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# **Successful Crisis Communication: A Case Study of the Norwegian Authorities' Response to an Imminent Terror Threat**

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**Declaration**

I, Sunniva Ottersen Bærug, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

**Date**.....

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## Abstract

When societies are faced with a crisis, the reputation, or even the fate, of the authorities hangs in the balance. If the authorities manage to communicate their handling of the crisis successfully, the crisis can strengthen credibility and trust between the public and its authorities. But if they don't succeed, the crisis can discredit the authorities. This study explores how the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) successfully managed to communicate an imminent terror threat to the general public during the summer of 2014. This is examined in a qualitative study that applies theory within crisis communication and framing. Based on the theories, this study understands successful crisis communication as the authorities' ability to show their side of the story and get their frames accepted by the media, and hereby win the dominant narrative of the crisis.

This study proves the *evade responsibility frame*, the *reducing the offensiveness frame*, the *cultural congruence frame* and the *united management frame* to be central in the crisis communication by PST and the Government. The study further concludes that the media accepted these frames and that these frames were successfully disseminated in the media coverage, which contributed to shape the authorities' handling of the crisis as successful. The only critical frame detected in the media coverage was the *exploitation of the crisis frame*. Within the *exploitation of the crisis frame* the media commentators warned about possible exploitation of the event and unfortunates consequences, for example that this event could be used to implement new policies that could be deemed detrimental to an open democracy. However, based on the media's overall acceptance of the authorities' frames, it is safe to conclude that PST and the Government successfully managed to communicate the terrorism threat. The authorities managed to win the dominant narrative of the crisis, which contributed to define the authorities' handling of the crisis as successful and must likely shape public opinion in their favour. In this study, I have thus demonstrated how a crisis does not only pose a threat towards the authorities, but also an opportunity if the crisis is communicated successfully.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Crisis, such as an imminent terrorist threat, that poses severe threats to the safety of the citizens, are some of the most challenging communicative tasks authorities may face. In events of uncertainty and fear, the authorities need to strategically manage their communications to gain support and trust from the public. Adding to the difficulties is the fact that authorities have to communicate in a highly mediated environment (Olsson, Söderlund, & Falkheimer, 2015). A crisis can thus lead to a competition between authorities and journalists to capture the dominant narrative, meaning the dominant description of a crisis: its nature and severity, the causes and the responsible for its occurrence. The dominant narrative will contribute to define events and shape public opinion. If authorities manage to communicate successfully, the crisis can create credibility and trust between the journalists, public and its authorities and strengthening a favorable reputation. But if they don't succeed, the crisis can discredit the authorities (S. An & Gower, 2009; Boin, Hart, & McConnel, 2009; Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

On July 24 2014, the Norwegian Government and the intelligence agency The Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) informed the public at a press conference that they had received information about an imminent terror threat against Norway from individuals affiliated with an extreme Islamist group in Syria. The spokespersons, Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland and Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen, said that they saw the potential threat as credible and that it were *“planned to be carried out shortly, probably in a few days”* (Bjørnland, 2014c). While they said the information about the terror threat was credible, it was *“not specific and not very concrete”* (Bjørnland, 2014c). The public were not advised to take any specific precautions, but were encouraged to be extra vigilant and notify if they saw anything suspicious. During the press conference, PST still worked on verifying the information they had received and they did not have any information regarding how an attack would be carried out (VG, 2014b). Bjørnland said that whether to inform the public about terror threats will always be a difficult choice to make, which they also admitted it was in this case (Bjørnland, 2014c).

Bjørnland and Anundsen received both criticism and praise that they alerted the public about the alleged terrorist threat. The former Operational Commander in the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), Hans-Jørgen Bonnichsen, argued that the events that took place on July 22 2011 has changed the Norwegian authorities communication strategy and criticized their openness about the terrorist threat. Bonnichsen argued that the terrorists had already won, since fear now was spread among the Norwegian citizens (Bonnichsen, 2014). Others, such as Lars Gule, Associate Professor at Oslo and Akershus University College, argued that the authorities had acted properly, since it would have been difficult to avoid informing the public about the threat. The Norwegian police are not normally armed in their daily services, but because of the heightened threat assessment, the police could now carry weapons as a temporary arrangement and armed police were placed at border crossings, airports and train stations (Berg, 2015). Gule stated that, *“there are some terms that must be applied, including the increased emergency measures and the extensive use of armed police. People would react to the changes [...] Openness was important to avoid speculation and rumors”* (A. b. Foss, 2014).



Information by the authorities of a terror threat can be used to prepare the public and increase their understanding of the risk terrorism poses, thereby increasing their resilience (Ruggiero & Vos, 2015). It can also, as argued by Bjørnland, act as deterrent effect for those who threatens to terrorize (Bjørnland, 2014c). However, to inform about a terror threat may also spread fear and affect the way the public view the world, touching core values in a democratic society such as Norway. In fact, Hyams, Murphy & Wessely (2002) argue that the challenges related to the fear of terrorism, such anxiety and confusion in the public, may pose a greater threat than the terror acts themselves. In addition, a central goal for most terrorists is to attract attention for their cause. By giving terrorists attention, it can help the terrorists to attract more attention to their actions and political objectives (Yarchi, Galily, & Tamir, 2015). Thus, to communicate terror threats, the crisis spokespersons have to walk a fine line between lack of preparedness, creating undue fear in the public's daily lives and avoid giving the terrorists too much attention. Terrorism is not simply about killing people; it is also about destroying our sense of well-being and create widespread psychological harm (Hyams, Murphy, & Wessely, 2002).

