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Right-wing Terrorism and Out-group Trust: The Anatomy of a Terrorist Backlash

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ABSTRACT

Terrorist attacks often lead to public backlashes. Following the attacks on July 22, 2011 in Norway, Norwegians showed support for democratic values such as “openness,” “democracy,” and “tolerance” in the public debate and in the commemorations across the country. They also reported higher out-group trust. This paper explores two possible reasons for this increase in trust using a unique panel fielded before and right after the attacks. The first is that cognitive dissonance led people to dissociate from the terrorist and his ideology. The second is that the increase in trust was a response to the public backlash after the attacks. The increase in trust was not caused by cognitive dissonance. Rather, people who were already positive towards immigration, or who saw positive effects of the attacks, became more trusting than others did, and Progress Party supporters increased their trust less than others. These findings are interpreted as a response to the attacks and the political characteristics of the backlash. The study concludes by discussing implications for our understanding of the different consequences of attacks for the terrorists’ imagined constituencies and for the broader public.

KEYWORDS

2011 Norway attacks; framing; July 22; lone wolf; out-group trust; right-wing terrorism; terrorism

Introduction

Terrorists are often motivated by a wish to increase publicity and support for their cause. The effectiveness of this so-called “propaganda by the deed” is, however, doubtful.¹ Terrorist attacks usually lead to negative backlashes in democratic societies, both against the terrorists themselves and against accommodating their demands.² These backlashes and the following lower levels of support in the public have at times even led to the demise of terrorist groups.³ However, few have studied the effects of terrorism on the support for the terrorists’ *cause* by different groups.⁴ Using the case of the attacks on July 22, 2011 in Norway, this paper asks whether the terrorist attacks led to a negative reaction towards the ideology of the terrorists and if so, whether this varied between groups with different prior attitudes.

On July 22, 2011, a right-wing extremist perpetrated a dual terrorist attack, bombing the office of the Labor Party Prime Minister in Oslo and massacring members of the youth wing of the Labor Party at their summer camp. In total, 77 people were killed and many were wounded in the first large-scale terrorist attacks on Norwegian soil. The terrorist sent out a political manifesto to different media outlets before committing the attacks, in which

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he outlined his ideas and his belief in a grand Muslim conspiracy.⁵ In the public, the attacks were mainly seen as attacks on Norwegian democracy, but Norwegian media also reported on the Labor Party background of the victims and the terrorist's former Progress Party membership.⁶ The Norwegian response to the attacks was similar to other backlashes against terrorism, with a strong rally around the political leadership, the media preoccupied with rebuilding the national community, and large commemorations across the country. Almost one-third of the Norwegian population participated in what became known as the "Rose Marches," showing sympathy for the victims and support for democratic values.

The attacks influenced the public's attitudes and Norwegians became more positive towards out-groups after the attacks.⁷ Research has explained this change in attitudes towards out-groups as caused by the "black sheep effect" and a possible dissociation from the terrorist's extreme right-wing ideology.⁸ However, the change in attitudes may also have been a response to the political mobilization of Norwegian society during the backlash to the attacks.⁹

The attacks and the public response

In the early afternoon of July 22, 2011, the terrorist set off a car bomb in front of the Prime Minister's offices in the center of Oslo.¹⁰ Because this was during the summer vacation, there were few casualties in spite of the extensive damages to the governmental offices in the area. The public originally believed that it was Islamic terrorism, and in the immediate aftermath of the attacks there were multiple examples of harassment of people perceived to be Muslims.¹¹ However, during the hours following the bombing it first became clear that the terrorist was a white male, before the news broke of a shooting on the island of Utøya. On the island, AUF, the youth wing of the Labor Party, were having their annual summer camp. Youth from all over Norway were participating in political workshops and debates, listening to speeches by politicians, and engaging in several other non-political activities. The terrorist came armed and dressed in a police-like uniform and informed the volunteers managing the coming and going that he came to conduct a routine control on the island.¹² Upon reaching the island, he began a two-hour massacre. In the two attacks, he killed 77 people.

The terrorist harbored a strong hatred against immigrants in general and Muslims more specifically. He argued for an expulsion of all Muslims from Europe and encouraged a civil war between the "native" Europeans and the "invading" Muslims. He believed in the "Eurabia" conspiracy theory, which suggests that liberal European elites and Muslim immigrants together are trying to create an Islamic Europe. According to this theory, even Muslims who do not support any kind of extreme Islam are just "posing" as progressives and are both "camouflaged and ... dangerous."¹³ His distrust in immigrants and specifically Muslims was accordingly a central motivation for the attacks, and this was both propagated by the terrorist himself in his manifesto and highlighted in the media after the attacks.¹⁴

In July 2011, the campaigns for the municipal elections in September had not yet begun in earnest. The Labor Party (AP) led a majority coalition government together with the Socialist Left Party (SV) and the Center Party (SP). This was the first time the Labor Party had been in a coalition government, but the party had dominated

