

Christensen, T., Laegreid, P. & Rykkja, L.H. (2013). After a Terrorist Attack: Challenges for Political and Administrative Leadership in Norway. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, online first.

After a terrorist attack - challenges for political and administrative leadership in Norway

7988 words

Professor Tom Christensen, Department of Political Science, University of Oslo,

tom.christensen@stv.uio.no

Professor Per Lægreid, Department of Administration and Organization Theory, University of Bergen,

per.lagreid@aorg.uib.no

Phone number 47 55 58 25 53

(Corresponding author)

Post doc Lise H. Rykkja Department of Administration and Organization Theory, University of Bergen,

Lise.Rykkja@aorg.uib.no

After a terrorist attack - challenges for political and administrative leadership in Norway

Introduction

July 22, 2011, two shocking terror attacks struck Norway. First, a car bomb destroyed several central buildings in the government complex in the capital of Oslo, among them the office of the Prime Minister. Eight people were killed and nine were seriously injured. Less than two hours later, 69 politically active youths from the Labour Party's youth organization attending a camp on Utøya Island were shot and killed by a gunman dressed in a homemade police uniform. 33 were injured. Most victims were between 15 and 18 years old. Both of the attacks were carried out by an ethnic Norwegian citizen, aged 33. He was arrested the same evening and immediately admitted responsibility for both attacks. A year later, the trial demonstrated that he operated on his own. He was judged sane, found guilty, and sentenced to 21 years of prison.

The attacks on July 22 came as a terrible shock. Norway is generally regarded as a peaceful, open and robust democracy, and had limited previous experience with terrorism (Rykkja et al. 2011). The attacks were quickly characterized as the most devastating since the Second World War. Government structures for handling crises were put to the test.

In times of crisis, citizens and victims typically look to the government for leadership, protection, direction and order (Boin et al. 2005). Masters and 't Hart (2012:2) point out that major crises are often followed by a collective anxiety and outrage that makes those who are responsible – both political leaders and expert authorities – obvious targets of blame. This article addresses the challenges that this shattering crisis created for central government, and more particularly for the political and police leadership in Norway. How did the Norwegian government and the political and police leaders react to the crisis? How did they balance, both

in the short and long run, the use of symbols and the instrumental concerns of coping with the attack? How did their performance affect their legitimacy and support? How can the responses of the leaders be explained? What can we learn from the Norwegian response?

We consider the reactions to the attacks through the lenses of descriptive crisis management theory. Our emphasis is on ‘meaning making’, focusing on how the leaders played out their reactions in the media and towards the public (Boin et al. 2005). When explaining the different aspects of crisis management we draw on three organizational perspectives, emphasizing the importance of myths and symbols, formal organization, and cultural-institutional traditions (Christensen et al. 2007). The analysis is based on qualitative content analysis of central policy documents, mainly commission and evaluation reports, parliamentary debates and documents, speeches made by central actors, and mass media coverage in the year following the attacks. The following section outlines our conceptual, theoretical and methodological approach. In the next section we describe relevant contextual factors. Third, we describe the central political leaders’ and expert authorities’ reactions to the attacks. We continue to discuss and analyse their response, based on our theoretical approach. Finally, we draw some conclusions considering what one can learn from the Norwegian response.

Theoretical approach

Following Boin (2008), a crisis can be seen as an extreme situation that threatens core values or life-sustaining systems, and which requires an urgent response under conditions of deep uncertainty. Crises are largely improbable events with exceptionally negative consequences, or ‘low chance, high impact’ events (Weick 1988). They are difficult to predict, develop quickly and in unexpected ways, and differ from normal situations in that they require a simultaneous coordinated effort by many organizations (Eriksson-Setterquist 2009). Crises

thus imply forming subjective opinions about non-routine situations characterized by time pressure, threats and ambiguity (Rosenthal, Charles and t'Hart 1989). Public leadership in time of crises faces big challenges and has been characterized as 'a mission impossible' (Boin and 't Hart 2003). The crisis of July 22 includes all these elements.

In addition to the devastating human losses and extensive material destruction, July 22 represents a significant crisis at a *symbolic level*. A physical attack on central institutions in a democracy – in this case central government ministries and the largest political party – strikes at the very core of the state, and violates central common political and societal values. By targeting young people, the attacker also violated essential human values. This complexity exerted extra pressure on the responsible authorities. The political executive has a central symbolic role when responding to and handling such an event (Edelman 1964). However, symbols and rituals have been missing in central crisis management analysis ('t Hart 1993). According to 't Hart (1993), three core features of symbolic action are central. *Framing* concerns the ability to define what the crisis is all about. Grasping the crisis as it unfolds and conveying to others how to understand it, when many are still in shock and there still are a lot of uncertainties, is a demanding, albeit important exercise. *Rituals* concern symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive, such as setting up inquiry commissions and evaluation committees. *Masking* relates to impression management and external communication strategies of crisis stakeholders to reduce impacts by selective communication. In our analysis, we concentrate on this symbolic role, and examine how it is related to instrumental/structural and cultural features.

By '*giving meaning*', leaders frame the crisis for citizens at large. Whether they fully grasp the crisis or not, they have to create an image of control, in order to lead, comfort and inform the public. In this phase, communication and the use of symbols is essential. A sure-

footed manipulation of symbols shapes the views and sentiments of the public and political environment, and may thereby enhance the leaders' action capacity.