The aim of this thesis is to examine how the crisis communication by PST and the Government was given, and furthermore how it was received by the Norwegian media. Ultimately my aim is to conclude whether they managed to communicate successfully or not. Based on the studies from Boin et al. (2005, 2009), Coombs (2007) and Olsson et al. (2015), this thesis understands successful crisis communication as the authorities ability to show their side of the story and get their frames accepted by the media, and thus win the dominant narrative of the crisis. To promote certain frames is a way of selecting particular aspects of perceived reality and obscure others, which contribute to define an event and shape public opinion (S. An & Gower, 2009; Entman, 1993). If the authorities manage to win the dominant narrative, Boin et al., (2005, 2009) argue that the authorities can strengthen their position and may even get rid of old policies and impose new ones. Successful crisis communication is then, as argued by Nord & Olsson (2013), as much about coming out unscathed from crises as being able to use the crisis to gain support and maybe even push through policies. A full consideration of both the potential threat and opportunity associated with the crisis will be examined. This thesis will explore the following research questions:

- *Which frames can be detected in the crisis communication by the Norwegian Government and PST surrounding the terror threat first communicated on July 24, 2014?*
- *Did the Norwegian media accept the authorities frames or did they reframe the crisis?*

This case study is interesting because it is a type of event that is highly challenging to communicate for authorities. This was no usual threats assessment by PST, but an imminent and credible terror threat against Norway that could happen within a few days. Terror threats are not unusual for PST, but it is unusual in Norway that the authorities chose to inform the public (Bernsen, 2017). There's no easy answer on how to manage a situation like this, especially in a highly mediated environment, where the crisis spokespersons can loose control of how their communication is relayed by media and harm their reputation. However, as mentioned, crises do not only pose a threat to authorities, but may also provide opportunities

to strengthen support and trust if the crisis is communicated successfully (Boin et al., 2009; Nord & Olsson, 2013). Thus, this case can give useful insights on how to manage crisis communication in similar crisis situations and contribute to theory development, at least within crisis communication theory.

## **1.1 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis starts with background information on terrorism in Norway, PST's societal role and the unique characteristics of this event to put this case study in a broader context. In chapter 2, before the theoretical discussion, I will provide a clarification of eight key concepts: crisis, communication, crisis communication, framing, reframe/counter frame, framing contest, dominant narrative and successful crisis communication. These concepts are necessary to clarify since they are used throughout the thesis.

In chapter 3, I will review literature in the field of crisis communication relevant to my research field and presents two central theories: William Benoit's (1995, 1997b) Image Repair Theory (IRT) and Timothy Coomb's (2006, 2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Both IRT and SCCT provide useful typologies for systematic examination of how the authorities' crisis communication played out. However, both theories are from a sender-centric perspective and I have thus combined IRT and SCCT with theory on framing to examine how successful the authorities crisis communication actually was. This combination of theories will be further explained in chapter 3.

In chapter 4, I will present my methodological design, while also discusses its inherent strengths and weaknesses in answering my research questions. Chapter 5 and chapter 6 are devoted to presenting and subsequently analyzing my findings. Chapter 5 looks at the frames applied by PST and the Government, while chapter 6 focuses on the media's acceptance/rejection of the authorities frames and other reframes applied by the media. In chapter 7 the conclusion will be presented. This includes a brief summary of my main findings and how these provide an answer to the research questions. As a closing remark, I will point out the limitations of this thesis and propose further research.

## **1.2 Background**

Norway has traditionally been a country with very little politically motivated violence. July 22 2011 was the first time Norway suffered from a major terrorist attack. The attacks on the Government quarter and the young politicians on Utøya were extraordinary in scope and brutality. The main task for PST is to provide accurate, timely and comprehensive information to the Norwegian Government on threats towards our society (Lowenthal, 2015). It is a complex task with high risk of making critical errors. The investigations after the July 22 attacks showed major weaknesses in Norwegian emergency response related to a terror crisis. Subsequently, there has been a broad political consensus on the need for improvements (Gjørsv et al., 2012). For example, both the July 22 Commission<sup>1</sup> and the Traavik Committee<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the Commission's work was to evaluate and to draw lessons from the July 22 2011, with the aim to better prepare the Norwegian society and prevent any future attacks (Gjørsv et al., 2012).

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the Traavik Committee conducted a review of PST (Traavik, Vikstrøm, & Holm, 2012).

emphasized the importance of PST being as open as possible about threats to our society (Gjørsv et al., 2012).

Leading up to the press conference meetings were held between PST, the Minister of Justice Anders Anundsen and Public Security and the Government Security Council<sup>3</sup>, discussing how to deal with the terror threat and whether to inform the public about the event or not (Anundsen, 2017). The Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland informed at the press conference that they had chosen to make the information public, since it was in line with the new guidelines adopted after July 22 2011. Bjørnland and Anundsen also argued that they saw it necessary to inform because of the temporarily armament of the police and that the information could have a preventive and deterrent effect on those who threatened to terrorise. In addition, they argued that the information could contribute to extra vigilance in the public and thus increase the likelihood of alert if someone saw something suspicious (Anundsen, 2014a; Bjørnland, 2014c).

PST had informed during the winter of 2014 that they considered the terror threat against Norway to be growing. The authorities argued that this was primarily due to a rising trend in international terrorism with an increased number of international terror attacks carried out by extremist Islamists (Bjørnland, 2014c). In addition, Norway's military presence in Afghanistan, the Government's handling of Mullah Krekar, the bombing of Libya, the publication of the Mohammed cartoons, and republishing of the cartoons in Norwegian media were also factors that contributed to the increase in terrorist threats from extremist Islamist groups (Gjørsv et al., 2012). Bjørnland said therefore that this situation was *"an expected development, in view of the trends and developments we have seen in the course of the last two or three years"* (Bjørnland, 2014c).