Norwegian politics through its majority and later minority governments since the Second World War. The Norwegian response to the July 22 attacks, which was a solemn celebration of Norwegian values and lacked belligerent language, was different from recent responses to terrorist attacks. In the years after 9/11, the responses to (mostly Islamic) terrorism followed the “War on Terror” framing.¹⁵ However, the in-group background and political ideology of the terrorist probably made this framing less relevant after the Norwegian attacks (although the first speech by the Prime Minister somewhat followed this framing).¹⁶ In the days after the attacks, a private initiative led to the organization of “Rose Marches” in almost a hundred municipalities across the country, where close to one-third of the Norwegian adult population participated.¹⁷ The Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg became the central exponent of the Norwegian interpretation of the attacks and he argued in his speech at the march in Oslo that the response should be “more democracy, more openness and more humanity” and “democracy, togetherness and tolerance.”¹⁸ In the aftermath of the attacks the Progress Party came under scrutiny and was criticized, both because of the terrorist’s former membership in the party and because of the party’s central role in the debate on immigration.¹⁹ While the party leadership denied any responsibility for the terrorist and his actions, both the party leader and certain local leaders were led to reflect publicly on their role in the immigration debate after the attacks.²⁰

Explaining the Norwegian response

Terrorism often leads to backlashes in democratic publics and there are multiple examples of attacks leading to the loss of public support for terrorist organizations.²¹ Crenshaw argues that while terrorists may have at least tacit support from certain groups, they may lose this support if they overstep these groups’ “tolerance limit” for violence.²² After a few especially egregious attacks, this loss of support has contributed to the decline of the terrorist groups themselves.²³ The Norwegian response mirrored these backlashes with a strong rejection of the terrorist attacks and the terrorist by the public. The change in out-group trust, which could be interpreted as a reaction to the terrorist’s ideology, is however puzzling. The only paper studying the consequences of terrorism for support for the ideology of the terrorists find no effect, neither positive nor negative, of terrorism,²⁴ and even in cases where terrorist groups cease their operations after backlashes, the political struggle often continues through other (non-violent) means and maintains its public support.²⁵ There does, accordingly, not seem to be a direct connection between public backlashes against terrorism and the rejection of the terrorist cause.

This paper studies two possible explanations for the increase in out-group trust.²⁶ On the one hand, the increase in trust could be caused by the so-called “black sheep effect,” a negative reaction towards the terrorist and as a consequence his attitudes. Aarstad, Jakobsson, and Blom²⁷ argue that because of the black sheep effect, people felt cognitive dissonance after the attacks and that this led to a dissociation from the terrorist’s attitudes. On the other hand, the increase could be a consequence of characteristics of the backlash. Rather than being a direct effect of the attacks, the public response and the emphasis on tolerance after the attacks could have led people to increase their out-group trust.

The black sheep effect and cognitive dissonance

Both Aarstad and Jakobsson and Blom find more positive attitudes towards immigrants (and implicit attitudes towards Barack Obama's middle name, Hussein) after the attacks and interpret this as caused by dissociation from the terrorist's ideology.²⁸ According to Jakobsson and Blom,²⁹ hostility toward the terrorist may have caused cognitive dissonance,³⁰ leading people to dissociate from the terrorist and his ideas. They point to "the black sheep effect," which refers to how people view misconduct by a group member more negatively than misconduct by others because it threatens the group image.³¹ People accordingly tried "to dissociate themselves from the terrorist and his ideas."³² There is reason to believe that the black sheep effect would affect some groups more than others. Eidelman and Biernat find that the black sheep effect is not only based on defense of the group image but also on a wish to keep one's *self-image* intact.³³ While the preservation of the group image could affect every member of the group, the need to preserve one's self-image varies from person to person depending on the level of similarity with the misbehaving group member. The need to dissociate from the perpetrator could accordingly be stronger for people who felt more similar to the terrorist.

Two characteristics are especially relevant for the evaluations of similarity in this case, attitudes towards immigration and support for the Progress Party. The terrorist was extremely critical of Norwegian immigration policy, possibly leading people who were negative towards immigration to experience more dissonance. One could thus expect an inverse relationship between prior attitudes towards immigration and change in out-group trust. Second, as the terrorist had been a member of the Progress Party, people affiliated with this party could have experienced more dissonance than others. In the period after the attacks, Norwegian media both highlighted the terrorist's connection with the party and the coverage of the party was more critical than before.³⁴ Thus, supporters of the Progress Party could have felt more cognitive dissonance and developed more positive attitudes towards out-groups than others did. Finally, people who had positive views of immigrants before the attacks probably did not experience cognitive dissonance, as their attitudes were not "similar" to those of the terrorist. This leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: People who felt cognitive dissonance after the attacks increased their out-group trust more than others did.

