Governmental Crisis Response – To be On Top of the Frame
The Case of Norway 22/7 2011 - Crisis communication and news management

Master Thesis in Political Science with Focus on Crisis Management and Crisis Communication

Swedish National Defence College
2013-05-24

Author: Malin Söderlund
Advisor: Eva-Karin Olsson
Words: 21 578
Abstract

This paper examines the mechanisms of “successful” communication in matters of political leaders’ ability to gain public trust and credibility during large scale crises. Even though political actors and other stakeholders tend to be very proactive to promote their views, news media also play an active and important role in framing public policy issues and crises. Thus, this thesis involves both political actors and media in the context of framing and crisis communication. Their interrelation and its importance for explaining successful crisis communication is demonstrated by producing a case study of the Norwegian government’s communication efforts during and after the terrorist attack in Oslo and the island of Utøya 22/7 2011. This paper argues and demonstrates that the active use of positive frames, that are cultural congruent and resonate with the media shaping, is a necessity to create a favorable context for winning praise and support in times of crisis. In line with previous research, framing strategies in crisis communication is demonstrated to be central to the crisis response and determines whether a responsible stakeholder is able to create momentum, maintain and even gain increased public support or not.

Key words: crises, crisis communication, political and strategic communication, public support, framing, media logic, Norway, July 22

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# Table of Contents

1. **INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................................ 1  
2. **BACKGROUND - THE NORWEGIAN CRISIS RESPONSE** ........................................ 4  
3. **PURPOSE OF STUDY** .................................................................................................. 6  
   3.1. Research Question ........................................................................................................ 6  
4. **OUTLINE OF PAPER** .................................................................................................. 7  
5. **DEFINITIONS** .............................................................................................................. 8  
   5.1. Crisis defined ................................................................................................................ 8  
   5.2. Crisis communication defined ...................................................................................... 9  
6. **PREVIOUS RESEARCH** ................................................................................................. 11  
   6.1. Crisis communication .................................................................................................. 11  
   6.2. The notion of framing .................................................................................................. 12  
   6.3. Frames, media and acts of terror .................................................................................. 14  
7. **MATERIAL** .................................................................................................................. 16  
8. **METHODOLOGY** .......................................................................................................... 17  
   8.1. Governmental framing efforts and media shaping – a content analysis ...................... 18  
   8.2. The case of frame production – Interviewing ............................................................... 19  
   8.3. Methodological caveats ............................................................................................... 21  
9. **CASE STUDY – 22/7 2011** ......................................................................................... 23  
   9.1. Institutional design of the Norwegian crisis management system ............................... 23  
   9.2. Frame Promotion by the Norwegian government ....................................................... 24  
   9.3. Frame Production - Choice of Meaning Making Strategy ........................................... 28  
   9.4. Frames in media coverage ......................................................................................... 32  
10. **DISCUSSION** ............................................................................................................... 36  
11. **CONCLUSIONS** ......................................................................................................... 39  
12. **REFERENCES** .............................................................................................................. 40  
**APPENDIX 1:** .................................................................................................................. A-1  
**APPENDIX 2:** .................................................................................................................. B-1
1. Introduction

As tests of political leadership, there are few more important moments than during and after a national crisis. A national crisis creates rare opportunities for state leaders to communicate directly, in their singular style, with tens of thousands of citizens. An opportunity that if seized might create credibility and trust between the public and its representatives, and if missed can discredit the authorities and even result in the change of office.

The mechanisms behind “successful” political communication have been of interest by scholars as well as practitioner. In turn the importance of crisis communication has led researchers from various fields to develop different approaches to analyze communication in general and crisis communication and the complex relationship of political actors, news media and the public in particular. The concept of “successful crisis communication” can easily be associated with situations when political actors manage to “politically survive” a crisis or manage to avoid negative criticism. However, a broader definition might also include situations when political actors manage to benefit from a crisis and set the agenda. In this paper successful crisis communication refers to such cases, i.e. when political actors, consciously or unconsciously, not only “politically survive” a crisis but also manage to benefit from it and create positive outcomes.

The terrorist attack in Norway 22/7 2011 was a large national crisis that took place a little more than a month before the local elections in Norway. Although polls earlier that year had shown that the government and its leading party, Arbeiterpartiet (the Labor party), was struggling with their results the public opinion shifted dramatically after the terrorist attack and the Labor Party ended up doing its best local election result since 1987, gaining a little more than 2%. In matters of public support, and gained level of trust, the crisis can be said to have strengthen the Labor party’s power position.

So are the only requirements to successful crisis communication a full portfolio of executive skills, such as empathy and confidence, or the specific features of the crisis at hand? Or is there something beyond single individual performances and contextual constraints?

According to previous research, a relatively new instrument in the toolbox of approaching political communication is known as the notion of framing. Political actors’ ability to frame the causes of a crisis and to actively promote certain frames, as well as getting media to reflect these, is recognized as a useful way to understand and explain successful communication. From a governmental perspective framing is very important as it calls attention to desired aspects of reality and is a way to communicate the organizational message, i.e. showing that the government is in control and capable of handling the situation. The “tool” of framing is even more important in crises as the reputation and credibility of the responsible actor might be at stake and the dramatic components of a crisis tend to fit the media logic perfectly, increasing the pressure on the responsible actor to create an effective crisis response. Naturally framing an incident is, to some extent, constrained by the crisis at

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2 The public support for the leading party was strong the months following the crisis. However, it can be noted that the support was not consistent. (http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/Velgerne-gar-til-Arbeiderpartiet-6283517.html#.UZdFb0osSaSo Retrieved 2013-04-02, Interview with Trude Måseide, Head of communication at the Prime Minister’s cabinet, 17/4 2013)
3 Entman 2003, Nord & Olsson 2013
hand. Still the notion of frames is recognized to have a general effect on how most people receive and perceive information.\(^5\)

The 22\(^{nd}\) of July 2011 a massive explosion took place in central Oslo next to the Norwegian Prime Minister’s office within Regeringskvartalet, which is the center of the Norwegian government buildings. A car bomb destroyed essential government buildings, killed 8 people and wounded several others. At that time it was still unknown that this was the run up of what would become the most violent terror attack\(^6\) in Norwegian modern history, ending up with 77 innocent people losing their lives and several others being injured. In view of the number of victims the tragic event in Norway is considered to be the worst terror attack in history performed by a single perpetrator with a handgun.\(^7\)

The severity and scale of the attack in Norway 22/7 2011 quickly ensured that the event received global media and political attention putting a lot of pressure on the crisis leadership. Naturally each crisis has various rhetorical problems but efficient and functioning governmental communication, especially in larger societal crises, is recognized as vital. Crisis management researcher and assistant professor at Leiden University Arjen Boin, and his fellow research colleagues Paul’t Hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius claim that “one of the primary tasks of the crisis leadership is to provide information to the demanding citizens to reduce uncertainty”.\(^8\) Managing the information flow and making it understandable under chaotic conditions is indeed challenging, and it was a main obstacle in the crisis response of July 22\(^{nd}\).\(^9\) However, as the crisis could be identified as “exogenously”\(^10\) caused, together with the fact that the Labor Party was the main target, the Norwegian government did not have to deal with the question of image repair during the first phase. This positioned the government in a unique place of being able to frame the situation.\(^11\)

In democratic societies there are of course limitations on how much political leaders can control the conflicting narratives and news channels. It is easy to assume that media traditionally rally around the government when the nation is under attack, or as soon as an exogenously caused crisis occurs. This should not be taken for granted. What determines whether media sanctions or opposes the government’s preferred frames has been heavily discussed within academia. Ideally, a free objective media would let the public to deliberate independently on the government’s framing efforts and if needed the public would construct their own opposed frames. However, the behavior of the media and the news coverage does not necessarily provide enough information to create this effect on the public.\(^12\) Moreover, as studies by Robert Entman and other scholars have shown, the connection between media coverage and what the government want them to cover is not as balanced as it may seem.\(^13\) There are cases when the media parallel the government’s rhetoric, e.g. in London after the


\(^6\) The focus of this study is not to discuss the many definitions of terrorist attacks in further details. The events in Norway will be classified as a terrorist attack as there were politically motivated and planned violence. The definition is also in line with the definition presented in the national Inquiry Commission Report. Rapport fra 22 juli-kommisjonen, 2012 [NOU 2012: 14].

\(^7\) NOU 2012: 14, p.45

\(^8\) Boin et al. 2005,p. 13

\(^9\) NOU 2012: 14, p. 209

\(^10\) The causes of a crisis can be framed either as exogenous (no linkages to the responsible stakeholders) or endogenous (responsible stakeholders can be the root of the problem). An exogenous caused crisis makes it easier for the responsible actors to remain confident and in control. Boin et al. 2009

\(^11\) Boin et al. 2005, p. 68, NOU 2012: 14

\(^12\) Entman, 2004, p. 2

\(^13\) Ibid.
terror attack in the metro 2005 and in the US after 9/11. While there are other cases when media instead opposes the government’s frames, as in Spain after the Madrid bombings 2004.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack in Norway the national debate was characterized by a feeling of unity and dignity. The discourse seemed to have made criticism and questioning of the crisis response inappropriate for a long time.\(^\text{14}\) It is reasonable to assume that in light of the horrible nature of the crisis there was no debate climate for dissent or criticism, neither from the media nor the political opposition.\(^\text{15}\) However, to understand the strengthened support of the Norwegian government in general, and the Labor party and Prime Minister Stoltenberg in particular, the government cannot solely rely on their role as victims gaining sympathy votes. This paper argues that the government’s active use of frames and the mass media’s shaping of the situation during the crisis as well as the post-crisis phase must also be examined to explain the government’s regain in public support. If the tragic event in Norway is to be fully understood and learned from, the Norwegian crisis management must be mirrored and analyzed from several sources and angles. So far few empirical case studies have been conducted with focus on the Norwegian government’s strategic crisis communication. Hence, this study not solely examines how framing strategies is used within political communication in crisis it also contributes to the broader understanding of the Norwegian crisis management by focusing on the authorities’ strategic crisis communication and analyzing the government’s framing efforts during and after the terror attack 22/7 2011 in relation to national media coverage and strengthened public support.

\(^{14}\) Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, head of communication at the Ministry of Justice, 24/4 2013

\(^{15}\) This could be similar to the overall sentiments in the US society after 9/11 as described by Entman. (Entman, 2003, p. 2)
2. Background - The Norwegian crisis response

The 22nd of July 2011, Oslo, Norway. It is late afternoon in the middle of high summer, many Norwegians are on summer holiday and the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, is working from home at his residency. He is preparing a speech for the Labor Party’s youth league’s annual camp at the island of Utøya 25 miles outside of Oslo.

At 15:26 a car bomb explodes in the central parts of Oslo. The target was the government’s headquarters, destroying the Prime Minister’s office, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court and causing severe damage to several other ministries. Due to damages on the governmental buildings in central Oslo the Prime Minister’s office had to be moved to a new location. Initially the Prime Minister’s residence was used and a temporary office (which would be used for one more month) was put in place.16 This was not only a logistical challenge it also affected the government’s ability to respond to the crisis causing several security problems.17 By aiming at the institutions that would normally handle the government’s communication channels the terrorist managed to attack one of the pivotal crises management tools, the political ability to communicate to the public and to coordinate the work of the government and its departments.18

After placing the car bomb in the Regeringskvartalet the terrorist, later identified as the right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik, disguised as a police man took his car and drove 25 miles to the island of Utøya with the purpose to kill as many of his “political enemies” as possible. In the chaotic two hours following the explosion he managed to kill 69 people, mostly teenagers, participating at the annual meeting of the youth league of the Labor Party before the Norwegian police managed to disarm him. During these hours and the following day the information void was huge and speculations and rumors about who was responsible were extensive. Local and international media started to speculate whether it was an Islamic terrorist group behind the attack. These assumptions were wrong and, as later fully proven in the trial of Anders Behring Breivik, the attack in Norway was performed by a lone individual with right-wing extremism sympathies.19 Even though many of the central decision makers and the public administration staff were out of office due to the summer holidays, the attack resulted in 77 people losing their lives, and is considered the most severe terror attack in Norway’s modern time.20

At a political and national level the crisis was first and foremost managed by the Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and his office (PMO).21 As fundamental values, key institutions and vital societal functions were attacked, the government was forced to engage and take full responsibility and leadership of the crisis response at a strategic level.22 At that point the government was well aware that although the fortunes of politicians can be enhanced by how they handle a crisis, their reputation could just as easy wind up among the casualties.23 Hence, one of the initial priorities for

16 NOU 2012: 14, p. 209
17 NOU 2012: 14, p.213-220
18 Boin et al. 2005, p.69, It can be noted that the scale of the crisis was so immense that it is unlikely that the ordinary “peace-time” institutions would have managed to cope with all aspects of the crisis alone even if the attack had not demolished the government’s buildings.
19 NOU 2012: 14, p. 17
20 NOU 2012: 14, p. 449
21 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013, NOU 2012: 14 p. 237
23 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
the Norwegian government and the Prime Minister was to get as much information as possible in order to grasp the crisis and communicate a message to the public.24 Although essential facts such as the explosion in central Oslo, and later the disclosure of the mass killing at Utøya, was clear to the public early on, there was still uncertainties about many aspects such as; the nature of the problem, whom to blame, what remedies and what action should be taken.