Employees from the police, PST and the Government were called back from vacation and the terror threat was their highest priority. While PST worked on verifying the information they had received, the police increased their emergency measures all over the country and armed police were placed at border crossings, airports and train stations (Johansen et al., 2014). The event immediately got a lot of attention and coverage in the Norwegian media because of the unusual aspects of this case: the authorities usually don't inform about terror threats and it is uncommon that they put in place highly visible and comprehensive security measures. Senior Adviser at PST's Communication Department Martin Bernsen also points out the special features of the case in 2014:

"Information about terrorist threats is something PST often receives. We received also information about terror threats in 2016. Then we managed to quickly take down the threat and we didn't need to inform the public about it. The special feature of this case [in 2014] was that the information about the threat was made public and that we implemented temporary armament" (Bernsen, 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> The Government's Security Council is lead by the Prime Minister and the aim of the council is to discuss and take decisions on important safety and emergency issues. The Government's Security Council has permanent members, and ministers from relevant ministries will also meet with the board. (StatsministerensKontor, 2015).

Former Minister Anundsen (2017) also underlines the special situation that occurred in 2014:

“It is not very common in Europe to inform about the type of threat situation we were in. Thus, we didn’t have so many other experiences from other countries to lean on. We did some pioneering work in 2014 [...] This was a very special situation, which gave us a challenging task” (Anundsen, 2017).

On 31 July 2014, seven days after the press conference, the authorities informed that the terror threat towards Norway had been reduced and that they cancelled the security measures introduced on July 24. Bjørnland stated that “*the likelihood of the original information being correct is reduced, which in turn means that the threat of an imminent terrorist attack in Norway is reduced*” (Bjørnland, 2014d). However, she underlined that the risk of a terror attack is still part of the Norwegians public reality and stated that “*we all have to be prepared for the fact that new threat situations may occur; this is not a state of emergency, but rather the state of normality*” (Bjørnland, 2014d). Nevertheless, three years after this press conference there have fortunately been no terrorists’ attacks in Norway and there haven’t been held similar press conferences of other imminent terror threats.

Nonetheless, the public still hasn’t received more information about the alleged terror threat and why the authorities decided to inform the public about the threat. Senior Adviser at PST’s Communication Department Martin Bernsen explains why they haven’t given out more information:

“PST can be compared with a hospital. A hospital director can tell you about how the hospital works, but never about a specific patient. The same applies for PST. We can speak in general terms, but far from disclose everything and seldom details about a specific case [...] If we publicly had informed about the details surrounding the situation, we could have destroyed our relationship with partners abroad and we could have risked losing valuable information” (Bernsen, 2017).

However, Bernsen (2017) emphasizes that the cases PST are working on often have more “*political and sensitive elements in them, such as surveillance*”, which usually make their cases more controversial than the hospitals cases.

## 2.0 Conceptual framework

Before the theoretical discussion, there are eight concepts, some of them interlinked, that need to be clarified: crisis, communication, crisis communication, framing, reframe/counter frame, framing contest, dominant narrative and successful crisis communication.

### 2.1 Crisis

Crisis comes from the Greek word *krisis*, meaning separation, choice, decision, dispute (Falkheimer & Heide, 2008). Crises are increasingly important social and political phenomena that have the potential to do great harm to organizations and governments, creating widespread and systematic disruption. In academic discourse, a crisis “*marks a phase of disorder in the seemingly normal development of a system*” (Boin et al., 2005, p. 2). However, a crisis may also be a force to constructive change and growth, and even create positive outcomes if the crisis is handled successfully (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Recent examples, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina, illustrate the rapid change that happens following a crisis. The events of 9/11 created fundamental rethinking of federal policy and comprehensive reorganization of US federal government. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 created a new understanding of the role of governments in response to disasters (Olsson et al., 2015; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

The merits of the various definitions of crisis have been debated within the area of crisis communication theories, for example the level of harm necessary for an event to qualify as a crisis. As Sellnow & Seeger (2013) point out, a bad snowstorm may be worrying, but only constitute a crisis when it creates proper damage. From other perspectives, the question of magnitude of a crisis is best understood as a matter of personal and community perception. Coombs (2009) describes a crisis as “*the perception of an event that threatens important expectancies*” (T. Coombs, 2009, p. 99).

Based on the definitions by Coombs (2009), Boin et al., (2009), and Sellnow & Seeger (2013) the press conference of a credible and imminent terrorist threat towards Norway must be said to fulfil the characteristic of a crisis, since the event:

(1) was a surprise,  
(2) demanded short response time,  
(3) was specific. As an example, an on-going health crisis would not meet this definition, but an imminent terror threat is consistent with this definition.

(4) violated expectations. It is generally expected that the public areas in Norway is safe. The information of an imminent terror threat from the authorities violated this expectation, which overall,

(5) created the perception of a crisis.

### 2.2 Communication and Crisis Communication

The latter word of the concept *crisis communication* derives from the Latin word *communicare* and means “*sharing, unite and making together*” (Falkheimer & Heide, 2008, p. 14). The traditional notions of communication have tended to emphasize the role of the

sender in a process of distributing messages to receivers. Receivers are largely seen as passive participants who are assumed to simply accept and act upon a message. This straightforward linear view of communication dominated the early crisis communication conceptualizations (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). As the field of communication developed, broader sets of concepts were used to describe a more dynamic process. The newest understanding of communication focuses on how a transmitter formulates an adapted message, for the most efficient way to reach the receivers (Falkheimer & Heide, 2008). This approach emphasizes that communication is a complex process that is dynamic, continuous and unrepeatable. Communication involves encoding and decoding systems, ongoing feedback loops and the ongoing co-creation of meaning (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

Given the complexity of the two words, crisis and communication, it can be difficult to define the concept *crisis communication*. Sellnow and Seeger (2013) suggest that it can be understood as the:

“ongoing process of creating shared meaning among and between groups, communities, individuals and agencies, within the ecological context of a crisis, for the purpose of preparing for and reducing, limiting and responding to threats and harm” (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013, p. 13).

