-wing extremism index includes the statements: “Norway is becoming a lawless society”, “there should only be white people in Norway”, “it is ok to use violence to defend Norwegian culture” and “violence among ethnic and religious groups is inevitable.”
- [37] The opposition to immigration index includes the statements: “Immigration is a serious threat to our national character” and “we should make it easier for immigrants to get access to Norway”. The last of the questions is turned so that high values denote opposition to immigration.
- [38] Melle, Ingrid. 2013. “The Breivik Case and What Psychiatrists Can Learn from It”. *World Psychiatry* 12 (1): pp. 16–21; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20002>.
- [39] However, Steen-Johnsen and Winsvold argue that seeing the terrorist as mentally ill may be part an individualization of the perpetrator that moves the focus away from possible societal causes of the attacks. See Steen-Johnsen, Kari, and Marte Slagsvold Winsvold. 2019. “Global Terrorism and the Civil Sphere in Norway: Renegotiating Civil Codes.” In *The Nordic Civil Sphere*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Anna Lund, and Andrea M. Voyer, 229–55. Cambridge, UK: Polity, p. 250.
- [40] One third of the respondents agreed completely with both of the statements: The perpetrator being crazy, and the attacks being caused by right wing extremism; only 3.5 percent agreed completely with him being crazy and not motivated by right-wing extremism.
- [41] Of those agreeing completely with the statement that more people were behind the attacks, 72 percent agreed completely with the attacks as being caused by right-wing extremism.
- [42] See Borchgrevink, op. cit.
- [43] Because only continuous variables can be used for PCA we exclude the binary questions on the targets of the attacks, but we show how these are related to the different factors below.
- [44] The fourth factor has an eigenvalue close to 1. The fourth factor in a four-factor solution correlates the most with seeing the attacks as caused by Norwegian immigration policy (0.42) and saying that there were more people behind the attacks (0.46). The correlation between the first factor and seeing the attacks as caused by immigration policy is reduced in such a solution, but it is still at 0.44.
- [45] T-tests show that there are significant differences in the values on all three indices for nearly all the possible targets as shown in Table 5 in the appendix. Contrary to our expectations of the different substantial targets, “The Norwegian Democracy” and “Multicultural Norway” have the strongest correlations with the three indexes. Both of these correlate negatively with the Far-

- Right index and positively the two others. Choosing “The Labor Party” or “The Left Wing” correlate similarly, albeit weakly, with the first two indexes. However, for the last index there is no relationship with choosing “The Labor Party” and a negative correlation with seeing the attacks as targeting “The Left Wing”. The three last options, seeing the attacks as having little to do with politics, saying that none of the options was relevant and not selecting any option, show similar patterns. They are correlated positively with the Far-Right index and negatively with the other two indexes.
- [46] There is a weak correlation (0.15) between the diversity and democracy narratives. In addition, both of these are negatively correlated with the far-right narrative at -0.32 and -0.25 for diversity and the democracy narrative respectively.
- [47] Jenssen, Anders Todal, and Kaja Hovde Bye. 2013. “Da sorg og sinne ble åpenhet og toleranse? – Politisk talekunst etter 22. juli 2011.” *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* 54 (2): pp. 217–28.
- [48] Rafoss 2018, op. cit., p. 147.
- [49] Stoltenberg mentions the people killed and Utøya multiple times in his speeches. However, except for the speech held for the Labor Party at Folkets hus (“People’s House”, the labor movement center in Oslo), few of the speeches emphasize AUF as the target of the attacks. See Amundsen, Hans Kristian. 2018. *Vi Er et Lite Land, Men et Stort Folk - Slik Samlet vi Norge 22. Juli-21. August 2011*. Oslo, Norway: Juritzen forlag.
- [50] Rafoss 2015, op. cit.
- [51] Amundsen, op. cit.
- [52] Notaker, Hallvard. 2021. *Arbeiderpartiet og 22. Juli*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- [53] Lenz, op. cit.
- [54] Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, op. cit.
- [55] Thanks to one of the anonymous reviewers for this comment and suggestion.
- [56] We have divided the respondents into four groups based on their answers on the additive indices from 0 to 1. ‘Full opposition’ is below 0.25, ‘some opposition’ from 0.25 to below 0.5, ‘some support’ from 0.5 to below 0.75 and ‘full support’ from 0.75 and above.
- [57] Bergh, Johannes, and Guro Ødegård. “Ungdomsvalget 2011.” 2013. *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* 29, no. 01: pp.30–50.; Wollebæk et al.,2013 op. cit.
- [58] We divide age into four categories and are especially interested in the group 18 to 28, respondents who was 9 to 19 at the time of the attacks.
- [59] In our survey, 26 percent of the respondents say that they participated. This is a bit lower than the 33 percent that answered that they had participated in the Rose Marches one month after the attack. See Wollebæk, Dag, Bernard Enjolras, Kari Steen-Johnsen, and Guro Ødegård. 2011. “Hva Gjør Terroren Med Oss Som Sivilsamfunn?” Oslo/Bergen: Senter for forskning på sivilsamfunn og frivillig sektor, p. 40. In addition, Solheim finds no relationship between participation in the Rose Marches and change in out-group trust after the attacks. Solheim, op. cit.
- [60] Vasilopoulous, op. cit.
- [61] Since this study is only correlational, it is not possible to establish clear causal directions of the different relationships. The causal relationship may be especially blurry for these variables as one may assume that perceptions of the attacks may have affected the emotional reaction or the motivation to take part in commemorations afterwards.
- [62] Jakobsson, Niklas, and Svein Blom. 2014. “Did the 2011 Terror Attacks in Norway Change Citizens’ Attitudes Toward Immigrants?” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 26 (4): pp. 475–86; URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edt036>.
- [63] Prior studies of the July 22 attacks have shown that both generalized trust and political trust reduced the amount of fear one experienced after the attacks. See Wollebæk 2013, op. cit.; Enjolras, Bernard, Kari Steen-Johnsen, Francisco Herreros, Øyvind Bugge Solheim, Marte Slagsvold Winsvold, Shana Kushner Gadarian, and Atte Oksanen. 2019. “Does Trust Prevent Fear in the Aftermath of Terrorist Attacks?” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13 (4): pp. 39–55.
- [64] Alexander, op. cit.
- [65] Thanks to one of the reviewers for making this point.
- [66] Steen-Johnsen, Kari, Øyvind Bugge Solheim, Marte Slagsvold Winsvold, and Bernard Enjolras. 2021. “Tillit etter terror i Norge, Frankrike og Spania. Betydningen av narrativer og politisk kontekst.” *Norsk Sosiologisk Tidsskrift* 5 (3): pp.12–27.
- [67] Seierstad, Åsne. 2015. *One of Us: The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway*. London, UK: Virago Press.