The public backlash

While the attacks themselves may have caused the increase in trust, it is also possible that specifics of the backlash after the attacks led to higher trust. Similar to after other terrorist attacks, the backlash against the attacks in Norway consisted of a rally around the political leadership, media coverage concerned with rebuilding the national community, and public commemorations across the country.³⁵ This massive mobilization of Norwegian society may in itself have created a stronger feeling of community and togetherness that in turn increased trust. However, democratic values in general, and tolerance more specifically, were central in the different manifestations of the backlash and this may have influenced

people's attitudes. Finally, the political characteristics of the backlash may have led to experiences of exclusion and censorship by groups that did not agree.

Events such as the terrorist attacks may in themselves lead to increases in trust.³⁶ Experiencing what Uslaner calls “galvanizing national crises” creates the feeling of being “in the same boat” and increases the feeling of similarity between members of the stricken communities.³⁷ Feelings of similarity, in turn, increases trust. After the attacks in Norway, out-groups such as immigrants were explicitly included in the community, and some of the victims did have immigrant backgrounds. People may thus have felt more similar to out-groups and increased their trust after the attacks.

It is also possible that the specific political characteristics of the backlash influenced trust. Crucially, democratic values were central in the response by the political elite, in the media, and in the public commemorations,³⁸ and this may have affected out-group trust. Especially the emphasis on tolerance may have affected people's views of out-groups. While most Norwegians took part in the commemorations after the attacks one way or another, not everyone may have experienced the backlash in the same way.³⁹ Contrary to the emphasis on “openness,” those who had divergent views from the ones expressed in the political debate may have felt less able to participate after the attacks.⁴⁰ There is reason to believe that these groups may have reacted to the pressure and not increased their out-group trust as much as others did.

Hypothesis 2: How people perceived the public backlash against the attacks influenced their out-group trust.

Data and methodology

The analysis is based on panel data from the project “Social Media and the New Public Sphere—Consequences for Democracy and Citizenship.” Panel data from before and after the attacks are used to study different types of attitudinal change. The first round was conducted before the attacks in March and April 2011, and the second round was conducted four weeks after the attacks in August of the same year. The respondents were drawn from Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) Gallup's web panel, which comprised of 62,000 individuals. Each round consists of two parts: one cross-sectional survey which is designed to be representative of the 93 percent of Norwegians who have access to the Internet and a second part, which is a panel consisting of social media users (who use Facebook twice or more per week and/or Twitter once or more per week). The study is based on the panel component of the survey, using the first and second round with a total of 2252 respondents. There were 4183 respondents in the first round, and the response rate of the respondents who were contacted again was 66 percent.

The panel is representative of Norwegian social media users, and design weights are used. To determine the differences between the panel and the broader population, the two samples are compared through student's T-tests. Comparing the rounds of the social media panel with the cross-sectional sample conducted at the same time shows a few differences. The social media sample is younger, has higher education, is more negative towards immigration, and perceived a larger personal threat than others after the attacks. On the questions concerning the attacks they experienced a bit more togetherness,

participated to a higher extent in the Rose Marches, and felt more able to voice their opinion, but did not differ significantly on the other variables. The differences are relatively small.⁴¹ The possible problem of representativeness is in addition reduced, as the main interest here is the *change* in trust rather than the absolute levels. The panelists only need to respond similarly as the rest of the public to the attacks for the results to be valid for the broader population. The absolute levels do not need to be the same for the change to reflect a general trend.

Variables

A conditional change model is used in which the dependent variable is change in trust (i.e., $TRUST_{T2} - TRUST_{T1}$), and the dependent variable at T1 is included to reduce the problem of regression to the mean.⁴² Ordinary least square regression (OLS) is used to ensure comparability across different models.⁴³ Because the terrorist attacks probably influenced both the dependent variable (out-group trust) and the independent variables, the independent variables that do not concern the response to the attacks are used at the first time-point.

For the measure of out-group trust, two items are used from the question, “How much do you trust different social groups?”: “People of a different religion” and “People of a different nationality.” These were used together with “People you meet for the first time” as measures of out-group trust in Delhey, Newton, and Welzel’s study of the trust radius.⁴⁴ As the terrorist was very critical of Muslims specifically, the questions about a different religion and nationality are the most relevant. Still, the respondents determine who they conceive as the object of the question. The questions are presented on a four-point scale from “Do not trust at all” to “Trust completely.” The two variables are combined in an additive index and rescaled to go from 0 to 1.

The question of party identification is used for support of the Progress Party, with 1 denoting people who consider themselves a “Progress Party-man/woman.” Attitudes towards immigration are taken from two different items. One is at a ten-point scale, which ranges going from “We should make it easier for immigrants to get access to Norway” to “We should have much stronger restrictions on the number of immigrants.” The other is a five-point scale, which ranges from “agree completely” to “disagree completely” to the statement “We have enough immigrants and asylum seekers in this country.” This first scale is inversed so that a high value indicates support for immigration, and the two scales are combined in an index through principal component analysis (Cronbach’s alpha of 0.68). High degrees of institutional trust were the primary cause of the lack of fear after the attacks.⁴⁵ To measure institutional trust, trust in the police, the courts, the municipal council, and the public administration are combined in an index. As trust in the government is closely related to partisanship, it is excluded. The question is “How much confidence do you have in the following institutions?,” and the relevant institutions are combined in an index using PCA (Cronbach’s alpha of 0.80). Originally, the scale ranged from “Very much confidence” to “No confidence,” but the scale is inversed so that a high value indicates trust. This variable is expected to have a positive relationship with the change in out-group trust as institutional trust should lead to lower levels of threat perception.