This definition focuses on the diversity of communicators and elements involved during a crisis. However, beyond this definition, is the fact that crisis do not only pose a threat to authorities, but may also provide opportunities for strengthening a favourable reputation and trust in the organization and government, as well as personal, credibility and legitimacy (Boin et al., 2009; Boin et al., 2005; Nord & Olsson, 2013). Boin et. al’s (2005, p. 69) understanding of crisis communication as authorities ability to communicate a persuasive story line (a narrative) that contributes in “*shaping people’s understanding of a crisis and thus building public support for their policies*” (Boin et al., 2005, p. 69) is therefore a better theoretical definition for this paper. Boin et. al (2005, 2009) thus emphasise that the authorities can exploit a crisis situation to their advantage by “*the purposeful utilisation of crisis-type rhetoric to significantly alter levels of political support*” (Boin et al., 2009, p. 5). Boin et al’s (2005) core claim is thus that crisis communication makes “*a crucial difference between obtaining and losing the permissive consensus*” (Boin et al., 2005, p. 70).

### **2.3 Framing, Framing Contest and Successful Crisis Communication**

Entman (2007) defines framing as “*the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation*” (Entman, 2007, p. 164). In other words, to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and obscure others. It is a way to promote a “*particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described*” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). By selecting some piece of information and making it more noticeable to audience, it will increase the probability that receivers will perceive the information, discern meaning, process it and store it in memory (Entman, 1993). Coombs (2007) emphasises that frames operate at two related levels: frames in communication and frames in thought. Frames in communication involve the way (words and phrases, etc.) is

presented in a crisis message and that this frame in communication helps to shape the frames in thought (T. Coombs, 2007).

Different frames can thus lead the public to have different perceptions of a crisis. Crises usually generate a contest between frames and counter frames (also called reframes) concerning the nature of and severity of a crisis, its causes and the responsibilities for its occurrence or escalation (Boin et al., 2009). Entman (1993) argues that authorities seeking support during a crisis are compelled to compete with other actors and journalists over the news frames. The frames used in the media are important, since most of the information the public collect about an event is derived from the media and because media frames can affect political judgements. Accordingly, media play a crucial role in the framing contest during a crisis, since the contestant who gets its frame in the news texts, often forms the dominant narrative of an event. In other words, what journalists write about an event largely affects the dominative understanding of a crisis and the reputation of the organization and government (Boin et al., 2009; T. Coombs, 2007; Entman, 1993; Nord & Olsson, 2013; Olsson et al., 2015; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

In sum, frames are cues used to interpret the crisis and if these frames become accepted and reflected on in the media, these frames develop the dominant narrative of the crisis, which means the dominant description of a crisis. Therefore, the development of a dominant narrative is beyond the control of a single organization or a government. As a consequence, it is necessary to study how the crisis is narrated in media (S. An, Gower, & Cho, 2011; Heath, 2010). Based on the studies from Boin et al. (2005, 2009), Coombs (2007) and Olsson et al. (2015), this thesis understands successful crisis communication as the authorities ability to show their side of the story and get their frames accepted by the media, and thus win the dominant narrative of the crisis. If the authorities win the dominant persuasive narrative of the crisis, they can strengthen their position and authority, and may even have old policies replaced with new more favourable ones (Boin et al., 2009; Boin et al., 2005).

### **3.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework: Crisis Communication**

This thesis applies theory within crisis communication, which is helpful with sets of concepts, definitions and ideas that allow this study to find patterns in the data collected. Crisis communication research and theory has been driven largely by crisis management, which is an established practice within public relations drawing on a variety of fields such as medicine, sociology and political science (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Crisis management is an experience-based approach that sought to “*prevent or lessen the negative outcomes and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders, and/or industry from damage*” (T. Coombs, 1999, p. 4).

First over the last decade, crisis communication have become a more essential part of crisis management, especially the relationship between the media and crisis spokespersons (T. Coombs, 2010; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Crisis communication theories problematize the messages given by crisis spokespersons during and after threatening and uncertain crisis

events (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). The increase of interest in crisis communication is so strong that Heath (2010) argues that crisis communication has become its own discipline rather than a subdiscipline within crisis management. Part of the increase of interest comes from the fact that crises are dramatic; they are newsworthy. For that reason, media reporting plays a vital part in defining a crisis and successful crisis communication can thus be seen as a way to avoid negative media attention (Heath, 2010).

The initial practitioners of crisis communication developed best practices through war stories. These war stories provided the foundation for advices for future crises, frequently in the forms of lists of “dos” and “don’ts”. The practitioners of crisis communication began to agree on these advices and the accepted list of “dos” and “don’ts” began to form. Thereafter academics started to study different cases, not only war stories, and developed rhetorical frameworks (T. Coombs, 2010). The Image Repair Theory (IRT) by William Benoit (1995, 1997b) is a good example of a rhetorical framework based on case studies. IRT is today one of the most applied theories within crisis communication. The theory is adaptable and valuable for crisis spokespersons at governments and organizations in order to choose the most fitting communicative approach to a crisis event (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). However, IRT has been criticized for being vastly descriptive and provide no evaluation of the successfulness of the communicative strategies used (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

A number of academics thus wanted more theory testing within the crisis communication field. Timothy Coombs (2006, 2007) was one of these academics. Coombs (2006, 2007) developed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) that is based on experimental methods rather than case studies. He thus moved away from descriptive studies to a more empirical study in an attempt to develop a predictive theory (Feiduk, Pace, & Botero, 2010). Coomb’s (2006, 2007) SCCT is presently widely used and also offers a specific set of communicative strategies from which crisis spokespersons within governments and organizations can choose to develop or maintain a favourable reputation (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). In addition, Coombs (2006, 2007) emphasizes that the chosen strategy should match the actual crisis situation, and in doing so Coombs have developed a predictive framework that aims to say something more about the successfulness of a crisis communication.

However, even though Coombs (2006, 2007) has made a predictive framework, which gives knowledge of how the crisis communication by the authorities most likely will be received, it doesn’t provide a framework to measure how successful the crisis communication *actually* was. Both Coomb’s (2006, 2007) and Benoit’s (1995, 1997b) theories are sender-centric in their perspective and doesn’t theorise on how a crisis can be framed or reframed in the media. Neither of them is thus suitable to find out how successful the crisis communication has been in shaping and changing people’s perceptions (S. An et al., 2011).