Distinct organizational perspectives may provide explanations for present structures or management solutions (Christensen et al. 2007). We apply three such perspectives to understand how leaders within different organizations acted in reaction to the crisis, and to explain why they acted in certain ways. A *myth perspective* emphasizes the importance of myths and symbols in politics and administration (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Meyer and Rowan 1977). As argued above, myths and symbols will also be important in crisis management. According to Brunsson (1989), public leaders always balance their actions with talk and manipulation of symbols. Importing myths and using symbols may result in more flexible and legitimate organizations. According to Edelman (1977), symbolic politics aims at the reassurance of people who feel threatened. Therefore, symbolic politics is particularly relevant during times of crisis, when people feel threatened or uncertain (Boin and 't Hart 2003). A site visit by government leaders, for example, is an important ritual and symbolic action to show that the government takes the crisis seriously (t' Hart 1993).

In this article, we examine the symbols that were used by the political and police leadership after the terrorist attacks, and analyze how the leaders tried to balance symbols and instrumental considerations. A crucial question is why the political leadership were more successful in this balancing act compared to the police leaders, and what further implications this had for their legitimacy.

An *instrumental perspective* directs attention towards formal structural arrangements seen as instruments to achieve certain goals (Egeberg 2003, March and Olsen 1983). Conscious structural design of public organizations can be an important way to fulfil public goals. However, it also presupposes high control and rational calculation, and will have potential limitations (cf. Dahl and Lindblom 1953). Behaviour is based on a 'logic of

consequence’ where ‘bounded’ rational actors try to predict the consequences of their choices and find appropriate means to achieve their goals (Simon 1957). Through this perspective the formal organization of internal security and safety and the related coordination challenges become relevant, representing preconditions for how leaders act. Although both may prevail, we start from the assumption that instrumental action is closely linked to operational crisis management, while symbolic action is more important in crisis management at the strategic level. A further assumption following from this would be that police leaders will find it more problematic to act symbolically since they are more directly responsible for operative crisis management, and therefore more likely to be blamed for operational failures.

A cultural-institutional perspective emphasizes the importance of informal norms, values and practices developed over time and as a response to internal and external pressure rather than organization based on conscious and rational design (Selznick 1957). In this perspective, leaders in a crisis will act according to established informal rules and values rather than according to what is instrumental for themselves or their organization.

Furthermore, development is seen as largely path-dependent: The ‘roots’ of an organization – contexts, norms and values central to its establishment – will influence its ‘route’ at a later stage (Krasner 1988, Pierson 2004, Streeck and Thelen 2005), and central actors will follow a ‘logic of appropriateness’ rather than a logic of consequence (March and Olsen 1989). In our case, a relevant question is to what extent and in what ways the response to the terrorist attack was influenced by such cultural factors.

The three perspectives are used in a supplementary manner (Roness 1997). Our main focus is on the symbolic aspects, considering how leaders’ success in using symbols and balance concerns are shaped by structural/organizational and cultural features.

Data and methods

The findings in this paper are based on qualitative content analysis of a collection of relevant documents, policy papers, public evaluation reports, speeches and government white papers, as well as media reports on the performance of public leaders after 22 July. The ultimate purpose behind this document study is, as postulated by Scott (1990: 28), to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and significance of what the document contains – both in a literal and in an interpretative sense. The documents were collected systematically through web searches covering mainly a period of 10 months (August 2011-November 2012), supplemented by new searches to update the manuscript before journal submission in December 2012. This includes near to 150 individual references and documents. Most news articles were found through the media monitoring software Retriever¹, combining search words such as ‘22 July’, ‘Utøya’, ‘Police preparedness’, ‘crisis management’, ‘crisis response’ and the like. The searches were concentrated on the main national newspapers (*Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *Verdens Gang*, *Dagsavisen*, *Morgenbladet*). Official documents were largely retrieved from the websites of relevant public government offices, such as the website of central government and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security², the Police Security Services³, and the Police⁴. All three authors had access to all collected documents. When reading the documents, a list of questions was developed and used as a guide to ensure comparability of results and interpretations. All documents have not been referenced in this article, mainly due to lack of space. They can, however be retrieved by replicating our search methods.

¹ Retriever webpage: <https://www.retriever-info.com/en/about-retriever.html>

² Government information: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/>

³ The Police Security Services: <http://www.pst.no/>

⁴ The Police: <http://www.politi.no>

The Norwegian Context

Norwegian society is marked by a high level of trust. Both generalized trust among citizens, and citizens' trust in government, are higher than in many other countries (Wollebæk et al. 2012). This also applies to citizens' trust in the government's ability and capacity to handle and prevent crises (Christensen et al. 2011).

A core concept within the Norwegian government is individual ministerial responsibility. This implies strong sectoral ministries resulting in weak horizontal coordination between policy areas (Christensen and Lægreid 1998). This is also the case within the area of internal security and crisis management, where the Ministry of Justice's responsibility for coordination meets with strong sectoral interests (Fimreite et al. 2011). Another important feature of the Norwegian system is a strong tradition of local self-government. The municipalities have important responsibilities, also for emergency preparedness, internal security and crisis management. The tension between the central state and the local authorities also influences debates on internal security and crisis management (Fimreite et al. 2011).