Four items are used to measure the effects of the public response to the attacks. The first is a question asking if people participated in the “Rose Marches.” The next four questions tap the respondents’ perceptions of the effects of the attacks. The introduction was “If you compare Norway today with the situation before the July 22 attacks, would you say that the society is characterized by more or less”: and the respondents answered on a five-point scale ranging from “Much less” to “Much more.” To measure the effects of the possible increased perception of community after the attacks the first item, “togetherness and community,” is used. To more directly measure the increased perception of the community with out-groups, the item “antagonisms between ethnic groups” is used. The final item is used to measure the perceptions of negative effects of the response to the attacks for the political climate. This is “possibility to voice one’s opinion” and measures experience of censoring of divergent views. All variables are recoded to range from 0 to 1.

In his attack on the AUF, the terrorist specifically targeted youth. There was a large increase in turnout in the youngest cohorts of voters in the election seven weeks after the attacks and in the public debate after the attacks, and there has been talk of an “Utøya-generation.”⁴⁶ Thus, age is included in the analysis and is divided into four groups: below 30 years old, 30 to 44 years old, 45 to 59, and 60 and up. The 45 to 59 group is the reference group. On the one hand, one could expect that the youth were more fearful and thus had less trust of out-groups after the attacks. On the other, if the general influence of the attacks is an increase in trust and the youth were the most influenced by the attacks, the youth could have increased their trust more than others. The question of political interest is included as a control. This has four values ranging from “Very interested in politics” to “Not at all interested in politics.” It is recoded to go from 0 to 1, where 1 denotes “Very interested in politics.” Gender and education are included as control variables. Education is dichotomized into 0, which denotes no higher education, and 1, which denotes higher education.

As studies of Islamic terrorism show, perceptions of threat may lead to out-group derogation.⁴⁷ The relevance of these studies for domestic right-wing extremist terrorist attacks is not clear, but it is possible that results in this analysis could reflect how groups differ in their perceptions of terrorist threat. Because the Progress Party takes a strong stance on crime, one possibility is that voters of the Progress Party are more afraid of crime in general and in this case perceive a higher threat from terrorism. Differences in threat perception could in turn create differences in out-group trust. Similarly, Wollebæk et al. show that confidence in the government’s anti-terrorism capabilities had a prophylactic effect on fear after the attacks.⁴⁸ To test for differences in levels of perceptions of threat and confidence in terrorism prevention, three items are included in the last model: “How worried are you that there will be new terrorist attacks in Norway in the near future?”; “How much confidence do you have that the government will prevent new, large scale terrorist attacks in Norway?”; and “To what extent are you worried that future terrorist attacks will harm you, your family or your friends?” This is a strong test of the validity of the results as these questions were asked in the second survey round together with the out-group trust questions. Accordingly, if political differences in change in trust are still present after controlling for fear and confidence levels, this strengthens the finding of a different mechanism than threat perception.

Results

The results are presented in the following section beginning with the descriptive statistics. Next, the different models are presented and the results from the six regression analyses are presented and discussed. The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that there is an increase in out-group trust from the first to the second round of the survey at 0.04.⁴⁹ In the dataset, around 10 percent identify with the Progress Party. The views on immigration are relatively negative, with a mean of .39, or between 4 and 5 on the scale from 1 to 10. The institutional trust is high, at .63, or above 3 on the scale from 1 to 5. Concerning age, the largest group is the group between 45 and 59. The panelists are relatively interested in politics, and the perceptions of threat are comparatively low.⁵⁰ Confidence in the prevention of terrorism is, on the other hand, relatively high.

Table 2 reports the results from the regression analyses and change in out-group trust is the dependent variable. The first model has only an intercept and the second includes the lagged dependent variable. In the third model, control variables and the variables denoting partisanship and attitudes towards immigration are included before the interaction term is included in the fourth model. The fifth model includes the measures of attitudes towards the effects of the attacks, before the perceptions of threat and confidence variables are included in the sixth and final model.