### **3.1 Theory Applied**

Despite mentioned limitations, I have chosen to apply William Benoit’s (1995, 1997b) IRT and Timothy Coomb’s (2006, 2007) SCCT in this thesis because they have been at the forefront of research regarding organizational and governmental communicative responses to a crisis. IRT and SCCT provide useful typologies for systematic examination of how the authorities crisis communication played out. Insights from both theories provides an



understanding of PST and the Government's response to the crisis, and also sheds light on the response options available to them during the crisis (Maresh & Williams, 2010). In addition, SCCT is also useful to predict the communicative approach used by the authorities and the likelihood of their crisis communication being successful. But since they both are from a sender-based perspective, I have combined IRT and SCCT with theory on framing to examine how successful the crisis communication *actually* was. This combination of theories enables me to examine the entire communicative process from sender to receiver, which is necessary in order to provide a thorough and convincing answer to both my research questions. The theories will be further explained in the next chapters.

I want to emphasize that Timothy Coomb's (2006, 2007) William Benoit's (1995, 1997b) are using the term "strategy" instead of "frames" to explain how a government and organization work with their crisis communication to maintain or develop a favourable reputation. Coombs (2007) clarify the differences by stating that crisis spokespersons use one or several crisis response strategies to establish a certain frame. I also want to highlight that a reputation is developed through the information the public receive about the organization and government. Most of the information the public receives about an organization and government is from media and that is why media coverage is an important feature of successful crisis communication (T. Coombs, 2007).

### **3.2 Benoit's Image Repair Theory**

William L. Benoit (2009) defines image as "*the perception of a person (or group, or organization) held by the audience, shaped by the words and actions of that person, as well as by the discourse and behaviour of other relevant actors*" (W. L. Benoit, 2009, p. 40). Benoit (1997a) argues that a positive perception by the public is important since it can shape how they behave towards the government and/or organization (T. Coombs, 2007; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Image Repair Theory (IRT) thus consists of a set of image repair strategies, that is, messages options which governments and organizations can use to protect a more favourable image in the wake of a crisis (W. L. Benoit, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; T. Coombs & Schmidt, 2009).

IRT offers five broad categories of strategies to re-make or maintain a positive image: (1) denial, (2) evade responsibility, (3) reducing the offensiveness, (4) corrective action, and (5) mortification (T. Coombs & Schmidt, 2009). Benoit (1997a) argues that if the media accepts the chosen strategies, the claims can reduce the blame towards the authorities and repair a possibly damaged reputation. Each strategy will now be presented:

**Denial:** The crisis spokespersons deny that they did anything wrong. They can argue that they weren't involved or deny that the act was harmful (W. L. Benoit, 1997a; T. Coombs & Schmidt, 2009).

**Evade responsibility:** Attempting to evade responsibility for the act has different versions (see table 1). For example, the crisis spokespersons accept some connection to the crisis, but argue that they have limited responsibility for the crisis, since they merely responded to another's offensive act (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Benoit (1997a) claims that the crisis spokespersons thus can argue that their behaviour can be seen as a reasonable reaction to the offensive act.

Reducing the offensiveness: The crisis spokespersons try to repair their image by placing their act in a more favourable context. For example, by distinguishing the act they performed from other similar but more offensive action (W. L. Benoit, 1997a). Benoit (1997a) argues that in comparison with other actions, the crisis spokespersons act might seem less offensive (see table 1 for the six options).

Corrective action: The crisis spokespersons attempt to repair current damage and prevent similar crisis in the future. Though, the crisis spokespersons can engage in corrective action without accepting responsibility or asking for forgiveness (T. Coombs & Schmidt, 2009; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Benoit (1997a) argues that a willingness to correct or prevent the problem can be enough to help the accused’s image.

Mortification: The crisis spokespersons admit a wrongful act and ask for forgiveness (T. Coombs & Schmidt, 2009; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Benoit (1997a) argues that if the public believes the apology is sincere, they may pardon the wrongful act.

**Table 1.** Benoit’s Image Repair Theory and its various communication strategies (W. L. Benoit, 1997b, p. 179; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2011, p. 76):

Strategy	Example
<b>1. Denial</b>	
a. Simple denial	We did not do it.
b. Shifting the blame	Someone else did it.
<b>2. Evade responsibility</b>	
a. Provocation	We were provoked to act.
b. Defeasibility	We did not have enough information.
c. Accident	This was not our intention.
d. Good intentions	We meant to do the right thing.
<b>3. Reducing the offensiveness of the event</b>	
a. Bolstering	We have done some good things.
b. Minimization	The crisis is not that bad.
c. Differentiation	Others have had worse crisis.
d. Transcendence	We should focus on other issues.
e. Attack the accuser	The accuser is irresponsible.
f. Compensation	We will cover the costs of the crisis.
<b>4. Corrective action</b>	We will solve the problem.
<b>5. Mortification</b>	We are sorry.

Although IRT has been in the forefront of research regarding organizational and governmental crisis responses, it is not without limitations, as briefly mentioned. One of the main critics within the field of crisis communication is Timothy Coombs (2006, 2007). Coombs (2007, p. 171) criticizes IRT to draw “*speculative conclusions*” based on “*case studies, not empirical tests of hypothesis*”. Another critic towards IRT is that it is a heavily

descriptive system that “*limit our understanding of how people respond to crisis and crisis response strategies*” (T. Coombs, 2007, p. 171). Moreover, Coombs (2007) argues that the non-existing link between the crisis responses to the actual crisis situation is a limitation. He argues that IRT should have provided a guideline of which strategic crisis spokespersons should choose based on the actual crisis situation. Due to these limitations, Coombs (2006, 2007) developed Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which draws on the theory from IRT, but are based on experimental methods rather than case studies. In addition, SCCT presents a system that recommends strategies based on the actual crisis (T. Coombs, 2007).

