

The attacks in Norway, 22 July 2011

– linking to some of the questions

Introductory note

This paper was compiled on the morning of Tuesday 26 July. It contains links to a small selection of the thousands of articles, commentaries and blogs that have been published on the internet over the last few days.

It starts by recalling the assumptions and speculations in media coverage on Friday 22 July. It then continues by recalling the discussions which developed on the subsequent two days, when the world found out who had really been responsible for the attacks.

What was the relationship between Breivik's ideology and his actions? Was he driven by personal factors as much as, or more than, by ideological factors? What are the features and causes of Islamophobia, and what is the connection between Islamophobia and other kinds of anxiety and fear, other feelings of threat and insecurity? Were some of Breivik's ideas right even though his actions were wrong?

The paper draws to an end with links to three writers in Scandinavia and with reference to an article naming and remembering some of those who have been killed or are missing, or who are grieving. The last link is to a broadcast talk by Michael Morpurgo. It's about stories and hope, and what we say to the young.

'The Muslims did it'

Craig Murray (<http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2011/07/islamophobia-run-wild/>) was one of the first writers to comment on the widespread Islamophobia and ignorance displayed on UK television programmes on the evening of Friday 22 July.

Broadly similar criticisms were made a day or so later by Charlie Brooker (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/24/charlie-brooker-norway-mass-killings>). The initial coverage, he said, was 'fact-free conjecture'.

In the hours following the attacks, the Quilliam Foundation put out a series of tweets clearly indicating it believed the attacks had been perpetrated by Muslims (<http://inayatscorner.wordpress.com/2011/07/23/quilliams-scaremongering-tweets-on-islamists-and-the-norway-killings/>)

There was a detailed analysis at <http://tabloid-watch.blogspot.com/> (24 July) of the *Sun's* assumption that the attacks in Norway had been perpetrated by Muslims, and of the changes it reluctantly and slowly made in its coverage when eventually realising it had been mistaken.

Sheila Musaji commented on the Islamophobic nature of the initial coverage at http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/islamophobia_can_be_a_useful_term/0018676

Glenn Greenwald, commenting in particular on coverage in the *New York Times*, wrote a detailed analysis of the way in which the word 'terrorism' has morphed into having a new meaning – something that only Muslims can be guilty of: (http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2011/07/23/nyt/index.html).

An indignant and sarcastic riposte to such criticisms of the media coverage was made by James Delingpole: <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jamesdelingpole/100098617/how-right-wing-was-anders-breivik/>

Breivik's manifesto

Max Blumenthal has coined the term 'axis of Islamophobia' to refer to the fact that prejudices against Muslims are closely bound up with certain other prejudices, ideologies and worldviews. He saw the events in Norway as an illustration of this idea (<http://maxblumenthal.com/2011/07/anders-behring-breivik-a-perfect-product-of-the-axis-of-islamophobia/>).

The original article outlining Blumenthal's thesis, first published in December 2010, is at <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175334/tomgram: max blumenthal, the great fear />.

Blumenthal's thesis was endorsed by Alex Kane, particularly in relation to what he called right-wing Zionism: <http://alexbkane.wordpress.com/2011/07/24/breivik-manifesto-outlines-virulent-right-wing-ideology-that-fueled-norway-massacre/>

There were several telling quotations from the manifesto at <http://warincontext.org/2011/07/23/from-pamela-geller-to-anders-behring-breivik-how-islamophobia-turned-deadly/>.

Matthew Goodwin wrote that 'Anders Breivik may have acted alone, but many within the far-right, including here in Britain, share his ideas about the need to take radical action against the "threat" of Islam.' His article was illustrated with a photograph portraying Breivik as a saintly and glorified hero-warrior, presumably created by Breivik himself. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/norway/8658417/Norway-killer-many-within-far-right-share-Anders-Breiviks-ideas.html>

Some of the writers cited by Breivik were briefly considered at <http://www.todayzaman.com/news-251634-norwegian-butcher-a-product-of-islamophobia.html>.