Even though the acute phase of the Norwegian crisis was relatively short, the accountability process continued long after the terrorist was arrested. Less than a month after the terror attack an inquiry commission was brought together by the Norwegian government. The Commission started to conduct a report in order to clarify and shed light on the tragic events and the response work carried out on 22/7 2011. In august 2012, the Commission released the report and many important and critical questions were brought to daylight; what had really happened, why did it happened, who was responsible, what action was taken and which lessons can be learned. 25 This generated a renewed debate about the failures and what can be done to prevent it from happening again.

24 NOU 2012: 14, p. 224
25 NOU 2012: 14
3. Purpose of study

Much of the existing crisis communication and crisis management literature has solely focused on giving practical advice to policy makers. Contrary to that this thesis does not only provide insights into how national political communication can be used in a crisis, but it also represents a broader initiative that focuses on framing strategies and how different framing structures may emerge in the response and accountability phase. As highlighted in the introduction, framing might be a very useful concept for studying and understanding communication as well as for explaining how public relations agents might benefit and exploit, consciously or unconsciously, negative events and crises.26

In the context of framing theories as applied to communication (Entman 1993), and more specifically to crisis communication, (Entman 2003, Canel 2011, Nord & Olsson 2013) the main purpose of this study is to examine key factors for the ability of political leaders to win trust and credibility during a large scale crisis. The focus is on framing strategies utilized by the Norwegian government during and after the terror attack in Norway 22/7 2011. In line with previous research the key factors are recognized to be the process of frame promotion, frame production and media shaping. Thus a part of the purpose is to examine how these concepts interrelate.

In addition, few empirical case studies have been made on the Norwegian terrorist attack, especially with a focus on crisis communication. Crisis management, as well as crisis communication strategies, are governed by specific national, institutional as well as individual conditions and rules. These conditions and rules tend to be more or less favorable to successful crisis communication. Hence, in order to fully understand the conditions of the strategic crisis response to the terrorist attack in Norway 22/7 2011, it is of interest to make an empirical study to distinguish the specific characteristics of the Norwegian crisis communication.

3.1. Research Question

The thesis responds to the question of presence of framing strategies in political communication during large societal crisis, such as terrorist attacks. By exploring the production and promotion of frames by the Norwegian government, 22/7 2011, as well as the shaping of frames in national media, the research questions are posed as follows:

1.a) Which frames did the Norwegian government promote and did they actively use strategic frames in their crisis communication?

1.b) How does the government describe their frame production process, i.e. which arguments and motifs can be linked to their strategic choice of certain frames?

2) Does the government’s frame promotion resonate with the media coverage?

In light of the empirical study a discussion about the interrelation of the key elements and the linkages between these three concepts in relation to the case of successful communication will be made.

The period of interest is limited to the 22/7 2011- 12/9 2011, the time between the attack and the local election. As mentioned, the Labor party made their best election in 24 years this year even though polls before the crisis, and regular opinion polls over the year, had indicated a weakened

support for the governing party. The gain in public support in times of crisis is of interest as it is assumed to be linked to the crisis response and the crisis communication. Assuming that framing is a strategic political action, empirical research that study examples of successful communication is valuable to understand how organizations work.\textsuperscript{27}

\section*{4. Outline of paper}

This paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, central concepts will be defined followed by a literature review of more recent studies and theories about crisis communication, framing strategies, and media logic. The second part presents the thesis methodological boundaries, research design and potential caveats. The methodology includes, apart from review of relevant literature, a content analysis of the government’s external message as presented in public speeches; press releases; and at press conferences, together with a content analysis of the news coverage in two national newspapers, \textit{Verdens Gang} and \textit{Aftenposten}, all referring to issues related to the crisis response of 22/7.\textsuperscript{28} In addition, three semi-structured interviews with responsible communication staff are conducted to shed light on the frame production process.

The result of the empirical case study and the reporting will be presented in the third part, which will be summarized by a discussion about the findings in the light of previous research.

\textsuperscript{27} Ulmer, 2012, p.529
\textsuperscript{28} In Norway there are no spokespersons for the government; i.e. non-political staff can never make a statement on behalf of the minister or other politicians they can only communicate straight facts. (Interview with Gunnar Johansen 24/4 2013)
5. Definitions

The key terms of this thesis include crises and crisis communication. As these terms have various meanings and our definitions have consequences on how we study our cases, it is of importance to define what these concepts refer to.

5.1. Crisis defined

In the academic context the word crisis is often described as some sort of an undesirable and unpredictable situation disturbing and/or threatening the normal order of society. American researcher Timothy Coombs defines a crisis as “an event that is an unpredictable, major threat that can have a negative effect on the organization, industry or stakeholders if handled improperly”. He explains that even if crises tend to be unpredictable they are not necessarily unexpected. In, "Krishantering på svenska" (1997) Sundelius, Stern and Bynander present a similar definition specifying three components defining a crisis: threat, uncertainty and urgency.

Generally the threat component refers to threats to core values, such as safety, security, integrity; it might also be a threat to vital systems of society. A crisis, as well as the threat component, is assumed to be a socially and subjectively constructed phenomenon. Hence it is intuitive that a crisis appear as a threat or a risk to something or someone; this can be at any level of society, locally or globally. The uncertainty and urgency components are linked to the threat as it tend to cause a high level of uncertainty and time pressure. Information shortage as well as information overload are common problems that increases the level of uncertainty. Understandably, the time pressure is also linked to the problem of finding solutions to an urgent problem at both a strategic and operational level. In sum, if a situation is not perceived as urgent the general sense of the seriousness of a crisis is said to be less widespread.

The crisis definition above is widely accepted (Entman 2003, Coombs 2012, Sundelius et al. 1997) but can be seen as relatively narrow. However, it leaves out an important and less examined component, the potential opportunities inherited in a crisis. It may not be in the nature of all crises to create positive outcomes but crises might create windows of opportunities, leading to positive effects that enable the crisis respondent to set the public agenda. This broader crisis definition expands the field of crisis communication research and increase organizations’ communication choices in crises.

Many are those who have emphasized that crises are not only different in type, consequences and adversity. Crisis also requires different and individual response strategies. Maintaining the broadened crisis definition above it is thus relevant to discuss what type of crisis that is studied.

Falkheimer, Heide and Larsson identify and categorize crises into physical crises and crises of confidence. Physical crises are generated during material accidents or natural disasters while crises

32 Stern, 1999, p. 17
33 Boin et. al. 2005, p. 3
34 Ulmer, 2012, p. 526, Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 81
36 Boin et al. 2005 p. 3
of confidence involve management’s behavior or other non-material aspects.\textsuperscript{37} Terrorism together with social unrest, sabotage etc. are typified as a physical crisis and/or societal crisis meaning crises situations perceived as threats to society. A societal crisis is rarely something policy makers can afford to ignore as it necessitates critical decision making and response in order to reestablish the order of the system.\textsuperscript{38} Well aware of the above, Boin et al. claim that at a strategic level, leaders of a crisis face the same difficulties and problems no matter the character of the crisis.\textsuperscript{39} They argue that the challenges of dealing with threats are essentially the same; minimizing the impact of adversity, safeguarding society and restoring the public faith in the organization’s own credibility.

According to the above the terrorist attack in Norway 22/7 must be said to fulfill the crisis criteria and can be seen as a societal crisis, i.e. a large crisis affecting the whole society. It is also referred to as a national crisis, a crisis affecting a nation.

Having clarified the concept of crisis a definition of crisis communication may be submitted.

\section*{5.2. Crisis communication defined}

“Communication is the essence of crisis management.”\textsuperscript{40}

Communication in general is an essential part of our society. Some might even claim that communication is fundamental for our very existence and our ability to relate to ourselves and others.\textsuperscript{41} The original meaning of the word communication is “sharing, unite and making together”.\textsuperscript{42} It is a way of transferring information from one to another as well as a tool of sharing a specific message to an imagined receiver. Furthermore being able to communicate, not necessarily verbally, is essential to build relationships between people.

The importance of this aspect is particularly interesting in a broader social context, e.g. in a democratic society built on a contract/relationship between the public and its elected representatives. This relationship is manifested by the politicians’ ability to communicate their specific message. As elected officials, political leaders are dependent on the public’s confidence and their own level of credibility, or at least on the public’s perception of their creditability.\textsuperscript{43} Political parties have to communicate to the citizenry in order to gain their trust and convince them of their credibility to be able to enforce their agenda and implement their decisions. Although political leaders and authorities use communication all the time to nurse their relationship with the public the ability to conceptualize, explain and clarify what is happening is never as important as in a society dealing with a crisis.\textsuperscript{44}

Contrary to autocracies for example, the expectations can be very high on elected leaders’ ability to respond to crises and to minimize its effects on society. The level of tolerance for mistakes is generally very low.\textsuperscript{45} Therefore crises and major hazards affecting the public have to be addressed by public leadership since people expect their governments to safeguard them and take action.

\textsuperscript{37} Coombs, 2012, p.515
\textsuperscript{38} Falkheimer, Heide, Larsson, 2009, p. 15, p. 19
\textsuperscript{39} Boin. et al. 2005, p. 4
\textsuperscript{40} Coombs, 2012, p. 25
\textsuperscript{41} Falkheimer & Heide, 2008, p. 14-15
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Boin et al. 2005, p.70
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
The concept of crisis communication can be broadly defined as “the collection, processing and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation”.

Hence, communicating in crises is initially about reacting to a critical situation, both internally and externally. It is about collecting information and coordinating a message through different channels to reach as many stakeholders as possible. In this paper a stakeholder is defined in line with Coombs definition, i.e. a stakeholder is a “person or group that is affected by or can affect an organization”. However, the theoretical definition of crisis communication in this paper is drawn from the definition presented by Boin et al. in their argumentative and multidisciplinary book: *Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure*. They define the skills of crisis communication as skills of “meaning making” explained as the leaders and stakeholders’ “ability to frame people’s view of a crisis and thus building support for their policies”. In the “meaning making” process the main prerogative for political leaders is defined as gaining credibility rather than communicating straight facts. Furthermore Boin et al. describe the context of crisis communication as a triangular relationship between political actors (governmental and non-governmental), the mass media and the public. Each of these stakeholders send, receive, and perceive information in a crisis.
6. Previous research

In view of the objectives of this thesis it is in place to describe the general nature of crisis communication within the broader field of crisis management, as described in previous research; what has been said and analyzed; which assessments and preconditions are necessary for making the most of this tool; what are the limitations and strengths and what pitfalls have been identified and can, if possible, be avoided. This will be presented in the sections below.

6.1. Crisis communication

The phenomenon identified as crisis communication is a relatively new field within the broader area of crisis management. It was not until the mid 1990s that this particular part of crisis management started to receive attention. Crisis communication research was initially conducted by practitioners and not by academics. Therefore, the early research focused on “how to” and was concentrated on what “to be done” at a tactical level. As the field expanded, academics started to gain interest. This led to a shift from giving tactical advice to a more strategic perspective; i.e. how to use strategic communication in crisis management.

As a field of study, crisis communication must be said to be well applied as managers and organizations tend to take the advice offered by scholars and experts to help them cope with crises.

The academic research is often very useful in this area because improved crisis management, including crisis communication, helps protect stakeholders and organizations. The growing interest in the communication field could be related to the tendency of a generally growing pressure for effective crisis response. In the context of political crisis communication, Canel and Sanders (2012) discuss the effects of the emerging “stock” of unpredictable voters and weakened liaisons between voters and political parties. This together with an enormous media market where information travels faster and faster may contribute to increased expectations of a faster crises response. Consequently political communicators will have to adapt to new conditions of a more competitive and demanding media climate, as well as socially differentiated citizenship.