Three crucial principles guide the Norwegian authorities' approach to crisis management. A *liability principle* implies that every ministry and authority is responsible for crisis management within its own sector. This is closely related to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, emphasizing strong sector ministries. Problems surface when complex crises demand coordination between sectors. A principle of *decentralization* emphasizes that a crisis should be managed at the lowest operational level possible. When a crisis happens within the borders of a municipality, this municipality is in principle responsible for handling it. Thus, geography becomes a central organizing concept. This can be problematic when a crisis crosses the borders of a single municipality, or when responsibility for handling the crisis is split between a municipality and a state agency with differing areas of responsibility.

A principle of *conformity* emphasizes that organizational forms in a crisis should be as similar to ‘normal organizational’ forms as possible. Those organizational structures handling the problem in a normal situation should also be prepared to handle crisis situations. After the attacks in 2011, a fourth principle was highlighted: The *principle of cooperation*. It emphasizes the necessity of collaboration between rescue teams and actors from different sectors, both public and private (St. meld 2011-2012). Taken together, these four organizing principles represent important structuring principles. However, they can also be problematic and challenging to implement.

The principles of ministerial superiority and local self-government, paired with the principle of liability and the principle of decentralization, constrain efforts to establish an integrated and coherent organization for internal security and crisis management, although recent efforts to strengthen coordination has led to a certain clarification of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Justice, subordinate agencies, the County Governors and local government (Lango et al. 2011). The principle of liability stands strong and continues to create tensions between organizational units, sectors and administrative levels. The Ministry of Justice remains the central coordinating body, but has been characterized as rather weak. Attempts to build a strong overarching coordinating ministry or strengthening the Prime Minister Office have failed, largely due to the strength of the principle of ministerial responsibility. Thus, coordination between different authorities continues to be a challenge (Fimreite et al. 2011).

A complex web of authorities was responsible for crisis management on the day of July 22. The Cabinet has an overall responsibility for security. *The Ministry of Justice and Public Security* normally takes the lead in a national crisis. Constitutional responsibility still rests with each ministry, and the individual ministries take the lead when a crisis hits their sector specifically. The *Government Emergency Management Council* supports the

government during severe crises, and is summoned by the most affected ministry. A *Government Emergency Support Unit*, an administrative resource designated to support the lead ministry, is summoned in especially demanding crisis situations. All these institutions were operative during the attacks in July 2011.

The main agencies under the Ministry of Justice were the *Directorate of the Police* (PD) and the *Police Security Service* (PSS). The PD is responsible for the professional direction and follow-up of the police, and can assist the local Chief of Police in a crisis situation. The PSS provides information and intelligence covering counter-terrorism and counter-extremism, publishes threat assessments, and provides personal protection. *Local police districts* are responsible for tactical decisions and operations. The attacks of 22 July hit two different police districts.

Providing meaning

The Norwegian authorities' immediate response to the attacks, both strategically and operational, were at first largely praised. However, over the following months the police was increasingly criticized in the media, both by commentators and those next of kin. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister (PM) and other leading figures (the King and the Crown Prince) were said to have dealt with the crisis in a sensible and dignified way. Only later on, after the publication of the critical 22 July Commission report (NOU 2012:14), was the PM criticized for lacking emergency preparedness and risk assessment. The Government was also accused of lacking implementation powers in the area of internal security. Simultaneously, serious doubts were raised as to whether the responsible operative authorities, especially the police, were at all prepared and adequately equipped.

After 22 July, more detailed information on the actual crisis management was gradually revealed, especially by the press. Criticism was directed mainly at the police

operation on Utøya, and towards the PSS. Later on, the crisis management of several ministries was also found at fault. Several of the authorities involved, the health sector, the military, the PSS and the police, produced their own internal evaluations shortly after the attacks (PD 2012a, PSS 2012). The 22 July Commission published its report in August 2012 (NOU 2012:14). The report was exceptionally critical. It argued that the PSS in fact could have detected and prevented the terrorist attacks, and that the Government could have implemented necessary security measures to prevent the bomb car from parking outside the government complex. Coordination and information flow in central government failed, and the police action was seriously flawed. The report identified two critical points that were linked to faulty police work. First, information on the escape car was available but not followed up. Second, the response time to Utøya was unduly delayed because of miscommunication and a misunderstanding on where to board the police boat.

Both the media and the public were outraged by the findings. The newspaper *Dagbladet* reported (Dagbladet 2012a):

“The Commission describes a police department that at first worked almost blindly and did not cope with the situation and could not do anything to prevent new attacks.”

The leader of a Parliamentary Inquiry into 22 July stated that (Dagbladet 2012b):

“This is an exceptional and robust report. In my opinion, the Commission provided us with an unpleasant truth, and the problems it revealed were striking.”

The political leadership immediately accepted the main points of the report, but faced serious criticism. One of the largest newspapers outright demanded that the PM resigned (VG, 14.08.2012). Several others stated that the Minister of Government Administration and Reform (responsible for security at the government complex) and her Secretary General (formerly Director-General of the PD) should step down. The police leaders were more reluctant to accept blame. The PD Director-General’s main strategy was to stress that the

commission's findings were quite similar to their own evaluations. This was supported by other police leaders, but was met by considerable criticism in the media. Eventually, the Director-General resigned, citing lack of support from the political leadership as the main reason.