Similar to the descriptive statistics, the first intercept-only model shows a mean change of 0.04. Including the lagged dependent variable in the second model shows that the change in trust after the attacks is negatively correlated with trust before the attacks. There is accordingly a certain regression to the mean where the most trusting people change in a less positive direction than others. The correlation between the time periods is .58 (i.e. 1-.42), and the intercept continues to be significant. The third model includes the independent variables of interest except the interaction and the measures of attitudes towards the effects of the attacks. Beginning with age and gender, the younger respondents report less positive change in trust compared with people above 45 years of age. Similarly, male respondents

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the panel.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Out-group trust (T1)	1,987	0.47	0.22	0.00	1.00
Out-group trust (T2)	2,136	0.51	0.21	0.00	1.00
Progress party identification	2,284	0.10	0.30	0	1
Attitudes towards immigration	2,274	0.002	1.02	-1.49	2.32
Institutional trust	2,279	-0.02	1.01	-3.66	2.11
Age (below 30)	2,285	0.18	0.38	0	1
Age (30-44)	2,285	0.28	0.45	0	1
Age (45-59)	2,285	0.39	0.49	0	1
Age (60+)	2,285	0.24	0.43	0	1
Higher education	2,282	0.58	0.49	0	1
Male	2,285	0.48	0.50	0	1
Political interest	2,277	0.58	0.23	0.00	1.00
Rose marches (T2)	2,285	0.34	0.48	0	1
More ethnic antagonism (T2)	2,284	0.38	0.18	0.00	1.00
More togetherness (T2)	2,278	0.75	0.17	0.00	1.00
Less able to voice opinion (T2)	2,282	0.52	0.21	0.00	1.00
National threat (T2)	2,285	0.36	0.22	0.00	1.00
Confidence in terrorism prevention (T2)	2,281	0.58	0.23	0.00	1.00
Personal threat (T2)	2,284	0.35	0.22	0.00	1.00
Attitudes towards immigration (additive index)	2,274	0.39	0.27	0.00	1.00
Institutional trust (additive index)	2,265	0.63	0.17	0.00	1.00

Table 2. Determinants of change in out-group trust.

	Change in out-group trust					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	0.037** (0.004)	0.230** (0.009)	0.331** (0.013)	0.331** (0.013)	0.395** (0.022)	0.391** (0.023)
Lagged out-group trust		-0.416** (0.017)	-0.556** (0.019)	-0.557** (0.019)	-0.563** (0.019)	-0.565** (0.019)
Age (below 30)			-0.067** (0.011)	-0.067** (0.011)	-0.068** (0.011)	-0.074** (0.011)
Age (from 30 to 45)			-0.040** (0.010)	-0.041** (0.010)	-0.037** (0.010)	-0.039** (0.010)
Age (above 60)			0.007 (0.010)	0.007 (0.010)	0.004 (0.010)	0.007 (0.010)
Male			-0.028** (0.008)	-0.027** (0.008)	-0.025** (0.008)	-0.026** (0.008)
Higher education			0.010 (0.008)	0.009 (0.008)	0.009 (0.008)	0.008 (0.008)
Progress Party identification			-0.033* (0.013)	-0.070** (0.020)	-0.063** (0.020)	-0.055** (0.020)
Attitude towards immigration			0.037** (0.004)	0.039** (0.004)	0.035** (0.004)	0.033** (0.004)
Institutional trust			0.017** (0.004)	0.017** (0.004)	0.015** (0.004)	0.010* (0.004)
Political interest			-0.002 (0.017)	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.002 (0.017)	0.0004 (0.017)
Rose marches					0.010 (0.008)	0.008 (0.008)
More ethnic antagonism					-0.079** (0.022)	-0.068** (0.022)
More togetherness					-0.040 (0.023)	-0.040 (0.024)
Less able to voice opinion					-0.068** (0.018)	-0.061** (0.018)
National threat						-0.047* (0.023)
Confidence in counter-terrorism						0.066** (0.018)
Personal threat						0.014 (0.023)
Interaction: attitude towards immigration and identification with the Progress party				-0.039* (0.016)	-0.039* (0.016)	-0.037* (0.016)
N	1,935	1,935	1,886	1,886	1,878	1,873
R ²	0.000	0.228	0.319	0.321	0.331	0.338
Adjusted R ²	0.000	0.228	0.315	0.317	0.326	0.332

.p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

have a less positive change in trust than women after the attacks, but the higher education estimate is not significant. People with higher levels of institutional trust (in municipalities, courts, police, and the public sector in general) increased their trust more than others did after the attacks. The estimate for political interest is not significant.

Partisanship influences the change in trust after the attacks. People identifying with the Progress Party do not have higher out-group trust after the attacks than others. Rather, the estimate indicates that people not identifying with the Progress Party increased their trust more than Progress Party supporters, all else equal, and this is significant at the .05 level. Similarly, attitudes towards immigration are positively associated with change in trust after the attacks. People who were more positive towards immigration before the attacks

changed their views on the trustworthiness of out-groups in a more positive direction than others.

To explore the relationship between Progress Party identification and views on immigration, the fourth model includes an interaction between the two variables. This has little impact on the estimates except for Progress Party identification. Identifying with the Progress Party is now highly significant (.01) and more negative. The interaction term is negative, about the same size as the estimate for attitudes towards immigration, and significant at the .05 level. Because it is the same size as the estimate for attitudes towards immigration, the two cancel each other out for people identifying with the Progress Party. The change in trust after the attacks for the people identifying with the Progress Party was not dependent on their views on immigration before the attacks. Plotting the predicted change in out-group trust based on party identification and attitudes towards immigration in [Figure 1](#) clearly shows the difference between the groups. Here, the x-axis denotes the attitude towards immigration before the attacks, and the y-axis denotes the change in trust after the attacks. The two different lines indicate the values for the people identifying or not identifying with the Progress Party, and the gray area indicates the 95 percent confidence intervals. While people identifying with the Progress Party are predicted to have the same level of trust after the attacks for every level of attitude towards immigration, other people are predicted to have higher levels of trust the more positive they were towards immigration.