Within the field of crisis communication the most heavily examined cases are recognized to be how the audience/citizenry perceives a crisis, how the same group use instructing information about a crisis and how media report about crises and their sources. There are also a number of normative case studies, focusing on evaluation and lessons learned. The number of studies is not only scattered to numerous volumes they are also scattered across a variety of disciplines. Communication studies can be found in media communication theory, in the field of public relations and public affairs, as well as in social and political science. In response to any critique that communication might lack disciplinary status, Robert Entman was one of the first to suggest that this diversity instead could be turned into a strength as communication research might bring the fields...
Entman also points out that the particular notion of *framing* within communication research offers a case-study that is conceptualized across the social sciences. Framing does not solely offer a way to define the discipline of communication, it is also recognized as a way to describe the power of a communicating text, e.g. a speech or news report. The various meaning and uses of framing in the context of crisis communication will be further explored in the section below.

### 6.2. The notion of framing

The concept of *framing* is one of the most applied tools when analyzing communication and crisis communication. Moreover, it is recognized to be a very useful communication strategy. Conceptually, framing research emerged from the sociological field, focusing on the rhetorical strategies to construct the news, and from the psychological background focusing on the audience’s subjective perception of a certain phenomenon. As elected political leaders are dependent on the public’s consent in order to control the agenda, they constantly try to influence the behavior of the public. Hence, framing is a very important tool in the exertion of power within the triangle of political communication (*political actors, media and the public*).

In a study of three national crises in Sweden during the 19th century, the Swedish researchers Sundelius, Stern and Bynander (1997) argues that *framing* in the acute/initial phase will affect the following crisis management process as well as the rhetorical strategy. Political leaders, as well as other stakeholders (e.g. political opponents, media etc.), use narrative techniques to attempt to tell the story of what happened, why it happened, how to resolve it, what are the consequences etc. The goal is to get the “audience” to accept and embrace their version of the story. By shaping people’s perception of crises, political leaders enhance the probability of being able to handle crises in an efficient way.

Canel (2011) suggests that the strategic dimension of framing involves strategic decisions on what frame to sponsor, how to sponsor it, and how to make the frame appealing. In the framing process, strategic actors deliberately participate in the sense-making “battle” where actors seek to create collective trust in their values and principles. Thus framing, consciously or not, essentially involves selection and salience of information.

The notion of framing is further recognized to be the most effective way to avoid blame in matters of frame the causes, and the treatment responsibility, of a crisis. The tendency to focus on *framing* the causes to evade blame is linked to the definition of crisis as a threat. (E.g. a reputational threat is linked to the attributions of crisis responsibility). To clarify, crisis responsibility refers to “the degree to which stakeholders attribute responsibility for a crisis to a certain actor or organization”.

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59 Entman, 1993, p. 51
60 Ibid.
61 Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 81, Boin et al. 2005, p. 82
62 Borah, 2011, p. 305
63 Boin et al. 2005, p. 72
64 Sundelius, Stern, Bynander, 1997, p. 146
65 Entman, 1993, p. 51-58
66 Canel, 2011, p. 215
67 Entman, 2003, p. 415-432
68 Entman, 1993, p. 52
70 Coombs, 2004, p. 5
Looking at the broader crisis definition, including the fact that crises also can create opportunities, researchers such as Nord & Olsson (2013) have highlighted that crisis communication research cannot solely continue to focus on the “responsibility frame”. Similar arguments can be found in more recent research, which also highlights a lack of research about the production of frames and active mix of frames, especially in the political context.

Nord & Olsson argues in their study of the Swedish government’s communication during the financial crisis 2008 that successful crisis communication is about being able to use the situation and take actions to set the agenda. They show that successful crisis communication is not solely about the “responsibility frame” but also about the government’s active use of frames in the context of promotion of their own management as well as moral values. Naturally, there are always a large number of alternatives for a leader to choose from in a crisis. However, public leaders have to keep rules, moral values and underlying understandings, in mind. Nord & Olsson argue, in line with Boin et al., that these things cannot be compromised while managing the crisis. Nord & Olsson show that there is a need for increased understanding of crisis exploitation and the linkage between framing and the news cycle. The importance of moral values in order to connect with the audience is in line with Robert Entman’s argument regarding the need for “cultural congruence.”

A framework for analyzing framing strategies derived by Entman (also used by Canel and Sanders, 2010, 2012) is the Cascade Model. To examine the connection between governmental production of frames and the frames endorsed by the media (meaning the subsequent outcome of the government’s framing process) the Cascade Model suggests examining four aspects: cultural congruence, motivations, power and strategy. According to Entman these aspects determines the success of a certain framing strategy. Entman’s assumption is that that the government most likely can control the overall framing when the frames of an event are culturally congruent, meaning that the frame should match with existing relevant cultural and moral assumptions. This is in line with Viorela’s & Ihlen’s (2011) claim; that there is a good chance for the government to succeed in the frame contest when the political actor is able to conceive a message that resonates with the underlying culture, appeals to psychological biases and meet journalistic needs. If this happens the opposition and journalists tend to be silent and the government’s frame will be the one that appear in the media coverage and subsequently reach the public. However, when the issue is of an ambiguous character (i.e. the matching is incongruent) the framing instead depends on the other aspects of the model, motivations, power and strategy. As demonstrated by a review on competitive framing, individuals exposed to mixed frames are likely to be more ambivalent about how they perceive the issue. Furthermore it is more likely that individuals voluntarily seek more information when the issue is ambiguous and they are exposed to competitive frames in the media.

Even though political actors and other stakeholders can be very proactive to promote their views of an issue, news media also play an active role in framing public policy issues. As crises tend to fit

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71 Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 81
72 Borah, 2011, p. 305
73 Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 81
74 Boin et al. 2005, p.8; Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 80
75 Entman, 2003, p. 15
76 Entman 2003, p. 415-432
77 Entman, 2004, p. 17
78 Viorela & Ihlen, 2011, p. 368-369
79 Borah, 2011, p. 311
80 Zhongdang & Kosicki, 1993, p. 55-57
perfectly into the news management cycle and requires a rapid and forceful governmental response, especially because of its news value, framing is also an essential feature of how the news coverage shapes an incident.81

### 6.3. Frames, media and acts of terror

As mentioned, crises tend to cause uncertainty on many different levels. It does not only affect the individual’s cognitive limitations; it also affects the national society and sometimes even the international community.82 Crisis such as a terror attack that aims to strike at the very heart of the democratic institutions, and attempts to undermine public confidence, makes communication skills extremely important in order to recapture the democratic symbols. Moreover a terror attack fits perfectly in the media/news management cycle and requires a rapid and forceful governmental response, especially because of its news value.

Turning to previous research on terrorism and strategic communication there are plenty of arguments that there is a synthesis between these concepts.83 The fact that terrorists often use their attacks to influence the public, together with the general tendency of terror attacks focusing on gaining media exposure might impact the governments’ reputation. (It can be mentioned that strategic communication is not only used by decision-makers and mass media, but also by the perpetrators, in this case the terrorists, themselves).84

A frequently applied concept in the discourse of news media framing is “mediatization”.85 In this context mediatization refers to a multidimensional process affecting the relationship of media, politics and society. This process has led to many changes during the last fifty years and politics have become increasingly mediatized, and that media coverage is without doubt a driving force in highlighting certain news. In the context of mediatization the question of who is independent and who is not has been raised and the general conclusion seems to be that the most important question right now is the independence of politics and society from the media.86

Canel and Sanders’s (2012) study on governmental response to terror attacks combine theories of crisis communication and media coverage. They analyze the response and communication strategies applied to the terror attacks in Madrid 2004 and London 2005. On March 11, 2004, 192 people were killed by multiple bombs in Madrid’s metro system. Almost one year later in London, July 7, 2005, four suicide bombers committed a coordinated suicide attack in the metro system and on a bus, killing 52 people. Both attacks were carried out by groups linked to Islamic extremists groups. There are not many similarities with the Norwegian attack in terms of preparation and effectuation. Although, looking at political crisis communication there might be similarities in the governmental preconditions and framing of the crises. Canel and Sander compare the two cases examining what the Spanish government did “wrong”, the government losing the following election, and what their counterparts in Britain did right as their government managed to create a moment of “rallying

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81 Boin et al. 2005, p.71-75  
82 Ibid. p. 71  
84 This assumption is strengthened by the fact that the Norwegian terrorist had written a manifesto containing a well defined communication strategy. Before the attack the terrorist posted a manifesto called “2083 – a European Declaration of independence”. The manifest contains right-wing extremist political critique particularly focusing on the consequences of Muslim immigration and its dangers to the western society. Falkheimer, 2013; Canel, 2011, p. 214  
85 Falkheimer, 2013, p. 6, Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 82  
86 Strömbäck, 2008, p. 241
around the flag” during the crisis. The analyzed data was mainly information provided by the governments’ and oppositions’ spokespeople in press releases, briefings, press conferences, speeches and interviews.

To identify the principle communication frames used in the Madrid and London cases respectively they used framing theory. The idea is that government need to frame the crisis response, adopt rhetorical strategies, and try to get the organizational message out. Based on research by Smith and Smith (1994) Sander and Canel argue that trust, competence and consistency and coherent rhetoric are the three dimensions of space in which a government operates in a crisis. The framing strategy they try to identify was whether a dividing or inclusive strategy had been used. They analyzed the different communication strategies by looking at the initial response, the government’s message, the ideological square (referring to the dichotomizing of the notions “us” and “the others”).

The main findings revealed that the Spanish government’s initial response was “one-sided” and that the governmental message continued to frame the attack in a rigid way for a long time. The Spanish government also used a narrow definition of “Us” and broad definition of “the others”. Contrary, the British government initially had a more cautious approach and the initial response work, including strategic communication, and was organized by the Metropolitan police instead of the government. The government’s message was depicting the terrorists as opposed to all of them who are not terrorists and defending the values of the British society. Creating unity around British values and showing sympathy with the victims was the leitmotifs of the communication. The government also referred to symbolic attributes in British history such as the London Blitz encouraging a spirit of unity. Both the media and the opposition gave its full support to the British government during the crisis.

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87 Canel & Sanders, 2012, p. 450
88 Ibid.
7. Material

Data collection is the first step to mirror the communication process. As this paper addresses the Norwegian crisis of July 22nd from a crisis communication perspective and responds to different objectives, different type of data were required.

To meet the descriptive objective to identify the active use of frames in the Norwegian political context of 22/7, official messages from the government were analyzed. The empirical material was, similar to Canel and Sanders 2012, information provided by the government in public speeches, press statements, editorials and at press conferences in the period between 22/7 2011 - 22/8 2011. (The intended examined period was 22/7 2011- 12/9 2011, ending at the time for the local election in Norway. However, as no official speeches on the subject of July 22nd could be retrieved after August 22nd, the period was shortened to 22/7 2011- 22/8 2011). The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) became the natural focal point as it was Stoltenberg and his cabinet that led the crisis management at a strategic level.99 Thus, material from the PM’s cabinet together with the lead ministries, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), were analyzed. The material from the MoJ and the MFA was mainly complementary to ensure that the material from the PMO was representative for the government’s crisis communication. The material was collected from the Norwegian government’s official website where each ministry publishes official press statements, broadcasted press conferences, and, in many cases prepared speaking notes for public speeches.90

The written empirical material was complemented by three interviews with Ragnhild Imerslund, head of communication at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), Trude Måseide, head of communication at the Prime Minister’s cabinet (PMO), and Gunnar Johanssen, head of communication at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), in order to answer the thesis’ second research question. The interviewees were personally involved in the crisis communication during 22/7 and contribute with personal insights of the crisis managers’ and the communicative process, adding a unique perspective of the decision making process in this particular case.91 The written material together with the interviews is assumed to provide a representative picture of the Norwegian government’s intended crisis communication message for the examined time period.