The political leadership

The public performances and speeches that the PM made during the first month after the terrorist attacks display the political leadership's main approach and communication strategy. At the first press conference after the attacks, the PM introduced the main themes, which would continue to dominate his later appearances: The terrorist attacks were proclaimed as attacks on the whole nation, on democracy itself, and on the Norwegian commitment to creating a better world. A fitting response was 'more democracy, more openness and more humanity'. No one should be allowed to bomb Norway into silence. Norway would follow her historical path, and reclaim security and safety. He said: 'Evil can kill a man, but it cannot defeat a whole nation and its people'. He also underlined that the Norwegian people should stand up for their ideals and central values (NTB 2011). This is an example of a strong symbolic language, and of a leader setting a moral example in a crisis situation (Edelman 1964, 1977).

In his following speeches, the PM returned to various aspects of democracy. He stressed the importance of mobilizing democratic values, sharing in the grief of the families affected, and giving them support. He highlighted the importance of various societal groups, and the youth organization was lauded as representing the future of democracy. He also thanked central civil servants for their valuable contribution to democracy. In his speech in a mosque, he also stressed the importance of 'new members of the democracy' and emphasized that Norway was one community, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender or class (SMK 2011). He also praised the broad public expressions of solidarity as a manifestation of the

peoples' collective will and urged Norwegian citizens to participate in strengthening the 'fabric of democracy', and thus commit to the Norwegian 'we'. The PM exposed a central ability to 'rise above' the people and become a representative of the 'common will'.

The PM was not willing to blame anyone, or start a 'witch hunt' for those with subversive attitudes. He stated that he was greatly impressed by the dignified, caring and firm nature of peoples' reactions, and quoted a young girl from the youth organization: 'If one man can show that much hatred, think about how much love we all can show together'. The PM emphasized that one should be alert to signs of extremism, and that the country needed to be organized and prepared for terrorist attacks in the future. Increased security was to be attained through adequate emergency organization, visible police, more controls, exercises, and training, and the right equipment.

The PM repeatedly used personal examples to underscore his main arguments. He met with the families of the victims and survivors several times. This underscored the symbolic aspect of his main arguments and earned him more praise. A major reason for this was that the PM identified himself with the victims. He publicly emphasized that he had many nice memories from Utøya, where he had gained important political experience and made many friends. He personally knew many of the victims, and their families. Another important reason was that the PM's Office was badly damaged in the bomb explosion.

Overall, the PM's response prompted praise, and can be seen as a display of 'statesmanship' (Selznick 1957). According to Masters and 't Hart (2012:17) there is ample evidence in crises that involve public safety and national security that astute rhetorical executive leadership can shape public cognitions, emotions and attitudes. The discourse of 'democracy, openness, humanity, but never naivety' was repeated continuously over the following weeks and months, and became a slogan and a central symbol of how (apparently) successful the central leadership in Norway was in dealing with the crisis. As such, it

represented a crucial sense- and meaning-making framing of the crisis, building a sense of comfort, direction and unity.

Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) argue that crises that involve acts of terrorism call for such a *restorative rhetoric*: a category of crisis response emphasizing issues of repair, recovery, rebuilding and helping victims. It includes a humanistic element, where the primary concern is to help victims and others affected to cope with the physical and emotional destruction of the crisis. It is not necessarily advocated to avoid blame, but serves as a facilitator and sense-maker in the healing process from disaster to restoration. Central (successful) responders – here exemplified through the symbolic statements and actions of the Norwegian PM – typically introduce expressions of remorse, sympathy and regret (Ibid: 379).

The speeches of the central leaders apparently hit a nerve. Three days after the attacks, hundreds of thousands Norwegians participated in what was popularly called ‘The Rose Parades’. Candles were lit and flowers laid down in a silent protest against the terrorist throughout Norway. The leaders’ statements, together with these demonstrations, apparently raised awareness that terror seeks to destroy trust, and seemed to result in a mobilization of core Norwegian values (Wollebæk et al. 2012:35).

The Minister of Justice did not fare as well as the PM. A few months after the attacks, he chose to step down. A main reason seems to be that he was caught in a cross-pressure between a need of restorative rhetoric and symbols, and a need to defend the police. His arguments were, however, over-shadowed by the successful rhetoric of the PM, and worsened by a problematic relationship to the police organization.

After the commission report in August 2012, the PM came under more pressure and his legitimacy decreased. The media portrayed him as not very interested in security and preparedness issues before the attack. Thus, the PM’s scope of action became more restrained and coupled to the report’s arguments about a failing central government apparatus. His

strategy was to accept the critique, and mainly placed the blame on the administration, arguing that accountability meant to stay and work harder to learn and secure proper improvements rather than stepping down. So far, this has been a relative successful strategy, even though his legitimacy has been tainted.