The fifth model includes the questions on the perceived effects of the attacks and on participation in the Rose Marches. Responses to these questions are indeed correlated with changes in out-group trust. While the estimate for participation in the Rose Marches is not statistically significant, both the estimate for perceptions of ethnic antagonisms and

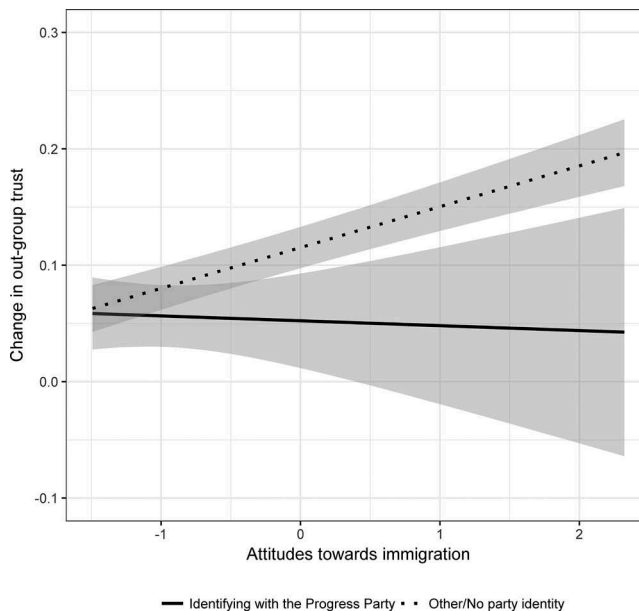


Figure 1. Predicted change in out-group trust by party affiliation and attitudes towards immigration.

the possibility to voice one's opinion are statistically significant (.01). Accordingly, people who responded that they thought there was less ethnic antagonism after the attacks, changed their trust more in a positive direction than others, and conversely, people who experienced that they were less able to voice their opinion after the attacks, changed their trust in a less positive direction after the attacks. The estimate for togetherness is unexpectedly negative although it is only significant at the .1 level. Including these variables reduces the estimates for identifying with the Progress Party and attitudes towards immigration, but not to a large extent, and both are still significant at .01. It accordingly does not seem to be the case that these estimates only covered differences in perceptions of the attacks. Rather, the change in out-group trust seems to be correlated with both perceptions of the attacks, party identity, and attitudes towards immigration.

Finally, the sixth model includes questions on threat from terrorism for oneself and for the country and on confidence in prevention of terrorism. Replicating the findings in other studies, the estimate for national threat and not personal threat is significant,⁵¹ and perception of national threat leads to lower out-group trust after the attacks. The effects of the terrorist threat have, however, mainly been studied in the context of Islamic terrorism and it is thus interesting to find an effect of experiencing terrorist threat after a right-wing extremist attack on change in out-group trust.⁵² Similarly, the estimate for confidence in government anti-terrorism measures is positive. The changes in the other estimates are relatively small. As could be expected when including confidence in anti-terrorism measures, the estimate for institutional trust decreases. The estimate for identification with the Progress Party decreases somewhat in level but maintains direction and significance. This seems to dismiss the possibility that the estimates only mask a difference in threat perception and institutional trust between people identifying with different parties.

The first hypothesis stated that cognitive dissonance caused by the black sheep effect created the increase in out-group trust, an explanation proposed by Jakobsson, Blom, and Aarstad for their findings of more positive attitudes towards immigration after the attacks.⁵³ While some people may have increased their trust in out-groups as a consequence of cognitive dissonance, this mechanism does not explain the general increase in out-group trust in Norwegian society. People who were negative towards immigration or who identified with the Progress Party increased their trust less than others after the attacks. Thus, the general increase in out-group trust was not caused by these groups experiencing cognitive dissonance.

The fact that Progress Party identification moderates the positive relationship between views on immigration and trust could have indicated that cognitive dissonance only influenced people who were both identifying with the party *and* negative towards immigration. However, the interaction estimate is not large enough to make people identifying with the Progress Party more trusting than others, even for the people who were most negative towards immigration. Rather, party affiliation cancels out the effect of prior attitudes towards immigration, and prior attitudes thus did not affect the trust of people identifying with the Progress Party.

There is also support for parts of the second hypothesis. People who experienced the aftermath of the attacks as less characterized by ethnic antagonisms than before the attacks increased their trust more than others, and people who felt less able to voice their opinion after the attacks became less trusting compared to others. However, the estimate for togetherness and community was not in the expected direction (albeit only significant at

the .1 level). The increase in out-group trust was accordingly not caused by people feeling increased levels of togetherness and community in general. Out-group trust seems to have been affected by perceptions directly connected to out-groups and by experiences of censorship, but not by the general increase in perception of togetherness created by the attacks.