### **3.3 Coombs’ Situational Crisis Communication Theory**

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) provides a framework for understanding how to maximize the reputational protection through communication. SCCT is, as well as IRT, concerned with public’s perception and the ultimate approval of an organization and government following a crisis. SCCT offers, as well as IRT, a specific set of communicative strategies from which crisis spokespersons can choose to help maintain or develop a favourable reputation (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). However, unlike Benoit’s (1995, 1997) IRT, SCCT matches the actual crisis situation with a certain *crisis cluster*, meaning a certain crisis type, with the aim to predict how the crisis communication most likely will be received. Coombs (2006, 2007) has thus moved away from descriptive studies to an empirical study and developed a predictive theory of how the crisis communication most likely will be received (Feiduk et al., 2010).

In that connection, Coombs (2006, 2007) has identified three types of crisis clusters: (1) the victim cluster, (2) the accidental cluster, and (3) the intentional cluster. By dividing different crisis types in three different categories, SCCT gives a suggestion on the likely level of responsibility an organization and/or government would attribute to a crisis (see table 2). The *victim cluster* has low attributions of organizational and governmental crisis responsibility (such as natural disasters and false rumours) and the organization and/or government is viewed as a victim of the event. The *accidental cluster* has modest attributions of crisis responsibility (for example, a technical failure that causes an industrial accident) and the event is considered as unintentional or uncontrollable. Finally, the *preventable cluster* has strong attributions of crisis responsibility (for example, a human error that causes an industrial accident) and the event is considered to be purposeful by the organization and/or government (T. Coombs, 2006, 2007).

The level of likely attributed organizational and/or governmental responsibility will influence the likelihood of acceptance of the authorities’ crisis communication by the media. Coombs and Holloway (1996) explain this more specifically by:

“the more publics attribute crisis responsibility to an organization, the stronger the likelihood is of publics developing and acting upon negative images of the organization. Greater attributions of responsibility lead to stronger feelings of anger and more negative view of an actor’s image” (T. Coombs & Holloway, 1996, p. 282).

Thus, a crisis belonging to the *victim cluster* with low responsibility will have a higher chance to be accepted by the media than a crisis with higher organizational responsibility, such as crisis belonging to the *preventable cluster*.

**Table 2.** Situational Crisis Communication Theory’s different *crisis clusters* and likely attributed responsibility (T. Coombs, 2007, p. 168):

<b>Level of likely attributed organizational and/or governmental responsibility</b>	<b>Crisis cluster type</b>	<b>Disaster examples</b>
Low responsibility (Weak attributions of crisis responsibility = mild reputational damage)	Victim cluster: In these crisis situations, the government and/or organization are also a victim of the crisis.	Natural disasters: Act of nature, such as an earthquake. Rumours: False and damaging information about a government/organization. Malevolence: External agent causes damage.
Moderate responsibility (Minimal attributions of crisis responsibility = moderate reputational damage)	Accidental cluster: In these crisis situations, the governmental and/or organizational actions leading to the crisis were unintentional.	Challenges: Stakeholders claim the government/organization has operated in inappropriate manner. Technical-error product harm: A technology or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled.
High responsibility (Strong attributions of crisis responsibility = severe reputational damage)	Preventable cluster: In these crisis situations, the government/organization knowingly placed people at risk, took inappropriate actions or violated law/regulations.	Human-error accidents: Human error causes an accident. Organizational misdeeds: stakeholders are deceived/law or regulations are violated.

Applying the SCCT cluster, terror threats match with *victim cluster* since terror threat will go under *malevolence*, which means that an external agent causes damage (see table 2). Since the crisis situation match with *victim cluster*, the spokespersons, in this case Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland and Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen, will be less willing to attribute responsibility since they did not cause the crisis. Following this logic, this study’s crisis with lower levels of responsibility attribution will have a high chance to be accepted by the media. The public will not likely develop a negative image of the Government and PST, as they would in situations with higher responsibility attributions such as organizational misdeeds (T. Coombs, 2006; Olsson et al., 2015). We can therefore expect that media accept PST and the Government’s frames/communication of the crisis to a higher degree than they would if the authorities had higher responsibility for the crisis.

SCCT presents four different communicative response strategies: *Deny strategy*, *diminishment strategy*, *rebuilding strategy* and *bolstering strategy* (see table 3). These strategies have the objective to change the perception of the organization and/or government and reduce the negative effect generated by a crisis (T. Coombs, 2007).

**Table 3.** Situational Crisis Communication Theory response strategy types (T. Coombs, 2007, pp. 170-172):

<b>Crisis Response Strategies</b>	<b>Explanation of the strategies</b>
Deny strategy	Crisis spokespersons deny any truth to the rumour causing the crisis and attempt to remove their connection to the crisis. If media accept the frame, the organization and government are spared from reputational harm.
Diminishment Strategy	The crisis spokespersons argue that they lacked control over the situation or that the crisis is not as bad as it is perceived. The strategy thus contains two elements: Excuses and justifications.
Rebuilding strategy	The crisis spokespersons attempt to improve the organization and/or government reputation by offer apology and/or compensate the victims.
Bolstering strategy	The crisis spokespersons remind the public of past good deeds and/or works to counter-balance the negative sides of the crisis. The crisis spokespersons can also praise relevant actors for their effort during the crisis as a mean to improve the relationship to them.

As briefly mentioned, SCCT also provides recommendations on which communicative response strategy spokespersons should choose based on the actual crisis situation. For example, a crisis situation that matches with *victim cluster* is recommended by Coombs (2007) to choose a *diminishment strategy* (see table 3). Coombs (2007) also argues that if the crisis situation matches with *victim cluster* and if the government and organization have a neutral or positive reputation prior to the crisis, informing and adjusting information alone can be enough to maintain a positive reputation.