The police

Contrary to the political leadership, the police faced serious criticism immediately after July 22. One critique was related to why early information on the terrorist's car was not spread. 'Police-tactical reasons', said the internal police evaluation, while the commission report stated that it rather resulted from chaos, personal failures, cultural problems and lack of competence. Another extensive debate concerned police response time. The police did not want to admit that response time was a problem (Dagsavisen 2012):

“A big apparatus was set in motion when terror struck Norway Friday July 22. Both the police, the military defence and the emergency services were called to do what they are trained to but hoped that they never would experience. Afterwards, all of them report themselves fit. However, questions are left unanswered, and especially three things are crucial: time usage and response time, cooperation with the military defence, and police resources.”

Nevertheless, it took almost an hour from the first reports of the shootings on Utøya until the police arrived at the site. Criticism was also raised concerning transportation, the choice of route to Utøya, and the meeting point before landing. Questions were raised as to whether the local police, who had arrived ahead of the platoon, had followed proper instructions. Another issue was the communication between different emergency units during the incident, and the functionality of the emergency communication network. The internal police report defended the police action, while the commission report launched heavy criticism.

Another critical issue was whether the PSS could have noticed the activities of the perpetrator and taken action prior to the attacks. International experts claimed that the attacks could have been detected if the PSS had followed up on central information. The perpetrator

appeared on a list from an international project (Global Shield) collecting data about people purchasing potential bomb device material. Furthermore, the PSS Director-General was accused of giving contradictory information, first denying that the PSS should have taken action, but later on apologising for giving misinformation, eventually leading to her resignation. The commission report also criticized the PSS for a lack of effort to detect the terrorist.

In their public appearances after the attacks, the police leaders were reluctant to admit any faults or errors. Their message was that everything had worked well, and that the police had done their best under the circumstances. However, media reports argued that the police leaders were neither humble nor apologetic enough. The police continued their defensive strategy, exemplified by the leader of the internal police commission's public performance after presenting preliminary points from the police's evaluation report. He continued to claim that the police had done all they could, and that their performance was rather good, considering the circumstances. In a public hearing in January 2012, the police director stated (PD 2012b):

“There is nothing now that indicates that the police did not respond quickly to handle the situation”

This resulted in even more criticism, and was seen by many as a PR disaster. The newspaper *Adresseavisen* (2012) stated that:

“The Police's own evaluation of its response at Utøya Island reveals a lack of humbleness and self-criticism. We have to pose critical questions. (...) The committee's statement that the police action was without faults, both at the site of the Government complex and on Utøya, is a big surprise”

The following evaluations from the police and the PSS responded to this criticism. Leaders from both organizations apologized publicly and admitted to poor crisis management.

However, the damage was already done, and the apologetic attempts were seen as rather

forced. When the commission then later on published its report, the PD Director-General was judged less empathic and willing to accept criticism than before. This strategy that led to even more public criticism, and a few weeks later he handed in his resignation motivated by a lack of support from the minister.

Symbols, instruments and culture revisited

The commission report revealed that failures on all levels were even more severe than the strongest critics had anticipated. The police were criticized the most, but it also hit the political leadership. The report revealed serious informational and coordinative problems. While the top political leadership succeeded from the beginning in balancing symbols and action, the police leaders struggled much more, even though both groups were met by severe criticism. How can this be explained? The answer could simply be related to different roles and tasks, and to the diversities of political and operative leadership, making different leeway for decisions. The meaning-making strategy that the different leaders chose, and the way this played out when the 'objective' facts from the commission hit the leaders and their strategies, could also be an important explanation.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks the situation was marked by disbelief, shock, uncertainty, fear and chaos. There was an urgent demand for information and crisis communication from the political leadership to make sense of the situation. When the PM succeeded in this, attention was diverted towards the actions of the police. The PM stressed the importance of democracy, openness and a caring society. The symbolic effect of this rhetoric was significant, and diverted attention away from the responsibility of the political leadership for more instrumental aspects of the crisis management at central government level.

In one sense, the central role that the PM took was surprising. In previous discussions, proposals to make central crisis management a responsibility of the PMO have been met with considerable resistance. As shown by Lægreid et al. (2011), proposals to restructure responsibility lines have not been followed through. This corresponds to the Norwegian tradition of a small and rather weak PMO with no specific task portfolio, and a rather weak role for the PM supposed to be 'first among equals' in the Cabinet.

The reactions after July 22 demonstrate that central public figures, especially the PM, are important national symbols of unity. He assumed the role of a strong public leader, and his stance endowed the political leadership with support, legitimacy and necessary strength in the early phases of the crisis. This symbolic leadership is central to the meaning-making phase. Those who successfully frame and define the crisis, and at the same time manage to avoid blame, often hold the key to solving it.

The PM was put under much more pressure when the commission report was published. Evidently, the rhetorical power weakened over time, mainly because the situation changed. After a time, the media, the families involved and the public in general went on looking for answers to what went wrong, rather than seeking comfort. And, according to the 22 July commission, a lot of things went wrong. This revelation and change of circumstances hindered further symbolic action. Although the PM and the government publicly accepted the critique, they could not escape a certain weakened position.