Discussion

The general increase in out-group trust was not caused by cognitive dissonance in people who were negative towards immigration or who were identifying with the Progress Party. While these groups also increased their trust in out-groups, they did so to a lower extent than others. The results show an effect of prior attitudes that is the opposite of the one hypothesized. It was people who were already positive towards immigration or who did not identify with the Progress Party who increased their trust more than others. Parts of the second hypothesis do however receive support in the analyses. There are no (or possibly negative) effect of perceptions of increased togetherness and no effect of participating in the Rose Marches in itself. Perceiving lower levels of ethnic antagonism after the attacks were related to higher increases in trust, and feelings of being less able to express one's opinions were negatively related to out-group trust. The increase in trust after the attacks depended on both perceptions of the political effects of the attacks *and* prior attitudes, albeit in the opposite way of the first hypothesis.

It is useful to revisit the cognitive dissonance hypothesis to understand why it is not supported by the data. The first condition for the hypothesis is that people must see the attacks as “misconduct” by the in-group member, and the second is that people resolve the ensuing cognitive dissonance by changing attitudes towards out-groups. It is highly likely that the public viewed the attacks as “misconduct” or that the attacks overstepped the “tolerance limit.”⁵⁴ The murdering of innocent children one by one was extremely ruthless and even violent right-wing extremists distanced themselves from the ruthlessness of the attacks.⁵⁵ Norwegian society also had little experience with terrorism, and although there had been other examples of extreme right-wing violence, there is no reason to believe that either Progress Party supporters or people with negative attitudes towards immigration should have been more supportive of terrorism.

How the possible cognitive dissonance was resolved is not as straightforward. For cognitive dissonance to cause attitude change, the connection between the attacks and the attitudes must be strong. After lone-wolf attacks by in-group members, debates on the mental health of the terrorists are not uncommon, and this was also the case in Norway.⁵⁶ Viewing the terrorist as a lunatic and the attacks as results of his insanity would break the connection between the attacks and the ideology as it is the madness rather than the ideology that caused the attacks. Together with the lack of findings from earlier research, there is little reason to expect an effect of cognitive dissonance in general after terrorist attacks.

Rather than an effect of cognitive dissonance, the increase in trust seems to have been a reaction to the political characteristics of both the attacks and the backlash. People experiencing less ethnic antagonism after the attacks increased their trust more than others did. It could seem counterintuitive that terrorist attacks motivated by hatred against different ethnic groups were perceived as causing *less* ethnic antagonism in Norwegian

society. One could have interpreted this as a consequence of the increased feeling of togetherness after the attacks, but the analyses show that this was not related to out-group trust. Rather, this should be interpreted as a reaction towards the ideas of the terrorist and a response to the core political message of the backlash. This indicates that the increase in out-group trust was indeed based on political considerations concerning the nature of the attacks and not only on the experience of being together during a crisis. The increase in trust seems to be directly connected to the political characteristics of the attacks and the backlash.

The increase in out-group trust was in addition dependent on prior political beliefs, and this holds when controlling for experiences of the effects of the attacks. The finding of an opposite effect of prior attitudes and party affiliation than hypothesized shows that politically motivated reasoning affected people's response to the attacks and the backlash. People are generally prone to accept information that confirms their prior attitudes (confirmation bias) and to disregard counter-attitudinal information (disconfirmation bias),⁵⁷ and this seems to be the case here. Those who were positive towards immigration increased their out-group trust more than others did after the attacks, and the attacks accordingly affected those who were already positive the most.⁵⁸ The effect of experiences of the debate climate after the attacks points in the same direction. People who felt that they had less opportunity to express their opinions after the attacks increased their trust less than others did. This shows reactance against the core political message of the backlash and probably against the experience of loss of freedom that the newfound consensus created.⁵⁹ This experience was inherently political, as only people with divergent opinions would feel unable to express them publicly. Thus, those who were already tolerant would probably not experience this type of self-censorship. The lower increases in trust by this group thus confirms the finding above that the attacks and the backlash affected people who were already the most tolerant.

Progress Party supporters exhibit a stronger disconfirmation bias than other groups, one that is not dependent on their prior attitudes towards immigration. As the terrorist had not been a member of the Progress Party for a number of years, the connection between the attacks and the party was relatively weak. It is thus probable that this bias was caused by more than solely by the attacks. At the very minimum, it seems to show that Progress Party supporters interpreted the media attention to the terrorist's former party membership as partisan.⁶⁰ However, the combination of the central position of Labor Party politicians, a perception of Norwegian media as left-leaning, and the direct and indirect attacks on the Progress Party may have led Progress Party supporters to interpret the core message of the backlash as partisan as well.⁶¹ For Progress Party supporters, the political message of the backlash thus seems to have been disregarded.

