



Anders Breivik, and the Threat to Europe

The University of Warwick

Stuart Croft



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Unimaginable tragedy in Norway – killing on a scale and with a brutality that is hard to imagine. It is all too easy to explain away as the act of someone with serious psychological disorders; and indeed, psychology may well have something to say about that which took place.

However, there is a wider and profound significance for Europe in what has taken place in Norway, in relation to the nature of contemporary terrorism, and the danger of the creation of a European far right terrorist movement.

In terms of what this act says about the nature of contemporary terrorism, there are five ways in which it seems that the actions of al Qaeda inspired violence has infused the thinking behind the attack.

- First, the attack itself was structured as a 'spectacular'; the whole purpose is to shock. As Breivik reported to his lawyer, the actions were 'gruesome', and clearly he knew full well the impact of the murder of so many who were so young.
- Second, mass casualty was a central hallmark. Of course, the car bomb in Oslo could have killed many more than it did; but a car bomb

was not spectacular enough, nor would it guarantee mass casualties – and hence the attack on the island.

- Third, learning from the Mumbai attacks, a gunman amongst a civilian population has almost limitless possibilities for murder; being far more 'effective' than a mere bomb.
- Fourth, the double attack – one for distraction, one for mass casualty – has been used by Al Qaeda inspired terror, one terrible example being the attacks on Bali. In 2002, a bomb detonated inside a bar in Bali was designed to kill, but also to drive people out towards a much more powerful second bomb, detonated twenty seconds after the first, and in total resulting in 202 deaths.
- Fifth, like those inspired by Al Qaeda, the Norwegian bomber was quite prepared to kill his 'own'. A hallmark of Al Qaeda terror has been the enormous numbers of Muslims killed; in Norway, the target of the terrorists were overwhelmingly the white mainstream. Both Al Qaeda and the Norway bombing considered that it is quite acceptable to kill their 'own', as well as the 'enemy.' Indeed, in Norway, the attacker had an explicit notion of 'traitors'.

And so terrorism has developed into a form that focuses on the spectacular, on mass casualty, on the use of guns as well as bombs, on double attacks, and on killing indiscriminately. In response, there are clear counter terrorism issues thrown up. First, the far right is a real threat. Some countries have acted on that basis for years, most have accepted the argument. But now investment in understanding the far right is urgent. Second, there needs to be a clear strategy for moving armed officers at speed to incidents; it is clear that this was not in place during the attacks in Norway. Third, as I will show below, the threat is not just national, but European, and indeed cross European; there is a need for still more intensive international cooperation over Far Right Terror.

This is because the implications for Europe are serious. Breivik's manifesto, published on the internet and widely available, is not designed merely to speak to the Norwegian Far Right, or even just that in the Nordic countries. It is entitled 'A *European* Declaration of Independence.' The manifesto is a long document – some 1500 pages – but he writes of Germany over 450 times, Serbia over 350 times, Spain 82 times; this is about embedding ideas in a European content. He speaks to the European Far Right. And he is of course not alone in that. The title of the manifesto draws explicitly on the Norwegian Far Right blogger Fjordmann's 2007 Declaration on behalf of Europe.

It has been extraordinarily difficult for the Far Right to organise collectively, and it has for years been split between nationalists, neo-Nazis, and Christian fundamentalists. Thus, in Britain, the English Defence League repeatedly emphasizes its hostility to Nazism; as, in the United States, do members of the Ku Klux Klan. Within those groupings, there have been further sub sets, and bitter fallings out. Neo-Nazi groups, such as Blood and Honour, have been the subject of splits and internal infighting, in many ways facilitated by the internet and social media. Of all such groupings, one would expect Neo-Nazis to follow an organisational model around a leader. And yet where Neo-

Nazism is particularly prolific, in the United States, that model has broken down as the leaders of the 1970s and 1980s have passed away, and it has been difficult for new leaders to gain and maintain authority. So the Far Right has been split along ideological lines, and it has failed to produce leaders of real substance.

What is different about Breivik's self positioning is that he offers a road for the Far Right to work together. He offers himself as a leader; a leader of ideas – hence the manifesto – and a leader of action. And as someone who can pull the various ideologies together. He has emphasised his Christian heritage; in the manifesto, Christianity and Christians are mentioned nearly 2500 times. A former contributor to a Swedish neo-Nazi website, he has produced Book 3 of his manifesto – which focuses on processes of conflict leading to the year 2083 – in a means which evokes the Neo-Nazi tract, *The Turner Diaries*, which tells of oppression of the white population in America, their revolution, and subsequent holocausts against the rest of the world. And he is careful to write of a Europe of countries, to allow nationalists to work together, in the interests of their own countries, in an alliance. The fit between the different ideologies is of course not perfect - but for some, it may be sufficient to bury differences and to focus on the new shared enemy of the Far Right: Islam

What makes this possible is the unique moment to which we have collectively reached. Ten years of the 'war on terror' – under that and subsequent labels – has created amongst some the sense that there is an enemy, and it is an enemy within. That is, contemporary Islamophobia is that which brings the Far Right together. For the Far Right, the Islamic 'they' seek to destroy the European 'us' globally, in our countries, in our towns. And the far right believe that this Muslim enemy is aided and abetted by traitors. Breivik's manifesto sets out four levels of treachery, with punishments attached for non-Muslim Europeans. And it sets out how to become a terrorist in the interests of defeating this Islamic Threat.

So Islamophobia has created the conditions for Far Right unity, and violent action. Whether the Norwegian killer becomes a leader in such circles remains to be seen; but that is surely his aim, and after the weekend, his actions and words will be celebrated in some Far Right circles. It is a time for Europe to focus on such threats more fully.