To answer the research question regarding matching political frames with media framing the analyzed data was found in news reports (both print, broadcast and online media) in the two leading national newspapers, Varldens Gang92 (VG) and Aftenposten93 (AP) in the period of 22/7 2011 - 22/8 2011. The news coverage including the phrases (“terror” and “Norge” and “22 juli”) were mapped through the search engine Retriever.94 In total 77 articles were included in the sample, 4 of these

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99 Interview with Trude Måseide PMO, 15/4 2013, Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, MoJ, 24/4 2013
90 The accessible material included 21 public speeches, statements at press conferences and editorials, as well as 22 press releases. See table 1 and 2 in the bibliography.
91 According to Lindlof & Taylor interviews are particularly well suited to understand political actors’ experience and knowledge. Lindlof & Taylor,2011, p.173
92 VG is Norways’s second largest national print newspaper. VG is owned by the company Schibsted and politically independent. (http://www.ne.se/lang/verdens-gang/341285, accessed 2013-04-20)
93 AP is a daily as well as evening newspaper. It is owned by Schibsted and has an independent conservative opinion label. (The evening edition is only published between Tuesday and Thursday). In 2011, AP was Norway’s largest print newspaper and the third most read web newspaper with 554 000 daily readers. (http://www.ne.se/lang/aftenposten, accessed 2013-04-20, TNS Gallup, 2011).
94 Retriever contains the data base ATEKST, a digitalized news paper data base, containing 105 Norwegian news papers and magazines. http://www.retriever-info.com/no/
turned out to be irrelevant, leaving 73 articles in the sample. (These can be found in appendix 1). As the focus of this paper is to examine political crisis communication, in relation to media shaping and gain in public support, it was important that the news papers included in the sample reached as many of the Norwegian readers as possible. In 2011 AP and VG were the two largest papers in Norway. Hence, their reporting on the terrorist attack can be seen to have reached large parts of the national public.

In sum, completing the study by analyzing both documents and interviews enabled a flexibility that is necessary in qualitative research to capture different perspectives. The material supports each other in meeting the research objectives.

8. Methodology

The question of how to study crisis communication is complex. However, a common and effective method to study complex and social phenomena is using a qualitative method such as producing a case study. According to George and Bennett the study of one, or a few, cases allows exploring differentiated aspects of complex phenomena and causality. In the context of communication research, Robert Ulmer agrees with George and Bennett claiming that single- or multiple-case studies can be very helpful challenging and investigating existing theory. In this paper producing a case study was a necessity in building our framing theories and applying it to political crisis communication.

The case selection was part of the research objective, which sought to cover a gap in the current state of knowledge regarding framing theories in the political context. This is also a case of crisis communication where basically all decision-making in matters of crisis communication were made at a strategic level. Very few decisions were made at an operational level as the acute phase was very short, making the case interesting from a decision making and framing perspective. Another aspect of the case of Norway 22/7 is that it was unique from a national government perspective by aiming at the institutions set to manage national crises and maintain vital societal functions. Neither the Norwegian authorities nor the Norwegian media had previous practical experience of handling a crisis of this kind in peacetime.

To meet the thesis’ objectives, the paper adopted a combination of exploratory and descriptive design. Descriptive design, in terms of answering the paper’s first research question, was important to get knowledge about the active use of certain frames. It should be said that frames might be identified in a text that does not necessarily say anything explicitly about the framing intention or how the audience perceive the messages. Thus, the presence or absence of frames was complemented by conducting the exploratory research in terms of the interviews, which sought a

95 Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 3, Yin, 2009, p. 100  
96 Yin, 1984, p. 23  
97 George, & Bennett, 2005, p. 10  
98 Ulmer, 2012, p. 528  
99 George and Bennett discuss the difficulties of case selection in their book Case Studies and Theory Development in social sciences, George & Bennett, 2005, p. 83-84, Yin, 2009, p. 25  
100 NOU 2012: 14, p. 210  
101 Yin, 2009, p. 29
more personal and reflective understanding of the framing process, together with the analysis of the shaping of frames in national media.

Using different techniques when studying communication reduce the field’s inherited complexity and make it easier to isolate the existence of specific elements and phenomena.

An effective way to determine textual meaning is to identify and describe frames. Hence, the research strategy found that the most appropriate way to answer the questions and objectives was a content analysis of the empirical material by doing critical reading and asking critical questions to the texts. A content analysis is often text oriented and can include interpreting and analyzing how meaning making strategies are used to persuade an audience to accept certain frames of an event. More specifically a framing theory grounded in the theoretical framework provided by Entman and Nord & Olsson (also used by Canel and Sanders) will be used to analyze the material. This framework will be elaborated in the following section.

8.1. Governmental framing efforts and media shaping – a content analysis

This approach to crisis communication analysis draws upon Entman’s framing analysis, a method of identifying certain key words or phrases (which has also been done by Nord & Olsson 2013) to identify the presence or absence of frames in texts.

According to Entman framing generally includes four similar functions; “the selection and highlighting, and use of the highlighted elements to construct an argument about problems and their causation, evaluation, and/or solution”. In line with Entman’s four functions the analysis focuses on elements in the texts rather than specific words. A certain element will represent a distinguished frame related to the problem, its causes, evaluation and solutions respectively.

The frames in the material (including both the official documents as well as in the editorial pieces) were inductively derived. Inductive research, refers to what some might call, “bottom-up” approach. Instead of beginning with a theory, formulating a research objective, and observing and confirming a phenomenon (deduction or “top-down” approach), the reasoning goes the other way around. Inductive research begins with making observations and from that move on to broader generalizations and creating the theories or categories. This makes it possible to detect new patterns and theories and help the researcher to draw general conclusions.

Guided by Entman’s definition, the frame identification process was guided by a set of questions constructed to guide the critical reading of the texts and to identify certain elements. The main question was: What elements are highlighted in the government’s texts and the media coverage respectively? This question was further disseminated into the following questions:

- What elements are used to construct arguments about the “problem” and its causes?
- What elements are used to evaluate/judge the “problem”?
- What elements can be found in the government’s solution to the “problem”?

102 Entman, 1993, Nord &Olsson, 2013
103 Bergström, & Boréus, 2000, p. 234-235
104 Entman, 1993, p. 53
105 Ibid.
106 Flick, 1998, p. 12, 17, 69
The identified frames in the official material from the Norwegian government were: cultural, responsibility, managerial and learning.

In the editorial pieces the following frames could be distinguished: responsibility, treatment responsibility, cultural, and consequential.

8.2. The case of frame production – Interviewing

Interviews are often used to verify or comment on data obtained from other resources, it can help the researcher to validate the information and to strengthen or weaken already drawn conclusions. In this particular case making, what some call informant interviews, enabled the researcher to gather information that might be difficult to study by other means, such as motifs and ideas behind a certain communication strategy.

To respond to this objective three semi-structured interviews were conducted during a two-week period, using the model presented by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) called, Seven stages in an interview study. The seven stages are:

1. Schematize
2. Planning
3. Interviewing
4. Transcription
5. Analysis
6. Verifying
7. Reporting

In the schematizing stage the purpose of the interviews was defined as to gain insights of the interviewees’ personal experience and knowledge of political crisis communication process in the Norwegian context, especially related to the crisis of 22/7 2011. In order to do this the questions presented in appendix 1 were discussed during the interviews.

In the planning process the persons, or respondents, to be interviewed were identified. The strategic choice of the respondents was made out of the following criteria, the respondent must:

- work/or used to work for the Norwegian government, preferably at the ministries dealing with the crisis of 22/7
- have knowledge and professional experience of Norwegian political communication

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107 Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 175
108 Lindlof & Taylor, op. cit., p. 177
109 Kvale, & Brinkmann, 2009,
have been involved in the crisis management of 22/7 or have specific insights in the
governments’ crisis communication management system and the response work during the
crisis

From these criteria three people were identified as key players in the Norwegian government’s
communication work, it was the head of the communication department at the Prime minister’s
Office, at the ministry of justice and at the ministry for foreign affairs. They were recognized to have
knowledge valuable for achieving the thesis’ objectives since they were identified as the most central
non-political actors involved in the government’s communication work during and after the crisis
22/7. Two of the interviewees are first hand sources while the third was not on duty 22/7 and got
involved in the communication work at a later stage. Therefore the third interviewee must be seen as
a second hand sources in matters of the acute phase.\textsuperscript{110}

No interpersonal meetings were possible. Instead the interviews were conducted by telephone. The
interviews lasted about one hour each and were one-on-one semi-structured\textsuperscript{111} conversations. Semi-
constructed interviews mean that the questions were partially prepared, directed to answer the
research objective. The aim was to create a good and favorable environment for dialogue that
resembled a conversation between equals.\textsuperscript{112}

All three interviews were audio-recorded and the transcriptions were made directly after the
interviews in order to minimize the possibility of any misinterpretations. To increase the reliability
the respondents got the opportunity to verify the transcripts and make changes to the data.

The analysis was made using the formulated questions and the checklist, see appendix 2. These were
constructed to resonate with the research questions of this paper and the specific purpose of the
interviews in matters of gaining information about the framing production process, the motifs behind
the decision to highlight certain frames.

Verifying the information is important as it affects the level of reliability, validity as well as the
possibility to draw any generalizing conclusion from the case study. As the interviews are
complementary to the analysis of the written material, together with media reporting, the level of
reliability and validity must be discussed in light of the methods and findings in the analysis of the
complete data.

The reporting from the interviews will be made in chapter 9. The reporting will, accordingly with the
purpose of the interviews, be structured by the governments’ \textit{intended crisis message} and the
governments’ \textit{motifs and motivations}.

\textsuperscript{110}Ragnhild Immerslund, HoC at the MFA, was on maternity leave summer of 2011.
\textsuperscript{111}Wengraf, 2001
\textsuperscript{112}Because of my status, working at the Swedish MFA with crisis contingency planning, I recognize that I enjoyed a high
level of trust. I argue that this increased the validity as well as the reliability of the interviews.
8.3. Methodological caveats

In qualitative studies of communication there is always a risk of the researcher bringing their own interpretations into the study. Consequently the researcher’s conclusions can be seen as speculative. This general critique can be applied to this case study and might be problematic as the quality of the interpretations (i.e. if they are true and dependable) connects to the questions of reliability and validity. It is the analyst’s task to interpret the situation in a qualitative study so to some extent that is inevitable. However, in order to avoid misinterpreting the material and increase the reliability (the consistency of the result)\textsuperscript{113}, the level of transparency of the research design and method must be high. By demonstrating how the interviews were structured, see appendix 2, as well as presenting typical and illustrative examples for the distinguished frames in the written material, that aims at increasing the transparency of the findings and explain how conclusions were drawn. In addition, the coding and categorization is not isolated from the discourse. Contrary the design is in line with previous research methods, which strengthen the reliability. By using multiple sources and extensive empirical material, the possibility to draw any substantial conclusions must also be seen as favorable. Finally it should be mentioned that there are arguments that this eventual flaw in fact could be turned into the field’s strength, e.g. communication researcher T. Coombs argues that such “speculative” case studies might be a necessity and opens doors for theory building and theory testing.\textsuperscript{114}

As this study is limited to one single-case another caveat could be if there are any substantial possibilities of generalizing the results, which in turn leads us to the question of validity, the true value and relevance of our findings. Furthermore, it might be difficult to transfer crisis management strategies and conclusions developed in other countries to this specific case. Although most cases are governed by specific conditions this single-case study can still contribute to a broader theoretical understanding of crisis communication and framing in the political context. To understand the complex relationship of political actors, media and society, and the mechanisms behind successful communication, this phenomenon must be examined under different conditions and in different cases.

To be able to transform a descriptive explanation observed in a single-case study into the concepts of a general framework, George and Bennett suggest a broad theoretical framework that captures previous research and historical contexts.\textsuperscript{115} Referring back to the findings of others it is possible to gain insights and contribute to theory building and theory development, at least within the context of framing and crisis communication, by conducting this single-case study.\textsuperscript{116} In addition, this particular case has so far received very limited attention among scholars, making it even more relevant as it give way for further research on the subject of framing and successful crisis communication. By examining cases where political actors manage to communicate effectively, the findings may also contribute to a more constructive political crises response.

Another methodological problem related to the level of generalizability could be linked to the sample of news articles from Verdens Gang and Aftenposten. As the media coverage was extensive during the period of interest a selection had to be made in order to get a material suitable for this type of

\textsuperscript{113} Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 273
\textsuperscript{114} Coombs, 2012 p.23-24
\textsuperscript{115} George & Bennett, 2004, p. 92
\textsuperscript{116} Nord & Olsson, 2013, Entman, 2003, Canel, 2011
study. At the same time the selection had to be large enough to reflect the general media coverage. In light of that it should be mentioned that a wider sample was included to begin with. This sample included 182 articles and, even though not systematically analyzed, the larger sample indicated the same results as the sample of 72 articles included in the analysis. The decision to use the smaller sample was made as it was recognized to suit the qualitative method of framing theories in a better way as well as being admissible with the formal limitations of this paper.

117 The larger sample was retrieved by using the phrase “Norge and terror”.
9. Case study – 22/7 2011

Before examining the frame production process and the active use of frames in the crisis communication of 22/7, a brief overview of the Norwegian political context will be presented in order to understand the communication response.