Given this theory, we should expect that Bjørnland and Anundsen are using a *diminishment strategy* or that they just inform or adjust the information since the crisis situation match with *victim cluster*. If they use the *diminishment strategy*, they will provide excuses and/or justification for the situation. The *diminishment strategy* attempts to lessen the authorities connection to the crisis, through two tactics: First, the crisis spokespersons can argue that they had minimal responsibility for the crisis; the event was primarily a result of circumstances beyond their control. Second, the crisis spokespersons can claim the crisis was not as serious as the public might consider it to be (T. Coombs, 2007).

The SCCT *diminishment strategy* by Coombs (2006, 2007) has a lot of common with two of Benoit's (1995, 1997) IRT strategies. However, while Coombs (2006, 2007) *diminishment strategy* includes two tactics, Benoit (1995, 1997b) has chosen to divide these two tactics into two different strategies: the *evade responsibility strategy* and the *reducing the offensiveness strategy*. This distinction by Benoit (1995, 1997b) is meaningful since it became easier to detect different frames in the authorities' statements, a distinction that could be more difficult to detect if SCCT had been the only theory applied in this thesis. Based on these similarities, we can expect to detect these three strategies in the crisis communication given by Bjørnland and Anundsen.

### **3.4 A Receiver-Based Perspective: Case Studies within the field**

Despite Coomb's (2006, 2007) SCCT and Benoit's (1995, 1997b) IRT recognizing of media's central role in the public's perception of a crisis, both theories are from a sender-based perspective. Coombs (2006, 2007) developed a predictive framework with the aim to say something more about the successfulness of a crisis communication. But even though Coombs (2006, 2007) SCCT predicts how the authorities' crisis communication will most likely be received, it doesn't provide a framework to study how successful the crisis communication *actually* was. Neither of them is thus suitable to find out how successful the crisis communication has been at shaping people's perceptions of a crisis. The theories lack theory on how the crisis can be framed or reframed in the media (S. An et al., 2011).

Media coverage is an important feature of successful communication, since most of the information the public receives about an organization and government is through the media (T. Coombs, 2007). To gain a more broad and rich understanding of the success or failure of crisis communication, Fediuk, Pace and Botero (2010) argue that there is a need to shift from a sender-based perspective to more receiver-based perspective that considers the effect that messages have on the perceptions of people (Feiduk et al., 2010). A way to manage this is to analyse how media received the authorities crisis communication, that is, whether the media accepted the authorities frames of the crisis or not.

The studies by Olsson et al. (2015), (Canel, 2011) and Nord & Olsson (2013) have done exactly that. These studies have examined the frames given by different governments during different crises and analysed whether these frames matched with medias frames. Olsson et al. (2015) studied the Norwegian Governments crisis communication after the terrorist attacks in Oslo and Utøya July 22 2011. Canel (2011) explored the Spanish Government's crisis communication after the Madrid bombing in March 11 2004 and Nord & Olsson (2013) studied the Swedish Government's crisis communication during the 2008 financial crisis. While the studies from Olsson et al. (2015) and Nord & Olsson (2013) showed how the Norwegian and the Swedish Government gained support during and after the crises, the study by Canel (2011) shows how the Spanish Government failed to get their side of the story accepted in the Spanish media coverage and thus failed to communicate successfully.

I have been inspired by these case studies and this thesis will analyse both the authorities frames and media's frames in order to explain the authorities successful or failed crisis communication. While successful crisis communication occurs when the media accepts the frames given by the authorities, a failed crisis communication occurs when the media are

posting messages that reject the crisis spokespersons frames and continue to using a different frame. The public will be given competing frames and select the frame they find most credible (T. Coombs, 2007). Thus, how media frame a crisis event influence the public opinion of the case and may even have an impact on the political policy process (S. An & Gower, 2009; Boin et al., 2009; T. Coombs, 2007; Entman, 1993, 2003).

## **4.0 Methods: A Qualitative Case Study**

Methodological choices influence how we conduct the research and provide tools for operationalizing the research examinations. These choices are a reflection of the researchers conception of knowledge (epistemology) and the researchers conceptions of the world (ontology) (Ackerly, Stern, & True, 2006). The most legible methodological approach to examine this case is through a qualitative method. A qualitative method will provide a detailed and thorough analysis of the research questions.

Qualitative methods tend to be associated with an interpretative worldview. The interpretative worldview draws on social constructivism, which is the idea that the reality we live in is built up over time, through interaction and communication. The social reality isn't given. The aim of an inductive qualitative research is to gain a better understanding of the views and meaning held by research participants, to explore communication relationship and gain a better understanding of how the social reality is constructed. To do so, an interpretive researcher have to recognize that in order to gain a better understanding of the world of communication, the researcher must explore the social phenomenon from different angles. The researcher cannot detached herself from her own conception of knowledge and the world (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Accordingly, the ontological assumption of this study reflect a constructionist understanding of the nature of reality and have an epistemological interpretative stance, which requires the researcher to grasp the subjective meaning of social research (Bryman, 2012).

I have chosen a case study since it allows a deep and narrow investigation of different perspectives of one particular social phenomenon (S. An & Cheng, 2010). A case study is a type of qualitative interpretative study that “*entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case*” (Bryman, 2012, p. 66). In other words, a case study is concerned with the complexity of a phenomenon in a real-life context. A major strength of a case study is that the researcher is allowed to use different sources of data (S. An & Cheng, 2010). It is therefore a useful research form to examine how the crisis communication was given by PST and the Government and received by the Norwegian media.

### **4.1 Data Collection and Sampling**

This thesis uses two main sources of data: data obtained from interviews and existing data. In other words, this thesis uses different data to access knowledge, also called data triangulation. The existing data used in the thesis, inspired by the case studies presented in chapter 3.4, ranges from academic books, journals, press releases, press conferences to interpretative articles in media, including comments and editorials by Norwegian journalists.