In marked contrast to the PM's stance during and immediately after the attack, other public leaders seemed to fail, at least in a symbolic sense. The Minister of Justice was criticized for not being more apologetic, for being defensive, and for being too loyal to the police. He was largely placed in the shadow of the PM. His role was more at the difficult cross-road between symbols and actions. His discretionary space for the use of symbols was therefore smaller. Ultimately, this seemingly contributed to his resignation. The new Minister

of Justice has also met problems related to the symbolic rhetoric in her handling of the commission's report. She inherited the difficult task of balancing political control while at the same time attending to the police organization. The media interpreted the PD General-Directors' resignation as the results of a blame-game. By blaming the police, attention was diverted from the political leadership. Typical for the increased pressure created by the report was also the critique towards the Minister of Government Administration and Reform. She admitted responsibility, primarily for not securing the ministerial buildings better, and some media commentators demanded her resignation.

Overall, the police leaders on different levels – the PSS General-Director, the PD leaders and the two involved police districts – met legitimacy and accountability problems, both immediately after the attacks and even more so after the commission's report. They all adhered to a meaning-making strategy arguing that they had handled the attacks rather well. This communication strategy failed, however, and led to accusations of a lack of empathy and self-critique. After the commission report was published, the media reactions became even fiercer.

What then of the explanatory perspectives we introduced earlier? Summing up, the symbolic action of framing and rituals, as well as masking is prominent (t'Hart 1993). The PM framed the crisis by the symbolic use of democracy, openness, transparency, participation and individual rights. Rituals were implemented with the setting up of both internal evaluation committees and the external 22 July Commission. Through the internal evaluations and public performances and statements from the police, masking seems to have been a typical strategy. Selective labelling, displacement of crisis perceptions and obscuring operational details were elements of this strategy.

Political and administrative leadership had, first, to cope with the public inquiry. The PM stated clearly that he wanted an independent and critical report - 'speaking truth to

power'. This put pressure on the different actors and stakeholders to cooperate. The inquiry process and the immediate response to the commission report revealed such cooperation, and acceptance of the critical assessments. In the hearing process, one could, however, also observe stonewalling responses from some actors, and especially the police. Second, the responsible authorities had to face public criticism. The main strategy was acknowledging rather than denying accountability. The relationship between political and administrative accountability was blurred, however. Accountability relations were multi-dimensional and ambiguous. Third, the responsible authorities faced a political verdict. The chosen strategy was to preserve rather than to resign, and the political executives argued that the best way of taking responsibility was to stay, improve and learn, rather than resign, reflecting a majority government. Some of the administrative executives tried the same strategy, but not all succeeded. Those who ended up leaving their positions, like the two top leaders in Ministry of Justice, in the end also used vicarious reasons for their resignation, but the media saw them as 'sacrifices' by the political leadership.

An instrumental perspective can help us understand the more dynamic preconditions related to the symbolic actions on different levels (Thompson 1967). We have argued that the PM, on the highest institutional level, used appropriate symbols and thereby managed to rise above the instrumental problems, something his role as a central public figure allowed him to do (cf. Brunsson 1989). The ministers in charge were closer to the action, however, and therefore had more trouble in handling these symbols. Police leaders on the other hand apparently chose the 'wrong' symbols, and quickly found themselves knee-deep in instrumental problems.

The instrumental challenges in the situation were extreme, and played into the symbolic equation. The terrorist attacks exposed a number of well-known problems, concerning lack of resources, ambiguous chains of responsibility and competences, and a

corresponding lack of coordination. Further challenges resulted from the coupling of two terrorist attacks, and the magnitude of the crisis. The attacks were also completely unexpected and unprecedented. Central actors had severe problems comprehending the situation. Making sense of the events and deciding how to prioritize resources, were closely connected, and the challenges related to the initial ambiguity were coupled to both standardized reactions and improvisation, which again influenced meaning making.

The crisis thus demonstrates the limitations of planning for a crisis (Boin 2008). Plans may work well for predictable and routine events, but in crisis situations characterized by deep uncertainty and urgency, they often prove inadequate or even useless. The commission report revealed that existing plans for crisis management were not followed. Central crisis management structures within the ministry were not established, and central police procedures demanding immediate action in dangerous situations were not followed. The emergency telephone system experienced severe capacity problems, and communication channels within the police were underdeveloped and in some cases incompatible. All these instrumental problems had an influence on the meaning making strategies, although a differentiated one.

A cultural-institutional perspective would further predict response according to the established institutional culture. The commission's report revealed a lacking security culture at the central political level. The reaction from the PM was typical: He stated to the commission that he thought the government complex was properly secured with barriers, even though he daily used the same route to his office as the bomb car did on the day of the attacks. Other cultural factors also played into the PM's reactions to the accountability question. His reaction was that the appropriate way to take responsibility meant to stay in position and work harder to improve crisis management, rather than to resign. As shown earlier, criticism has hit the police organization more than the top political level. Blaming the administration rather

than the political leadership is rather uncommon. An explanation to this is that the attacks were aimed more or less directly towards the Labour Party lead by the current PM.

The Ministry of Justice in particular seems to follow a historical path of organizing for internal security and crisis management, and seems restricted by the sectorized and fragmented structure of the field (Fimreite et al. 2011, Lango et al. 2011). Other than changing the name of the ministry to include 'public security', there has been no major institutional change. The same defensive, or even passive reaction seems to characterize the military side. The division between the military and civilian administration responsible for internal security is a longstanding one. The commission report also revealed that coordinated action across the boundaries of the military and the civilian administration was difficult.