9.1. Institutional design of the Norwegian crisis management system

In 2011 the Norwegian crisis management was organized accordingly with a resolution adopted 2005.\(^{118}\) The key principles in the crisis management strategy were, and still are, the principles of responsibility, subsidiarity and equivalence.\(^{119}\) The principle of responsibility determines that the ministry, department or organization responsible for a certain domain also have the primary responsible in a crisis. The principle of subsidiarity is linked to the fact that the crisis management should be as decentralized as possible and the principle of equivalence refers to the way the authorities operate during a crisis; this should be as similar to the ordinary routines as possible.

In line with these principles the Norwegian municipalities and local authorities have the main responsibility for the operative work in a crisis although the government has a responsibility at a strategic and political level during a crisis with national implications. Even at the strategic level it is the principle of responsibility that determines which ministry is responsible. Each ministry has its own crisis management obligations although it is the Ministry of Justice, through its underlying authorities, that has the overall responsibility for coordination in large scale crises. Naturally, in the case of 22/7 it became the Ministry of Justice, together with the Prime Minister’s Office, that was appointed as lead ministries at the strategic level.\(^{120}\)

In a large scale crisis the government may activate the “Government Crisis Council” (Regjeringens Kriseråd, from here on referred to as the RKR). The RKR has five permanent members; the Prime Minister’s office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The ministries are represented by non-political staff. The main priority of the council is to coordinate the different ministries’ strategic crises response in multi-sectorial crises.

In 2006 the government created the Crisis management and coordination secretariat (Krisstötteenheter, KSE). The secretariat formally belongs to the Ministry of Justice and their primary task is to support the RKR and the government.\(^{121}\)

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\(^{118}\) NOU 2012: 14, p. 66 -70  
\(^{119}\) NOU 2012: 14, p. 70  
\(^{120}\) Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013  
\(^{121}\) Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013
9.2. Frame Promotion by the Norwegian government

Guided by the critical questions as presented in Chapter 8, (i.e. what elements are used to construct arguments about the “problem” and its causes; what elements are used to evaluate/judge the “problem”; what elements can be found in the government’s solution to the “problem”?) four frames were distinguished in the official empirical material.

These frames were: cultural, responsibility, managerial, and learning and they will be illustrated in the following sections.

Cultural frames – “Societal values to defeat terrorism”

“Jeg har et budskap til de som angrep oss. Og til de som står bak. Det er et budskap fra hele Norge: Dere skal ikke få odelegge oss. Dere skal ikke få odelegge vårt demokrati og vårt engasjement for en bedre verden.”

- Stoltenberg, 22.30 pm, July 22nd 2011.

The above statement was made at the press conference the same night as the attack. It shows that the government wanted to ensure the public that the country stood strong against the attacks on the bulks of the Norwegian society. The government’s message adopted a strategy of communicating values and ethics and they made clear that the terrorist attack was an attack on core values, and foremost an “attack on the democratic society”.

By initially launching expressions and metaphors to explain that this was not only an attack on innocent people but also an attack on the Norwegian society, the intended frame surpassingly became inclusive and unifying without excluding any specific groups. In one of the PM’s institutional statements, made three days after the attack, Stoltenberg spoke directly to the public and declared that:


The government successfully managed to create an inclusive “we” by framing the attack as an attack on fundamental values rather than being an attack on a specific group with certain political views, (ref. the Labor party).

The general endorsement of the Norwegian values and the intended way to respond to the crisis (with strengthened democracy, openness, humanity etc.) was often contrasted with the potential and “dangerous effects” of allowing this tragedy to change the Norwegian society. Thus reinforcing that Norway would not give up its core values and use them as their weapon against acts of terror was important.

122 Stoltenberg, Speech 29/7 2011, see table 2.
123 PM’s speech 25/7 2011, see table 2.
124 Ibid., Foreign Minister’s editorial piece 12/8 2011, see table 2.
“Vi er fortsatt rystet av det som traff oss, men vi gir aldri opp våre verdier. Vårt svar er mer demokrati, mer åpenhet og mer humanitet. Men aldri naivitet.”

What can be assumed to be an attempt to create public acceptance of the crisis situation, the cultural frame continued to be the main element in the government’s message throughout the examined period. In line with the consistency and coherency of the message it seems like this might have suited the Norwegian people and their needs, at least according to the PMO.

**Responsibility frames**

According to previous research it is easy to assume that the main element in the government’s rhetoric would be framing of the causes of the crisis. Interestingly enough, going through the material, the responsibility frame is barely manifested in the government’s message and framing efforts of July 22nd. The government’s initial and forthcoming approach was not to comment or speculate of the motifs or causes of the attack. In the joint official statement by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice, the evening of July 22nd, after saying that this was a matter for the police to investigate the PM added, “att detta [motiven] var noe ja overhodet ikke ville spekulere i.”

During the following days, when the threat level was back to normal and it stood clear who was behind the attack, the responsible ministers (the PM and the MoJ) repeatedly said that they still did not want to comment on the motifs behind the attack. Notable is that during the following weeks (and later when the accountability process started) the government’s strategy to avoid commenting remained consistent. In fact the Prime Minister managed to avoid mentioning the perpetrator and the causes of the crisis in practically all his public speeches and performances.

In addition the first time the Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, commented on the perpetrator was almost a month after the attack. It was only the Minister of Justice, Knut Storberget, who commented on the terrorist without getting direct questions from journalists. However, he described the causes of the crisis in a general scope, “The man arrested for the massacre at Utöya is Norwegian. I don’t want to discuss any further details.”

Instead of focusing on the reasons of how this could have happened or trying to diagnose the causes behind the attack, the government’s representatives repeatedly used words such as “cowardly”, “evil”, “hateful” to frame the problem. By indirectly promoting the image of a cowardly attack on the whole country, as shown in the previous section, it can be assumed that the responsibility frame became less prominent and less important. The “society” (the government) could not be blamed for this tragedy as they, together with the Norwegian “society”, also were the victim. Hence, the government could rely on the fact that the crisis was caused by an exogenously factor, a lone individual.

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126 Stoltenberg, Speech 24/7 2011, see table 2. In addition to this quote it can be noted that the governments’ message was repeated by the Norwegian head of state, King Harald, who emphasized that “our faith in freedom is stronger than our fear” and that “even in the darkest moment, our desire to live safe and free will prevail.” Also the mayor of Oslo (not liaised with the Labor party) made it clear that “our punishment will be more generosity, more tolerance and more democracy”.

128 Press conference with the PM and MoJ 22/7 2011, see table 2.
129 Press conference with the PM and MoJ 23/7 2011, see table 2.
131 Stoltenberg and Storberget, Press conference 22/7 2011, see table 2.
132 Stoltenberg and Storberget, Press conference 23/7 2011, see table 2.
Managerial frames
A third intended government frame was the “managerial frame”. As in many other large scale crises the government had to respond quickly both with practical deeds and with symbolic response. References to the government’s crisis response were among the more frequent elements in the government’s messages, especially during the initial phase of the crisis.

“The government had to respond quickly both with practical deeds and with symbolic response.”

The first external message from the government and the PMO was sent out 15:58, approximately 35 minutes after the first attack. It was a short note saying that the PM is unharmed and safe. In the first broadcasted interview with the PM (at 17:35 with NRK) the message was that the authorities were doing everything they could to help the victims and their families.

Later that evening the PM once more reinsured that the authorities did everything they could to assist the victims and that the government and its responsible ministers were on top of it. An important part of Stoltenberg’s holding statement at this point was to explain what the authorities were doing. For example he highlighted that the RKR had been called to a meeting (the official meeting request was made at 17:23 that evening) and that the decision was made to call the whole government instead of the limited group of the permanent members. The PM and the MoJ also promised that “whoever is behind the attack should be accounted for their actions.”

The press releases were important to keep the media and public informed of what the government was doing. Basically all press releases referred to symbolic actions of the different ministers. The government’s active “use” of symbolic actions e.g. visits to the damaged government buildings; to Sundvallen (the place where the survivors of Utøya were gathered) as well as the PM’s visit to Ullevål hospital in Oslo on the night of 22/7, were all symbolic parts of the managerial frame, explaining what the government was doing. These powerful symbolic images (together with the royal family consoling families of the victims and the official visits to churches and mosques), sent out a message that the government was actively handling the crisis and participating in the national grief process.

Learning frames
A forth frame emerged in the government’s text, which in lack of a better title is called “learning”. This element touches upon the “effects” of the crisis on the Norwegian society, people and political

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133 Coombs, 2012, p. 454
134 Stoltenberg, Press conference 23/7 2011, see table 2.
135 NOU 2012 : 14 p. 238
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 In total the RKR met six times between the 22nd and the 25th of July. The meetings had five main points on the agenda; one point was “media coverage”. The purpose of this point was to discuss the government’s external communication with the press and the general media coverage of the events. NOU 2012: 14 p. 237
140 Stoltenberg to NRK, 17.30, 22/7 2011, NOU 2012: 14 p. 239
141 Stoltenberg, Press conference 23/7 2011, see table 2.
climate. This aspect is definitely linked to the other frames but was used frequently enough to qualify as a category of its own.

About a week after the attack the PM started to refer to the broader effects of the crisis. The 1st of August the PM made a public speech, stating:


A week later the PM reassured that “the democratic society would be strengthen of the attack”. It is clear that they wanted to create a unifying feeling that everyone could learn something from the tragedy. What can be noted is that the government solely highlights positive outcomes or at least they emphasize that these events can teach Norway something useful and good.

“Vi kan lære av det. Gjøre mer av det. Hver og en av oss kan gjøre demokratiets vev litt sterkere. Det ser vi her.”

At the memorial ceremony in the parliament august 1st the PM encouraged everyone to be considerate and respect each other despite different opinions. Instead of looking back he wanted to encourage the public, as well as the political leadership, to “blikket framover med fornyet tro på våre grunnleggende verdier.”

The most frequent linkage within this frame was reassuring that the terrorist did not succeed to change the country as he intended to, instead Norway had been strengthened. By repeating this positive affirmation the government created an element of confidence and victory in their message.

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142 Stoltenberg’s speeches 29/7 2011 at the memorial ceremony and in the Central Jamaat-mosque, Stoltenberg, speech 21/8 2011, see table 2.
143 Stoltenberg, speech 1/8 2011, see table 2.
144 Stoltenberg, speech 8/8 2011, see table 2.
145 Stoltenberg, speech 8/8 2011, see table 2.
146 Stoltenberg, Speech 25/7 2011, see table 2.
147 Stoltenberg, Speech 1/8 2011, see table 2.
9.3. Frame Production - Choice of Meaning Making Strategy

The reporting from the interviews with the communication staff at the PMO, the MoJ and the MFA will be made in this chapter. The findings are presented in two sections representing elements touched upon during the interviews. These sections are; Intended crisis message and Motifs and motivations behind the choice of communication strategy.

Intended Crisis Message

One hour after the bomb went off in Regjeringskvartelet political secretary Hans Christian Amundsen at the PMO was made responsible to develop a coherent governmental crisis message and set the tone of the government’s communication strategy. The Prime Minister and his cabinet, together with the Ministry of Justice and the KSE, simultaneously started to create speaking points.

According to the interviewees, the intended signatures of the response work at the crisis message were: unity for Norwegian and democratic values, sympathy for the victims and their families, the resilience and general despise of terrorism. Once it stood clear that several people also had been killed at the Labor party’s annual summer camp at Utøya, Amundsen presented the government’s main crisis message: “Vi lar oss ikke knekke eller bombe til tausthet”. The head of communication at the Ministry of Justice added, “The main message to the PMO and Stoltenberg was: the response to violence is more democracy, more humanity and never being naïve.”

The MFA was not directly involved in developing the government’s message but according to their HoC they “got information from the PMO that the message would be: this is an attack on Norwegian values and the democratic society and that the response would be more openness and more democracy, this was the first information that came from the PM that evening”. She continued by pointing out that “The most important message was also to show that the government was still up and running and to ensure that the police did everything they could.”

Thus one of the most important talking points consisted of a statement clarifying that the authorities did everything in their power to solve the crisis, followed by a signal that the ones behind the attack will be punished.

According to the HoC at the PMO the PM himself did not wish to camouflage the tragedy. Contrary he wanted to use words as, “chocking”, “bloody” and “cowardly” to describe the attack. This became, according to the PMO, the ground for their following communication strategy. (It is interesting to note that the PM continued to use the word explosion, contrary to bombing, attack etc., during the chaotic hours after the attack. This was not a coincidence as the PM did not want to label the events until it was firmly confirmed by the police department that it was a bomb.)

Motifs and Motivations

The internal discussion about how to describe the crisis initially dealt with details as what words should be used by the Prime Minister.