Jeff Sparrow, writing from Australia, included in his article a striking wordle based on Breivik's manifesto: <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/2809244.html>

William Saletan discussed the concept of 'Christian terrorism' and Breivik's claim to have been inspired by Pamela Geller (<http://www.slate.com/id/2299967/>).

Boris Johnson argued that Breivik was not in fact motivated or inspired by an ideology but by a sense of personal inadequacy. Johnson wrote also, however: 'My friends, there is no easy way of saying this: a lot of what this evil nutcase says could be drawn from the blog-post threads that you will find in the media, especially the "conservative" media, in Britain.' (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/borisjohnson/8658872/Anders-Breivik-There-is-nothing-to-study-in-the-mind-of-Norways-mass-killer.html>).

Similarly Joan Smith focused on Breivik's insecure personality as distinct from his ideology: 'Breivik rants against Muslims, appearing to harbour a conviction that just about every organisation from the EU to the BBC is an Islamist front. But what emerges most strongly from his incoherent ideology is that he belongs to a breed of young European men with massive chips on their shoulders and a pitiless disregard for the suffering of others': <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/joan-smith/joan-smith-fantasy-warriors-strike-again-2325991.html>

The nature of racism

An academic article by Nira Yuval-Davis, first published in June, was re-published by *Open Democracy* in late July to help provide a theoretical framework for understanding Breivik's actions: http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/nira-yuval-davis/dark-side-of-democracy-autochthony-and-radical-right?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzEmail&utm_content=201210&utm_campaign=Nightly_%272011-07-26%2005%3a30%3a00%27

'An atrocity, but ... '

Various writers deplored Breivik's acts, but defended the views which he expressed in his manifesto about multiculturalism, immigration, Europe, marxism and Islam.

Such writers included leader writers on the *New York Times* (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/opinion/25douthat.html?_r=2) and *The Jerusalem Post* (<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Editorials/Article.aspx?id=230788>)

The same outlook was expressed much less intellectually, but with great passion, forcing Jeremy Paxman into silence, by the leader of the EDL on Newsnight: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b012twgz/Newsnight_25_07_2011/. (The interview starts at about 13 minutes 40 seconds from the start. It is preceded by a report from Norway and by a review of the EDL.)

Reflections from Scandinavia

Thomas Hylland Eriksen was in Oslo on 22 July and reflected on the consequences and implications of the attacks for Norwegian politics and society: http://www.opendemocracy.net/thomas-hylland-eriksen/norway%E2%80%99s-tragedy-contexts-and-consequences?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzEmail&utm_content=201210&utm_campaign=Nightly_%272011-07-25%2005%3a30%3a00%27

'In every barbaric act,' wrote Henning Mankell, author of the Kurt Wallander series of crime novels there is a human element. That is what makes the barbaric act so inhuman': <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/25/norway-attacks-anders-behring-breivik>

'Like every other citizen of Oslo,' wrote Aslak Sira Myhre, 'I have walked in the streets and buildings that have been blown away. I have even spent time on the island where young political activists were massacred. I share the fear and pain of my country. But the question is always why, and this violence was not blind': <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/24/norway-tragedy-extremism-europe>

In memoriam

Some of the people who were killed or missing were named and remembered by Terri Judd and Charlotte Sundberg at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-victims-stories-young-lives-cut-short-by-a-merciless-killer-2325916.html>

'... our children. We can better prepare them. Let us not kid them.'

'We cannot,' said Michael Morpurgo in a brief radio essay, 'protect ourselves entirely. But we can be vigilant, particularly on behalf of our children. We can better prepare them. Let us not kid them. ... Each of us must face the monster down.' He ended:

At Christmas time, every year since the Second World War, the Norwegians send us a Christmas tree to put up in Trafalgar Square.

Wouldn't it be an idea, now, at this terrible time for the Norwegian people, to offer to plant a tree of ours on Utoya, as a symbol of our solidarity and friendship with them?

We share their stories, their pain, and their hope.

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9547000/9547476.stm)