The reactions of the police leaders, reflected in their internal evaluation reports and comments to the media, can also be seen as path-dependent and has been claimed to reveal an internal culture of inertia and lack of self-critique. In the extreme situation facing the terrorist attacks, it could have been easy for the public to accept some slack and failures. However, the police leaders continued to say that they were in control of the situation. These attitudes did not go down well with the media and public, even though the police traditionally is highly trusted in Norway. To use Easton's concepts; lack of specific support overshadowed for some time the general high diffuse support towards the police.

Summing up, the response to the terrorist attacks is characterized by complex interactions between mutually influential factors, by dynamics between symbolic factors on the one hand and structural and cultural influences on the other. The external shock had an obvious and important impact on all actors. The response was, to a large extent, shaped by established organizational arrangements, doctrines and principles that constrained central leaders' scope of action. Deliberate interference by the political executive was important, but has not resulted in any major instrumental changes this far. All this is blended with a rather

successful use of symbols by central political leaders and the PM in particular, although it proved a less successful strategy after the 22 July commission had published its report. The police leaders on their side, held on to a rather failing symbolic strategy, and seemed even more constrained by difficult structural-instrumental conditions and an apparent cultural resistance to change.

Conclusions

The overall focus in our analysis has been the balancing of symbols and actions of the executive and police leaders after the 22 July attacks. The political leadership, and in particular the PM, were initially praised. Later on, the praise turned to critique, asserting a lack of preparedness and action capacity. The public organizations responsible for operative action, in particular the police, met even more problems and lost legitimacy when trying to balance symbols and action, both initially and in the aftermath of the commission report. This can be explained by different roles and by dynamics between different constraining factors. Immediately after the attacks, the PM succeeded by utilizing collective and uniting symbols, and managed to stay clear of the conflicts concerning operational matters, something that became more difficult after the report was published. The police leaders had a more complex role. They were closer to the ‘real’ action, and did not handle this well. They were considered overly self-righteous in their response to criticism. We find that their symbolic strategy was shaped by structural and cultural constraints. When severe operational problems eventually were revealed, this added to the critique.

Seen through the lens of an instrumental perspective, criticism was initially, and also in the report of the commission, particularly directed towards the police. It revolved around a lack of instrumental and planned features; lack of internal and external coordination, inadequate means of communication and resources resulting in a prolonged response time.

Trying to hide or modify these facts lead the police leaders astray in their symbolic strategies of meaning-making.

The organization of the central governmental crisis management apparatus was also criticized, and much more so in the final report. These problems can be understood in terms of a cultural-institutional perspective. The previous history of crisis management in Norway is characterized by fragmentation, sector-wise solutions, path-dependency and incremental change (Fimreite et al. 2011, Lango et al. 2011). This turned the table against the central political leadership, undermining their until then successful symbolic strategy, eventually making political damage in both the short and long term.

The crisis management of the terrorist attacks also reveals that the established organizational principles of conformity, liability and decentralization are difficult to practice. The expectation that the organizational model in extreme crisis situations will be similar to a normal situation is difficult to live up to. Major crises and disasters are unexpected and surprising situations, where established organizational forms often prove inadequate. Generally, there is an urgent need for improvisation and rapid and flexible response. Often, established hierarchical structures, lines of command and competence areas are overstepped. This was also the case in the hours and days following the bomb explosion and the attacks on Utøya. Something that influenced in a major way the leaders use of crisis symbols.

Major crises like the July 22 attacks epitomize trans-boundary and ‘wicked’ problems (Ansell et al. 2010, Head 2008). They pose challenges that cross established organizational borders. Increasingly, successful crisis management must take place at the interface between organizations and levels of administration. The principle of liability establishes responsibility within single organizations, but represents an obstacle to coordination in a larger crisis situation. After July 22 there has been an intense focus on coordination problems within the

police and between the Ministry of Justice and the subordinate authorities with responsibility for prevention or crisis management.