148 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
149 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013
150 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/4 2013
151 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/4 2013
152 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013
153 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
“We had a discussion at the PMO whether to call the crisis a terror attack or not and decided that as it is politically motivated violence it could be described as a terrorist attack, however the PM never used those wordings in his speeches the first time after the attack.”

Shortly after the attack the MoJ, supported by the KSE, was appointed as lead ministry in the strategic crisis response. However, they decided that the Prime Minister, together with the Ministry of Justice, would be leading the crisis communication work. This important initial decision was made in the acute phase of the crisis.

“We were confident in the decision to let the PM be the government’s spokesperson, not solely because of the severity of the crisis but also to avoid sending out the wrong signals about the motifs behind the attack and who could have been behind it.”

“The Foreign minister was designated to make official statements to the international press. He could talk to the international, but not the national, media without sending out the wrong signals.”

Both the HoC at the PMO and the HoC at the MoJ expressed that they had been afraid that if the PM had met the press with the foreign minister, or the minister of defence, that could have sent out signals that this was a foreign attack on the country. This would have been contra productive to the government’s deliberate strategy not to speculate about the motifs of the attack. The HoC at the PMO said in the interview that:

“The most important thing at that point was not to comment on the motifs and who could be behind the attack before we had confirmed information about that/…/ We remembered the mistakes made in Madrid 2004. At that time the government claimed that ETA was behind the attack on the train station, pointing in any direction at all before knowing facts of the motifs was something we did not want to do.”

All contact between the MoJ and the PMO in the first hours after the bomb was made over telephone or e-mail. Despite of logistical challenges a co-worker at the communication department at the MoJ managed to send their suggested speaking points to Mr. Hans Christian Amundsen, political secretary at the PMO responsible for media relations. According to HoC at the MoJ, Amundsen was the one writing the PM’s first speech that evening. The first speech contained all the elements that the MoJ wished to be emphasized.

The PM’s speech at the first press conference July 22nd was very similar to the one held by the mayor of London after the terrorist attacks 2005; it was clear that the MoJ had been inspired by the British government’s response to the bombings in London 2005. The HoC at the MoJ described the process the first hours as follows:

“Under different circumstances we would normally use standard formats for producing speaking points, but at that time we could not access our own network. Luckily enough a colleague had some of the information saved on his laptop. In fact we had prepared speaking points in case of a large national crisis in Norway. These speaking points were similar to Ken Livingstone’s speech after the London bombings 2004. We had prepared these speaking points

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154 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
155 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
156 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
157 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
158 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013
in case of a larger crisis, we (ref. the communication department and the political leadership) wanted to use the same elements as he (ref. Livingstone) highlighted.”

From this statement it is clear that some of the elements the government decided to highlight had been prepared long before the crisis even occurred. In the interview with the HoC at the MoJ elaborated on this subject,

“Similar to Livingstone’s message we made it clear that the perpetrators would fail. We wanted to communicate that the attack could not destroy our democratic society or weaken our aim to create a better world.”

The HoC at the MoJ continued by saying that, “the speech of Ken Livingstone had all the elements we believe should be in a crisis communication message.”

Another incentive to be quick in the crisis response, referring to getting a crisis message to the media and the public, was to avoid misunderstandings and be able to set the tone. As one of the interviewees said:

“It is important to provide the media with information and be proactive with the information to avoid misunderstandings /.../ During the crisis and the following week both media and the public had an enormous need for information. Hence, it is important to be so quick with the information so that the journalist get what they wish for and do not seek the information elsewhere. Our interest to provide information coincides with media’s need for it.”

Hence, the holding statement was designed to help control the message that the public would hear. The aim was to make the government and the authorities the primary source of information. Establishing an initial interaction with the media was helpful to win time and to gather information. According to the HoC at the MFA and the PMO this strategy was seen as relatively successful.

The HoC at the MFA added that the most important message was “to show that the government was up and running and to ensure the public that the rescue personnel did everything they could”. This element was said to be emphasized to ensure the public that the government was in control and able to manage the crisis. The Prime Minister himself admits that some of the phrasing was meant to calm the public rather than being all true. For example at the press conference the day after the attack, July 23rd, Stoltenberg said that the government’s and the police’s contingency plans and strategies had been activated and put in place, something that turned out to be wrong.

According to the interviewees it stood clear rather fast that this would get an international dimension as it was one of the most severe terrorist attacks in the west for many years. Thus, it was also important to get a holding statement to international media. According to the HoC at the MFA the holding statement to the international press was as follows:

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159 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013  
160 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013  
161 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013  
162 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013  
163 Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013  
164 Interview with Ragnhild Imerslund, 17/4 2013  
165 NOU 2012: 14 p. 142
“Norway will remain the Norway we know; Norway would not change, and that Norway would remain the Norway as the world knows her. During the first week the Foreign minister had several press conferences with international press and this was his message.”

The HoC at the MFA continued by explaining the reasoning behind the first holding statement:

“The MFA is responsible for public diplomacy and the international image of Norway, to begin with we were afraid that this incident would damage our reputation and change the world’s view of our country to an image of a country with right-wing extremism where people feared acts of terror.”

It was important to avoid being associated with terror and violence. Of course this message was also in line with the main message that this was an attack on the Norwegian society and Norwegian values, and that the response would be more of these things, more love, more democracy and more humanity.

According to the HoC at the MoJ the decision to highlight core societal values was a deliberate communication strategy. This strategy was further explained by the HoC at the MFA:

“We are a small country and we felt vulnerable, hence we needed compassion and cohesiveness. We know that we are vulnerable because of our transparency and democracy but no one wish for a police state. It was important to clarify that nothing in our fundamental values would change.”

The HoC at the MFA summarized, “We have three ground elements that we generally communicate in a crisis: compassion and empathy, analysis of the situation and transparency of our management.” It was important to show strong signs of sympathy and empathy and it was recognized that “symbols are very important as they show empathy with those hit by the crisis /.../ thus we improvised press conference in liaison with the ministers visits to Utøya, hospitals etc.”

In matters of using social media the MFA soon started using the same hashtags as the public on Twitter, (e.g. #OSLove). According to HoC at the MFA this was a way to get official and confirmed information in all channels in order to avoid misunderstandings as well as getting the government’s holding statement promoted in many different channels at the same time. However, they experienced difficulties in using Facebook. They felt that the short format did not suit the severity of the situation. Another reason for not using Facebook was that they did not want to open a channel for sharing hateful messages. Even though they did not use Facebook they monitored it to pick up the general feeling of the people.

“We tried to follow the people and what they felt. For example we had a meeting the 24th to discuss if we should have a memorial ceremony; we suggested organizing something the next Friday, one week after the attack. During our meeting we got information that a person had created a Facebook group calling people to join on a rose manifestation in Oslo the next day;

166 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/2 2013
167 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/2 2013
168 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/2 2013
169 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/4 2013
170 Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, 24/4 2013
171 Notable is that the first week after the terror attack 250.000 tweets on the subject were registered (!). Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/4 2013
172 Interview with Ragnhild Imerlund, 17/4 2013
before our meeting had finished around 100 000 people had joined the group. At that point we realized that we should listen to what the Norwegian people wanted.\textsuperscript{173}

9.4. Frames in media coverage

Guided by the critical questions in chapter 8, (used to structure the identification of frames in the government’s text), four frames were inductively distinguished in the news media coverage; Responsibility, Treatment responsibility, Cultural, and Consequential frames.

The concepts of “national media” or “news media” in this section refer to Verdens Gang (VG) and Aftenposten (AP), the two papers included in the sample.

As the media coverage in VG and AP turned out to be similar the reporting will be made conjointly.

Responsibility frames

The information void during the first chaotic hours and the following days is reflected in the media by news articles trying to describe “what happened”, “when did it happen”, “how many dead and injured” and so on.\textsuperscript{174} Besides these “descriptive articles”\textsuperscript{175} the news reports paid a lot of attention to the roots of the incident. In the acute phase media immediately started to engage in speculations of who was to be held responsible for the attack. Notable is that several international news papers decided to run headlines similar to the Sun’s “Al Qaeda massacre: Norway’s 9/11”.\textsuperscript{176} However, the national media diverted from the international press. Instead they diagnosed the causes of the situation similar to the government’s reluctant approach.\textsuperscript{177}

“Vi aner fortsatt ikke hvem som sto bak gårdsdagens ugjerning. Men vi vet nok til å anta at det lå en profesjonell vilje bak.”/.../ ” Det er lov å spekulere, men viktig å skille det vi vet fra slike spekulasjoner. For uansett hva etterforskningen vil vise om bakgrunnen for det som skjedde i går, så må det aldri bli slik at terror og trusler om terror skal få bestemme Norges linje.”\textsuperscript{178}

A “responsibility frame” in the light of the terrorist, Breivik, and his motifs can be found e.g. in VG’s reporting the 25\textsuperscript{th} and in AP’s editorial piece the 27\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{179}

“For å bli mer aggressiv og ikke redd da han skulle utføre massakren, skal Anders Behring Brevik ha dopet seg med anabole steroider.”\textsuperscript{180}

Furthermore the incidents were described as a terrorist attack.\textsuperscript{181} For example in VG:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{“Ville være en ustoppelig enmannshær}\nSkal ha brukt steroider og høy musikk for å dempe frykten” VG, 2011-07-25.
\textbf{“Manet ekstreme briter til kamp”}, AP, 2011-07-27. p. 6
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{“Ville være en ustoppelig enmannshær}\nSkal ha brukt steroider og høy musikk for å dempe frykten” VG, 2011-07-25.
\textbf{“Tapre, tapre Norge”}, AP, 2011-07-25. p. 2
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{“Terroren makabra logikk”}, AP, 2011-07-23. p. 2
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Interview with Trude Måseide, 15/4 2013
\item This type of news reporting in crises is logical and is further discussed by e.g. Olsson & Falkheimer 2013.
\item Salgado and Strömback (2011) define descriptive articles, contrary to interpretative articles, as articles focusing on \textit{when, where, what and whom} instead of why. (Salgado & Strömback, 2011, p. 144.) The observation that descriptive articles were dominant in this case is strengthened by a quantitative study of the news media reporting in a two week period after 22/7 2011 made by Olsson & Falkheimer 2013. (Olsson & Falkheimer, 2013, p. 13)
\item It is possible that the findings could have been different if examining other types of media.
\item ”Terrorens makabra logikk”, AP, 2011-07-23. p. 2
\item ”Ville være en ustoppelig enmannshær Skal ha brukt steroider og høy musikk for å dempe frykten” VG, 2011-07-25.
\item ”Manet ekstreme briter til kamp”, AP, 2011-07-27 p. 6
\item ”Ville være en ustoppelig enmannshær Skal ha brukt steroider og høy musikk for å dempe frykten” VG, 2011-07-25.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
"Gårdsagens angrep er det første anslag motsivile mål og statsmakten i Norge siden 9. April 1940. En målrettet terroraksjon med hensikt å spre død og ødeleggelse i hjertet av vår hovedstad og det politiske Norge."  

The problem was portrayed in terms of terrorism and focused on the lone perpetrator, the right-wing extremist Breivik. The terrorist was described as “cold” and “cruel”, similar words as used by the government. Moreover, societal and contextual causes and motives of the attack were not widely examined although some voices were raised saying that the government indirectly could be held responsible for the tragedy, e.g. “Kaspar Johan Birkeland, toppkandidat for Demokratene i Ålesund, mener terrorangrepet kunne vært unngått hvis ikke Arbeiderpartiet hadde hatt en så islamvennlig holdning.”

However, this view cannot be seen as representative for the overall news coverage. Instead speculations and reporting about the unique background of the perpetrator were central in framing the responsibility causes. For example in one AP article the following motif was mentioned,

“Men diskusjonen som pågår om ideene, språket og de sosiale faktorene som ligger bak Breiviks monstrøse handlinger kan kanske gjøre samfunnet bedre skikket til å identifisere og motstå fremtidige virus fra nettet. Som mange har påpekt fremstår Breivik som et produkt av internett-radikalisering, på linje med mange europeiske jihadister før ham.”