In sum, this shows that the specifics of both the attacks and the backlash affected attitudes. As earlier studies of the consequences of terrorism often have focused on the psychological effects and especially the increases in perceptions of threat after attacks,⁶² few have studied the political aspects of attacks and their backlashes. The results here show these characteristics are central to the effects of terrorism, at least of domestic terrorism. Some caveats are however necessary. On the one hand it is not clear to what extent the content of backlash is given by the characteristics of the attacks themselves. On the other hand, the effects of the backlash seem to be circumscribed by other contextual factors. In this case, even though the Prime Minister did not emphasize the former party affiliation of

the terrorist or the current one of the victims,⁶³ party affiliation had important consequences for the attitudinal effects of the attacks. Similarly, politically motivated reasoning led to differences in the reactions of people with different prior attitudes. The effects of both terrorist attacks and their backlashes thus seem to be dependent on the political context.

Studying the Norwegian public offers insights into a group not often studied after terrorist attacks. As most recent studies are of Islamic terrorism in non-Islamic countries, the terrorist ideology is seldom directly relevant for the political attitudes of the public (i.e., the majority population). In Norwegian society, the ideology of the terrorist was connected both to a central political cleavage, immigration policy, and to a mainstream political party, the Progress Party. Indeed, the group delineated by attitudes towards immigration and by Progress Party affiliation could be regarded as an operationalization of the terrorist's *imagined* constituency.⁶⁴ The findings here do not support an expectation that terrorism leads this constituency to moderate their views, not even when terrorists cross the "tolerance limit."⁶⁵ Rather, they show that the constituency is more resistant to change than other groups in society. Other groups, however, may change as a consequence of attacks and the following backlash, and especially groups that were the most negative towards the terrorist ideology from the start. The political views of terrorists may thus become even more marginalized than before and political polarization may increase. As Abrahms argues, people often infer extremist ideology from the use of terrorism.⁶⁶ Terrorist attacks may accordingly increase the gap between the constituency and the rest of society,⁶⁷ and make a non-violent, democratic political campaign more difficult.⁶⁸ While terrorists may try to provoke an overreaction by the security forces,⁶⁹ they may as easily succeed in creating an overreaction by society in general.

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Notes

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61. Haider-Markel and Joslyn similarly find partisan differences in effects of framings of blame attribution after Columbine. Framings used by Republicans affected Republican voters and those used by the Democrats affected Democratic voters. Haider-Markel and Joslyn, "Gun Policy, Opinion, Tragedy, and Blame Attribution" (see note 60).
 62. The findings here do corroborate the negative effect of the terrorist threat on out-group trust even in the context of a large-scale right-wing extremist terrorist attack.
 63. Teemu Sinkkonen, "Can Political Leaders Make a Difference? Norwegian versus Spanish Experiences in Responding to Terrorist Attacks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 4 (April 2, 2016): 326–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1117330>.
 64. This is not saying that these groups were positive towards the use of terrorism, nor towards all of the terrorist's ideology, but rather that the terrorist may have imagined this group as his constituency and probable supporters. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 22.
 65. Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Declines" (see note 3).
 66. Abrahams, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work" (see note 1).
 67. There are some indications that ostracism in turn could increase peoples' support for terrorism, see Michaela Pfundmair, "Ostracism Promotes a Terroristic Mindset," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (February 25, 2018): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2018.1443965>.
 68. While the Progress Party suffered a setback in the municipal elections in the autumn of 2011, the party entered government only two years after the attacks for the first time. That there was a long-term negative electoral consequence for the party is accordingly not clear. Following the results here, the partisan bias may have ameliorated some of the negative effect of the attacks for the party.
 69. Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*. Cass Series: Political Violence. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 7.

Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive statistics of the cross-sectional sample.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Out-group trust (T1)	968	0.47	0.21	0.00	1.00
Out-group trust (T2)	798	0.51	0.21	0.00	1.00
Progress party identification	1,124	0.11	0.31	0	1
Progress party vote	962	0.14	0.35	0	1
Age (below 30)	1,127	0.16	0.37	0	1
Age (30–44)	1,127	0.24	0.43	0	1
Age (45–59)	1,127	0.35	0.48	0	1
Age (60+)	1,127	0.34	0.47	0	1
Higher education	1,126	0.53	0.50	0	1
Male	1,127	0.50	0.50	0	1
Political interest	1,123	0.58	0.24	0.00	1.00
Rose marches (T2)	858	0.28	0.45	0	1
More ethnic antagonism (T2)	854	0.38	0.19	0.00	1.00
More togetherness (T2)	856	0.74	0.18	0.00	1.00
Less able to voice opinion (T2)	855	0.54	0.21	0.00	1.00
National threat (T2)	858	0.35	0.23	0.00	1.00
Confidence in terrorism prevention (T2)	857	0.59	0.24	0.00	1.00
Personal threat (T2)	858	0.33	0.22	0.00	1.00
Attitudes towards immigration (additive index)	1,071	0.42	0.26	0.00	1.00
Institutional trust (additive index)	1,115	0.63	0.18	0.00	1.00