References

- Adresseavisa 2011. *Lack of self-criticism*. Adresseavisa 17.12.2011, 22:32.
- Ansell C., A. Boin and A. Keller (2010), 'Managing Transboundary Crises: Identifying Building Blocks of an Effective Response System.' *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Volum18, Number 4, pp. 195–207.
- Boin, A. (2008), 'Editors introduction: Fundamentals of Crisis Development and Crisis management: An Introduction to Critical Crises readings', in A. Boin (ed.), *Crisis Management*. Volume 1. Sage, London.
- Boin, A., P. t'Hart, E. Stern and B. Sundelius (2005), *The Politics of Crisis Management – Public leadership Under Pressure*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Boin, A. and P. t'Hart (2003), 'Public Leadership in Times of Crisis: Mission Impossible?' *Public Administration Review*, Volume 63, Number5, pp. 544–553.
- Brunsson, N. (1989), *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decision and Actions in Organizations*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Christensen, T. and P. Lægreid (1998), Administrative Reform Policy: The Case of Norway, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Volume 64, Number 3, pp. 457–75.
- Christensen, T., A.L. Fimreite and P.Lægreid (2011), 'Crisis Management – The Case of Internal Security in Norway', *Administration and Society*, Volume 43, Number 5, pp. 561–94.
- Christensen, T., P.Lægreid, P.G.Roness and K.A.Røvik (2007), *Organization Theory for the Public Sector*. Routledge, London.
- Dagbladet (2012a), *The report reveals great weaknesses*. Dagbladet 13.8.2012, 12:0.1
- Dagbladet (2012b), *An unpleasant truth*. Dagbladet 13.8.2012, 16:10.
- Dagsavisen (2012), *The many unanswered questions. The attack on Norway*. . Dagsavisen 8.8.2012.
- Dahl, R.A. and C.Lindblom (1953). *Politics, Economics, and Welfare*. New York: Harper & Row.
- DiMaggio, P. and W.W. Powell (1983), 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', *American Sociological Review*, Volume 48, Number 2, pp. 147–60.
- Edelman, M. (1964), *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Champaign, IL:University of Illinois Press.
- Edelman, M. (1977), *Political Language. Words that Succeed and Policies That Fail*.Academic Press, New York.
- Egeberg, M. (2003), 'How Bureaucratic Structure Matters: An Organizational Perspective', in B.G. Peters and J. Pierre (eds.) *Handbook of Public Administration*. London: Sage.
- Eriksson-Zetterquist, U. 2009. 'Risk and organizing – the growth of a research field', in B. Czarniawska (ed.), *Organizing in the face of risk and treath*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.
- Fimreite, A.L., P. Lango, P. Lægreid and L.H. Rykkja (eds.) (2011), *Organisering, samfunnssikkerhet og krisehåndtering*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Griffin-Padgett, R. Donyale and D. Allison (2010), 'Making a case for Restorative Rhetoric: Mayr Rudolph Guliani & Mayor Ray Nagin's response to Disaster', *Communications Monographs* Volume 77, Number 33, pp. 376–92.

- Hart, P. 't (1993), 'Symbols, Rituals and Power: The Lost Dimensions of Crisis Management.' *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Volume 1, Number 1, pp. 36-50.
- Lango, P., P.Lægreid and L.H. Rykkja (2011), 'Organizing for Internal Security and Safety in Norway', in G.Nota (ed.), *Risk Management Trends*. InTech, Rijeka.
- March, J.G. and J.P. Olsen (1983), 'Organizing Political Life: What Administrative reorganization Tells Us About Governance', *American Political Science Review*, Volume 77, Number 2, pp.281-96.
- March, J.G. and J.P. Olsen (1989), *Rediscovering Institutions. The Organizational Basis of Politics*. The Free Press, New York.
- Masters, A. and P. 't Hart (2012), 'Prime Ministerial Rhetoric and Recession Politics: Meaning Making in Economic Crisis Management', *Public Administration*. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9299.2011.01966.x
- Meyer, J. and B. Rowan (1977), 'Institutional Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony', *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 83, Number 2, pp. 340-63.
- NOU 2012:14. *Rapport fra 22. juli-kommisjonen*. Oslo: Departementenes servicesenter.
- NTB (2011), *Statsministeren: Svaret er enda mer åpenhet*. 23.7.2011, 01:01
- PSS 2012. *Evaluation report*. Oslo: Police Security Service.
- PD 2012a. 22. juli 2011. *Evaluering av Politiets innsats*. Oslo: Politidirektoratet.
- PD 2012b. *Politidirektørens innlegg i forbindelse med høring i Stortinget 18.1.2012*. Available from: https://www.politi.no/vedlegg/lokale_vedlegg/politidirektoratet/Vedlegg_1561.pdf
- Pierson, P. (2004), *Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Roness, P.G. (1997), *Organisasjonsendringer: Teorier og strategier for studier av endringsprosesser*. Fagbokforlaget, Bergen.
- Rosenthal, U., M.T. Charles and P. 't Hart, eds. (1989), *Managing Crisis: Threats, Dilemmas, Opportunities*. C.C. Thomas Publishers, Springfield.
- Rykkja, L.H., P. Lægreid and A.L. Fimreite (2011), 'Attitudes towards Anti-terror Measures: The Role of Trust, Political Orientation and Civil Liberties Support', *Critical Studies of Terrorism*, Volume 4, Number 2, pp. 219-237.
- St. meld. 29 (2011-2012). *Samfunnssikkerhet*. Oslo: Ministry of Justice and Public Security.
- Selznick, P. (1957), *Leadership in Administration*. Harper and Row, New York.
- Simon, H.A. (1976), *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-making Processes in Administrative Organization*. Macmillan, London.
- Scott, J. (1990), *A Matter of Record. Documentary resources in Social Research*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- SMK (2011), *Jens Stoltenbergs tale i Central Jamaat-moskeen*. Oslo: Statsministerens kontor.
- Streeck, W. and K. Thelen, eds. (2005), *Beyond Continuity. Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Thompson, J. (1967). *Organizations in Action*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Verdens Gang (2012), *VG Mener: Stoltenberg bør gå av*. VG, 14.08.2012, 06:36.
- Weick, K.E. 1988. 'Enacted sensemaking in crisis situations', *Journal of Management Studies*, Volume 25, Number4, pp. 305-15.
- Wollebæk, D., B. Enjolras, K. Steen-Johnsen and G. Ødegård (2012), 'After Utøya: How a High-Trust Society Reacts to Terror – Trust and Civic Engagement in the Aftermath of July 22', *PS: Political Science & Politics* Volume 45, pp. 32-37.