It can be noted that media managed to focus on the responsibility frames without politicizing the incidents. For example there were no speculations of linkages between the political environment in Norway and the causes of the incident. Even though many articles, by the end of the examined period, started to criticize the police response and PST’s (Police security service) weak preparations this critical perspective remained absent the first weeks. Some articles questioning Norway’s terror preparedness and ability to map terrorist began to show approximately two weeks after the attack. Overall the government and the official authorities were (fairly) portrayed as victims and not as a cause the tragedy. To summarize, by focusing on the perpetrator, and his background, the news media framed the roots of the crisis as the acts of a lone individual. They tended to use similar words as the government to describe the event. The level of attention to the responsibility frames differs between the media and the governmental respectively. Furthermore, the news coverage focused on non-political aspects of the attacks; in fact de-politicization of the incidents was characteristic for the reporting. (This finding is also strengthened by Olsson & Falkheimer’s quantitative study of the media coverage in AP and VG two weeks after the attack).

Responsibility treatment frames (Media’s perspective on the managerial frame)

This frame is linked to the government’s managerial frame, as it deals with reporting on the general crisis response and the responsibility for the “treatment of the problem”. During the initial week the government’s statements in matters of response were heavily cited in the news coverage.

183 “Vil forandre Norge”, VG, 2011-07-23, p. 26
184 “Kunne vært unngått”, VG, 2011-08-06. P.11
185 “Hvilke ideer dreper?”, AP, 2011-08-04, p.4
186 “For tidig for konklusjoner”, VG, 2011-08-01
187 “Ensporet terrorforskning?”, VG, 2011-08-08, p. 4
188 Olsson & Falkheimer, 2013
The first days both AP and VG printed direct citations from the PM’s speech at the press conferences the 22nd and the 23rd. In fact Stoltenberg was heavily quoted during the whole period. It should be mentioned that in the initial phase of the crisis the news media (as they normally would) heavily relied on information that came from the government and the police.

Medias “treatment responsibility frame” in matters of the remedy of the terrorist attack was overall coherent with the government’s message, referring to democracy and humanity as the strongest weapon to defeat terrorism.

“Det beste våpenet mot ekstremistisk tenkning eren mest mulig åpen og fri debatt.”

Stoltenberg was portrayed as statesmen like. He was acknowledged to have handled the crisis exceptionally well. He was said to be able of unifying the nation similar to Einar Gerhardsen and he was described as “honorable”, “compassionate” and “statesmanlike”. Commentators generally praised Stoltenberg’s management and the overall image of the Prime Minister was that he led the nation in a calm, thoughtful and reassuring manner.

“Å lede et land når katastrofen rammer, er den tøffeste prøven en statsminister kan oppleve.”

Stoltenberg was further praised for his speeches. While visiting a local mosque in Oslo the Prime Minister’s inclusive “we” was described as the notion of “the new Norwegian.”

Although the government’s suggested treatment to terrorism were generally accepted and endorsed, it is clear that the expectations were high on the government to further manage this approach and keep their promises. Stoltenberg’s message to the public the 25th “Never again July 22” was the main headline of both VG’s and AP’s editions the following day.

“Den siste uken har det norske folk stått mer samlet enn noen gang siden 1945. Dette er en kraft våre politikere vil få god bruk for når de skal gi innhold til statsministerens krevende budskap «Aldri mer 22. juli.»”

A few days later AP wrote a piece about how the government would keep its promise:

“Terroristen har gitt Arbeiderpartiet ubestridt deinisjonsmakt i vår politiske debatt. Den makten må forvaltes med omhu.”

The “treatment responsibility” frame continued to be actively addressed. Moreover, the notions of safety and freedom was compared and portrayed as possibly incompatible in relation to terrorist attacks. Despite headlines such as “Yes to surveillance, Norwegians want stronger penalties” the articles were nuanced, e.g. citing the Minister of Justice who called on consideration and reflection.

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191 This is logical as the government and the police were managing the crisis response. The reliance on official sources is recognized to increase even more during acts of terror - Olsson & Falkheimer, 2013, p. 11
192 “Uendelig stolt av Jens”, AP, 2011-08-12, p.6
193 “Politisk retorikk og vold”, VG, 2011-08-10
196 “Jens tiljublet foran moskeen”, VG, 2011-07-30
198 Gjennom sorge til fremtid”, AP, 2011-07-30, p.2
199 Arbeiderbevegelsens blodvitner, VG, 2011-07-29, p.2
200 “Trygghet og frihet samtidig”, VG, 2011-08-01, p.2
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To conclude, the overall reporting in both VG and AP were positive, or at least neutral, to the governmental response. The news coverage endorsed the government’s message of how to defeat terrorism (with more democracy, openness and humanity), see cultural frames, and the PM was portrayed in positive wordings, e.g. as being statesmen like.  

**Cultural frames**

The cultural frames can be linked to the elements touched upon in matters of the “treatment responsibility” frame, i.e. the government framed the solution and response as a “cultural-weapon” to defeat terrorism. However, the cultural frames are also present in the media framing of the “problem”. The crisis is described similar to the government’s framing of the problem by referring to the attack as an “attacks on democratic and fundamental institutions”.

The cultural references were prevalent throughout the examined period and they were in line with the government’s general approach to how the country should respond to the attack.

"Oslo svarte med samhold og varme da terroren rammet landet og byen. Vi håper at tiden frem mot valget vil preges av verdighet."  

Several articles referred to major historical events and national “heroes” in their description of the government’s crisis management and analyses of Stoltenberg’s role. The government, with Stoltenberg as its front figure, were portrayed as a national hero managing to handle the national grief while he was personally affected.

"Det gjelder ikke minst statsminister Jens Stoltenbergs innsats. Han ble et ankerfeste for hele Norge da katastrofen rammet."  

Finally, it is clear the media picked up the government’s expressions and metaphors in matters of the cultural references both regarding the framing of the problem as well as the treatment of the problem. Media also picked up this element in articles about the government’s ability to unify the nation as well as in articles reporting on the symbolic political action.

**Consequential frames**

Both AP and VG were relatively silent in discussing the short- vs. long-term effects on Norway. Rather than discussing eventual effects the reporting concentrated on whether Norway had changed or not, as well as if the world’s perception of Norway had changed. Would Norway be a country associated with violent extremism, racism and terrorism? Or would Norway be associated with love, solidarity and democracy?

Both AP and VG did discuss the terror’s potential effects on the Norwegian society the first two weeks.

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203 Ibid.
204 It can be noted that in the weeks after the examined period the media coverage was less extensive and seem to have been more critical to the operative crisis response. See articles such as “Gjorde ikke nok”, VG 2011-09-02, p. 8, “Presset PST-sjef beklager og erkjenner mulige fell”, AP, 2011-09-02 p. 4, “Politiets innsats 22 juli”, VG 2011-09-01 p. 38, “Denne listen Inneholdt bare 50-60 navn. Det krever ikke store resurser å sjukke ut så få navn.”, AP, 2011-08-27 p. 6
"Alt er forandret.../det beste er om vi kan stå samlet, fjerne ensomhet og frykt ved å strekke ut en hånd til hverandre."\textsuperscript{208}

"Terroragrepet vil forandre Norge. Det Norska folk må forberede seg på et mer lukket samfunn og mye control."\textsuperscript{209}

The tendency at the end of the examined period was that Norway would "\textit{never be the same as before the attacks}"\textsuperscript{210} however, it is unclear whether she would be strengthen or weakened after the attacks.\textsuperscript{211}

Compared to the governments learning frames, emphasizing that the country would be strengthen, the media coverage reflected a more equivocal picture. In AP there were articles stating that the country already had changed while other argued that it had not. Furthermore, some articles expressed that the world was impressed by the Norwegian crisis response while others indicate that there is a risk that Norway is seen as a base for recruitment of extremism.\textsuperscript{212}

"Det som skjedde i går, vil endre Norge for alltid. Vi har mistet siste rest av vår uskyld. Innhentet av verden."\textsuperscript{213}

Even though different views were given space, both papers were lacking nuanced discussion on potential effects.

During the fourth week of the examined period articles dealing with the potential short-term effects in terms of affecting the outcome of the local election started to show. The, so called, "22 july effect" referring to The Labor Party’s, and more importantly the Prime Minister’s, gain in public support was discussed. This phenomenon, that the Labor Party, would win the local election through sympathy votes, was to some extent portrayed as a democratic problem.\textsuperscript{214}

On a final note, the reporting about the general effects on the Norwegian society were, naturally, very speculative. No clear message about what any eventual effects would be could be found in the news coverage although it was clear that the country “would never be the same again”. The government’s positive learning frame is present but not dominating.

10. Discussion

To summarize, the government actively used cultural, responsibility, managerial and (positive) learning frames in their crisis communication. The production process of these frames was described in the interviews as driven by the motivations of personal affection, the fear of image and reputational repair, knowledge of the media logic and detailed knowledge of previous cases of “successful crisis communication”. The media analysis revealed that the frames in the news coverage basically were shaped around the same elements as the government’s intended frames, e.g. the

\textsuperscript{208} Alt er forandret", AP, 2011-07-26, p. 19
\textsuperscript{209} "Vil forandre Norge", VG, 2011-07-23, p. 27
\textsuperscript{210} "Troen på livet vårt", AP, 2011-08-05, p.6
\textsuperscript{211} "For tidlig for konklusjoner", VG 2011-08-02, p. 2
\textsuperscript{212} "Sympati med Norge", AP, 2011-08-13 p.20,"Er norge et forendret land?", AP, "Dystre blikk på Norge", AP
\textsuperscript{213} "Vil forandre Norge", VG, 2011-07-23, p. 27
\textsuperscript{214} "Regjeringa prioriterer verdspolitiet", AP, 2011-08-18, p. 5
responsibility and cultural frames resonated well with the government’s frames. Although the responsibility frames were more frequently addressed in the news media than in the government’s messages the causes of the “problem” were generally portrayed in the same way, de-politicizing the matter. Furthermore, the learning frames were a bit more speculative in the editorial pieces, offering different consequences and scenarios. The government’s managerial frames resonated well with the media’s treatment responsibility frame although the media reporting changed during the period towards a more critical perspective on the operational response.

As mentioned in the purpose of the paper, all cases are governed by unique constraints. The cultural settings of Norway, e.g. being a small country where the government and the national media work closely together combined with the scale and severity of the crisis, naturally had an effect on the response and behavior of all stakeholders. This should be kept in mind while analyzing the interrelation of political actors, media and the public.

In sum, the government’s intended frames resonated well with the national media reporting. As mentioned, news frames are proven to influence both the public opinion as well as the political policy process. Given the, not surprisingly, huge media interest the political ability to match their preferred frames with the media reporting must be seen as never as important. (It can be noted that four weeks after the attack 15 out of AP’s 27 front pages had been dominated by the topic of July 22nd. For VG the same number was 21 out of 27 front pages). Thus, the selection and promotion of certain frames and their resonance in the total frame setting, (the national media), probably enhanced the possibilities of gaining public support for the Norwegian government.

Even though the government managed to win trust and credibility, as proved in the local election and in public surveys after the terrorist attack, it is interesting to note that the “crisis effect”, or "July 22nd effect", seemed to have passed rather quickly for Stoltenberg. The Labor Party dropped back to its pre-crisis popularity level only after a couple of months. Considering the alternative explanation for the government’s successful crisis communication that is was a case of sympathy voting does not seem enough keeping in mind previous cases as well as the extensive media coverage. Given the assumption that framing is a strategic action, and that the strategic use of certain frames can be tied to other stakeholders’ perception of an incident, the fact that media frames paralleled the government’s frames confirms the importance of this aspect in the framing process.

A speculative thought is that the government’s initial references to core societal values and the words used to describe the attack could have created a backlash for the government if the initial development of the crisis would have been different. The decision to have a reluctant approach to the causes of the crisis could have been seen as weak and naïve. If e.g. foreign terrorists had been responsible and taken further action after the bomb in central Oslo, to some extent Stoltenberg could be seen as “lucky”, referring to the fact that the circumstances of the crisis were coherent with his initial response. At the same time the media reporting seemed to have been nuanced enough to explain the difficult position of the PM, managing security and logistical challenges as well as showing empathy and confidence while he was personally affected. Thus, the media strengthen the government’s managerial frames and consequently their (re. Stoltenberg’s) credibility.

216 “Fylt opp”, VG, 2011-08-19 p. 48
In comparison to previous research on news media logic it is interesting that the descriptive reporting continued throughout the examined period. Given the severity of the events a more nuanced discussion would have to be expected.\(^{218}\) The lack of nuanced discussion on societal- or global causes of the attack as well as the potential effects of the crisis is in line with the de-politicizing of the attack as described in the “responsibility frame” distinguished in the media (and promoted by the government).

Furthermore, the relatively limited “critical” reporting of the crisis response, together with a lack of interpretations of the causes and long-term effects of the crisis, could be seen as a result of the general image of the whole nation being a victim. The government’s ability to create an “inclusive we”, similar to the British case 2005, indicates that this was an important feature in communicating successfully. Moreover, the Norwegian case provides insights into the synthesis of political actors, media and public support in cases when the responsible stakeholder for managing the crisis also is the victim. Of course different types of crises affect the level of attributed responsibility differently. The Norwegian crisis would categorize into the type of crises that T. Coombs would call the “victim cluster”, referring to a type of crises that produce low levels of crisis responsibility.\(^{219}\) Interestingly this type of crisis, a terrorist attack, does not normally belong to this “type” of crisis. In fact, normally in these cases the responsibility frames are frequently applied in the political news reporting.\(^{220}\) However, one can assume that in this case the severity of the attack together with the fact that the political actor (fairly) was portrayed as a victim obviously affected the level of responsibility attention. This goes for both the media coverage and the government’s frame promotion.

To continue, the dominance of the government’s cultural and managerial frames, together with the positive reporting on these elements indicate that the intended frame about core societal values and “democracy to defeat terrorism” was _culturally congruent_ (Entman 2003) with the Norwegian national news media’s “mental images”. During the interviews, the respondents indicated that so were the case. Moreover, both AP and VG supported and reproduced the government’s cultural references, which confirms the assumption of the frames being cultural congruent. Hence the question of what frames to promote to gain public support indicate that the government’s ability to draw attention away from the responsibility frames to the other frames, foremost the cultural frames, together with the fact that the promoted cultural and societal values were cultural congruent with the media and the public were successful.

By emphasizing joint moral grounds and involving personal experiences the frame promotion process became personal. Even though the government’s concerns and affection were genuine that does not necessarily mean that it was not a deliberate communication strategy. Communicators make unconscious or conscious framing judgments of what to say all the time guided by their “own frames”. In fact the decision to emphasize “soft-values” had been made beforehand, indicating that the government had a detailed knowledge of the media logic and other cases of successful crisis communication.

This was further confirmed in the interviews as the respondents revealed that the crisis message was intentionally influenced by Ken Livingstone’s speech after the London bombings 2005. Consequently

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\(^{218}\) Olsson & Falkheimer, 2013  
\(^{219}\) Coombs, 2004, p.6  
\(^{220}\) Nord & Olsson, 2013, p. 84
the discourse of unity in Norway after the attack can be compared to the situation in Britain (as described be Canel and Sanders 2012) after the London bombings 2005.221

Finally, the decision to promote the frame of societal values and historical cultural elements rather than the “responsibility frame” turned out to be wise. It did not solely create increased national support but also generated positive effects internationally. This unexpected effect of the managerial and cultural frames, strengthening the Norwegian brand, also shows that this was a case of crisis exploitation. It is reasonable to assume that the promotion of these frames were unintentional or produced in the light of personal affection, empathy and the fear of dealing with image repair of the “Norwegian brand”. (They did not want to be described as a recruitment base for right-wing extremism or associated with “the original crime” spawning crimes by other right-wing extremists.) However, as mentioned it was revealed in the interviews that the intended frames had been prepared in advance, in case of a large scale crisis.

11. Conclusions

This case study demonstrates the usefulness of framing theory in examining the communicative process, from development and production to the promotion of certain frames, and finally the endorsement or diversion of frames in the news media. The impact of political actors active use of frames that are cultural congruent, together with skills of frame promotion (e.g. shifting focus from responsibility frames by promoting other aspects) and detailed knowledge of the media logic, enhance the chances for desired frames to become supported and reproduced by media. In turn affecting the level of “success”, i.e. gaining trust and credibility. This explorative study can be seen as a starting point for further research on the use of frames in crisis communication as well as how to effectively respond and communicate in relation to large scale crises such as terrorist attacks. Complementary to the empirical material used in this study it would be interesting to make interviews with journalists at VG and AP to examine media’s motifs and motivations in shaping the news. To examine both media’s - and political actor’s motifs could provide even more knowledge about the complex relationship of the key elements of successful crisis communication, frame promotion, frame production and media shaping, and help us to understand in what way these elements interlink.

221 Coombs, 2012, p. 460
12. References

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Interviews

Interview with Trude Måseide, Head of communication at the Prime Minister’s cabinet, April 15th 2013

Interview with Ragnhild Imerslund, Head of communication at the Ministry for foreign Affairs, April 17th 2013

Interview with Gunnar Johanssen, Head of communication at the Ministry of Justice, April 24th 2013

Press Releases

See table 1. for press releases issued by the Prime minister’s office (PMO), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the period 22/7 2011- 22/8 2011. These can be found on the government’s websites. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from:


MFA: http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_artikler.html?id=844


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<td>August 18</td>
<td>Om angrepene på regjeringskvaralet og Utaya</td>
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<td>Store deltar og taler på gudstjense i Norderhov kirke</td>
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<td>Utanriksministeren deltek på markering i Arendal</td>
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<td>July 26</td>
<td>Utanriksministeren deltar på markering i muslimsk menighet</td>
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Speeches and Press Conferences

See table 2. for public speeches, editorials and press conferences of the Norwegian government in the period 22/7 2011- 22/8 2011. Retrieved May 12, 2013, from:


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**News articles**

See appendix 1 for the sample of news articles printed in Varldens Gang and Aftenposten in the period 23/7 2011- 22/8 2011. The articles can be found through the search engine Retriever by using the phrase: “Norge and terror and “22 juli””
### News Articles

- Vil forandre Norge  
  - JOBET MED TERROR I NI ÅR  
  - Ville være en ustopkelig enmannshær  
  - Tapre, tapre Norge  
  - Alt er forandret  
  - Jeg kjenner smerten deres  
  - Vondt at muslimer fikk skylden  
  - Manet ekstreme briter til kamp  
  - Det føles så nær  
  - Kamp mot all fascisme  
  - Aldri mer 22. juli  
  - Rosenes by  
  - Over en million holder hender!  
  - Rosedemokratiets håp  
  - Lederskap  
  - Stoppet debatt på nett etter terror  
  - Arbeiderbevegelsens blodvitter  
  - Viktig kommisjon  
  - Onskapens problem  
  - Hvor var du klokken 15.26 22. juli 2011?  
  - 50 NORDMENN  
  - Gjennom sorgen til fremtiden  
  - De er den tredje bølgen. De hater ikke raser. De har ingen hakekors. De

#### SPALTIST
- Jens tjujublet foran moskeen  
- Et utvalg utsagn etter  
- Hva er ditt bidrag?  
- Forpliktelsen  
- JA TIL OVERVÅKNING  
- Trygghet og frihet samtidig  
- Jus og fælser  
- Minnesenter i Oslo  
- «Vi har ikke noe å skamme oss over»  
- Vi skal aldri glemme dere  

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<td>Under radaren</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
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<td>Rekordinnsamling etter norsk terror</td>
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<td>83</td>
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<td>Hvilke ideer dreper?</td>
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<td>Aftenposten Amag</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troen på livet vårt</td>
<td>Aftenposten Amag</td>
<td>2011-08-05</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Å ta politikken fra en terrorist</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-06</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De vanskelige minuttene</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-06</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«Fremtiden deres er avhengig av jobben vi gjør»</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-06</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- KUNNE VÆRT UNNGÅTT</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-06</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Den doble sorgen</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-07</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terror i Guds nav</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-07</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensporet terrorforskning?</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-09</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politisk retorikk og vold</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-10</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skal saumfare 22. juli-terror</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-10</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontoret fullt av konsolanser</td>
<td>Aftenposten Aften</td>
<td>2011-08-11</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppsplittet beredskap</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-11</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åpenhet trygger barn</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-11</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uenendig stort av Jens</td>
<td>Aftenposten Amag</td>
<td>2011-08-12</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommisjonsleder reddet Hydro fra terroraksjøen</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-13</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usminket og ærlig</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-13</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takk, Oslo</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-13</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det norske hatet</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-13</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympati med Norge</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-13</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RØRER IKKE UROKRÅKER</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-14</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La oss leve i fred og uenighet</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-14</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En ny tid for politikk</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-15</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frps tungetale</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-16</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEKLÄGER MUSLIM- DOKUMENT</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-17</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion i en tung tid</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-17</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er Norge et forandret land?</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-17</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dystre blikk på Norge</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-17</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regjeringa prioriterer verdapolitiet</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-18</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYLT OPP</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-19</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldri mer 22. juli</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-20</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mer demokrati er svaret</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>2011-08-21</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«Norge et lys i et mørkt Europa»</td>
<td>Aftenposten Morgen</td>
<td>2011-08-21</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2:

Topics to be discussed during the interviews:

Background information - Profession:
Arbetar personen med kriskommunikation. 
Hur ser personen på sin yrkesroll som kommunikatör i nationella Kris situati0n.
Hur kopplar de sin egen funktion till organisationens strategiska kriskommunikation (ex. genomslag i media, allmänhetens respons)

Crisis communication 22/7:
- Hur såg arbetssättet arbetsfördelningen ut 22 juli 2011, ex. hade de tillgång till nödvändiga “kommunikationsverktyg”.
- Vilken beredskap fanns vad gäller krishanteringssystem och kriskommunikationsstrategier för en större nationell kris ex. en terrorattack.
- Vem var huvudansvarig kriskommunikationsarbetet 22/7.
- Vilka kommunikationskanaler användes.
- Vilka var de största utmaningarna i det reella kommunikationsarbetet under och efter krisen.

Message and Decisionmaking 22/7:
- Vilket var regeringens huvudbudskap under och efter krisen.
- Förändrades budskapet.
- Varför just detta budskap.
- Vilka var styrkorna respektive svagheterna i kommunikationsstrategin.
- Vilka effekter hade regeringens budskap.
- Hur resonerade man kring politisering vs. avpolitisering av händelserna.
- Hur upplevde de media, oppositionen och allmänhetens reaktioner på krisbudskapet.
- Hur ser personen på kriskommunikation i relation till medias rapportering och allmänhetens reaktioner.
- Hur såg man på användandet av symboler och ritualer.
Before the interview (purpose of study, ethical aspects etc)

- Innan intervjun klargörs syftet med uppsatsen och med intervjun.

- Syftet med uppsatsen är att undersöka sambandet mellan politisk kommunikation, media rapportering och stärkta opinionssiffror/ökat förtroende under och efter en kris. Uppsatsen är teoretisk grundad i teorier om framing strategier i kriser och hur valet av dessa tillsammans med medierapportering påverkar kriskommunikationens effektivitet.

- Information ges om att intervjumaterialet kommer användas som källmaterial i uppsatsen. Personen tillfrågas om han/hon godkänner att intervjun spelas in. Klargörande att ljudmaterialet endast är för personligt bruk och att möjlighet till verifiering innan uppsatsen publiceras kommer att finnas.

- Information ges om hur samtalet går till rent praktiskt, dvs vilken typ av frågor vi kommer samtala kring.
Intervjumall

**Inledande frågor**

- Kan du berätta om hur ni/du arbetade med kriskommunikation 22 juli?
  - Hur såg arbetsfördelningen ut i samband med krisen? (ex.vilken roll hade beslutsfattarna och pol.sak.vs. kommunikatörer och tjänstemän?)
- Vilket var ert kommunikationsbudskap under och efter krisen?
  - Hur resonerade ni kring krisbudskapet?
  - Vilka kanaler använd ni för att få ut budskapet?
  - Hur såg ert budskap ut efter att 22 juli rapporten släptes?
- Vilka effekter upplever du att kommunikationsstrategin fick under, respektive efter, den akuta krisen?
  - Hur togs budskapet emot av media och det norska folket?
  - Hur upplever du kopplingen mellan regeringens strategiska kommunikation och medias rapportering?
  - Vad var budskapets styrkor respektive svagheter?
- Vilka var de största utmaningarna i kommunikationsarbetet?
  - Ex. fanns det beredskap i krishanteringssystemet för en sådan typ av kris?

**Uppföljande frågor**

- Notera viktiga ord och ställ korta frågor
- Verifiering på det direkta samtalet: “Så du tycker att...?”

**Sonderande / specificerande frågor**


**Direkta / Indirekta frågor**

- Direkta - För att få svar på saker som saknas.
- Indirekta - Fråga hur andra skulle gjort eller hur han/hon tror att andra tänker.

**Tolkande frågor**

- Klargörande - Verifiering av tidigare delar av intervjun. T.ex. “Är det så att...?” “Menar du att?”
- Spekulativa frågor - Öppna för reflektion. T.ex. “Kan du se något samband med...?”

**Words**

- Crisis
- 22 /7
- Communication
- Government
- Message
- Framing
- Decisionmaking
- Media
- Public