The reason I chose *interpretative* articles, such as editorials and comments as data units, instead of *descriptive* articles, is because it makes it easier to explore whether media accepted the Government and PST's frame or not. Interpretative articles go beyond descriptive articles and their factual based reporting answering *what, where, when* and *who*. Interpretative articles make no claim of objectivity and the journalists make his or hers interpretations regarding the event. The journalists act as analysts instead of observers of an event (Olsson et al., 2015). It is therefore more meaningful to analyze interpretative articles since the journalists can argue their view on the matter. In fact, I believe it would be speculative to include descriptive news articles, since I then would have had to apply a level of speculation to interpret the journalists' actual opinion about the case. Frithjof Jacobsen (2017), commentator at Verdens Gang (VG), states that commentators at VG are separated from the news reporters. Those who write interpretative articles do not make descriptive news stories and vice versa. While news journalists write descriptive articles with the aim of providing the facts, commentators are hired to write editorials and other interpretative articles with their own byline (F. Jacobsen, 2017). This is how Jacobsen (2017) and Alf Ole Ask (2017) from Aftenposten describe their role as commentators:

“In a commentator article, I write my understanding of an event. It is not a historiography or the definitive analysis. It is a snapshot of a situation as it looks like inside my head right now. However, as a commentator, you will try to gain insight into an area that others may not have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with” (F. Jacobsen, 2017).

“A commentator should be a voice in the debate and try to put an event into a context, but a commentator is not necessarily more critical than a news journalist” (A. O. Ask, 2017).

I also limited the data unites to only include interpretative articles written by journalists. Journalists are in an intermediate position between the authorities and the public and provide the flow of public information to the people. In contradiction to for example politicians and employees from different organizations, journalists are completely free to write whatever they want. In Norway we have a free press and the journalists usually have no hidden agenda. In addition, as stated in chapter 2.3, what journalists write about an event largely affects the dominative understanding of a crisis and the reputation of the organization and government (Boin et al., 2009; T. Coombs, 2007; Entman, 1993; Nord & Olsson, 2013; Olsson et al., 2015; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

I started the analytical process, through open coding<sup>4</sup>, by studying press statements by the Government and PST. Thereafter, I analysed interpretative articles, editorials and comments from the 22 leading national newspapers in Norway on print in 2014: Aftenposten, Verdens Gang (VG), Dagbladet, Bergens Tidende, Dagens Næringsliv, Adresseavisen, Stavanger Aftenblad, Fædrelandsvennen, Morgenbladet, Drammens Tidende, Romerikes blad, Sunnmørsposten, Tønsberg blad, Vårt land, Gudbrandsdølen Dagingen, Haugesund

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<sup>4</sup> Open coding means that the researcher have read through the collected data several times and that each separate idea that emerge from the data is given a label (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).



Avis, Dagsavisen, Finansavisen, Oppland Arbeiderblad, Varden, Agderposten and Klassekampen (MedieNorge, 2014). I also analyzed interpretative articles on net from the leading national news media, including the leading two news broadcasters that only publish articles online: the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) and TV 2 (TNSGallup, 2014). The selection criteria for the interpretative articles were that the journalists commented on the terror threat against Norway during the summer of 2014.

Since the aim of this paper is to examine PST and the Government's success or failure to win the dominant narrative of the crisis, it is important to select the newspapers with the biggest readership (Olsson et al., 2015). The articles from the 22 newspapers I included had the largest circulation figures in 2014, and the two news broadcasters had the highest number of unique users in 2014 (MedieNorge, 2014; TNSGallup, 2014). The newspapers Hamar Arbeiderblad, Aftenposten Junior and Budstikka were also among the leading newspapers on print and online in 2014. However, Hamar Arbeiderblad and Aftenposten Junior<sup>5</sup> are not digitized and Budstikka had no interpretative articles about the event. These newspapers are thus not included in the sample. Nevertheless, I believe that the amount of articles gathered provide me with the flexibility that is necessary to capture the different perspectives and come up with a detailed and thorough analysis of the research questions.

The decrease in print newspapers' circulation numbers and the increase in people using social media as their primary news source could be perceived as a weakness in the method I have selected (Bjørnstad & Tornes, 2014). However, I argue that the chosen sample gives a comprehensive understanding of the dominative narrative surrounding the event since the majority of the Norwegian population still reads one or several newspapers on a regular basis. In 2013, 76 percent of the Norwegian public read one or both forms of newspapers on a normal day. 51 percent of the public read printed newspapers and 52 percent read online newspapers (Bjørnstad & Tornes, 2014). In addition, even though 40 percent in the age group 15 to 29 years stated that they used Facebook to stay updated on news, Bjørnstad and Tornes (2014) argue that it is still the established newspapers that are the primary source of the many news stories circulating in Norwegian Facebook feeds.

I started the data collection at the National Library in Oslo and looked briefly through some of the leading national newspapers published from 24 July 2014, the date of the press conference, and forward. The crisis has no clear end date, but I soon found that the newspapers stopped commenting on the event after one and a half month. I also found that the words "Bjørnland", "Anundsen", "terror" and "PST" were continuously used in the relevant articles. Upon discovering this, I did a more extensive search at the National Library and Retriever<sup>6</sup> similar to the case studies by Nord & Olsson (2013) and Olsson et al. (2015). The articles mapped through the search engines at National Library and Retriever thus included the phrases "Bjørnland", "Anundsen", "terror" and/or "PST" and was published in the period from July 24 to September 24 2014. Many of the articles I found were not related to my field of study, e.g. terrorism in Gaza. However, in the interest of not narrowing my search too much, I would rather read through some irrelevant articles than overlook a few

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<sup>5</sup> Aftenposten Junior is a newspaper for children, with the aim of explaining the news. Thus, the newspaper wouldn't be included in the sample even if the newspaper had been digitized.

<sup>6</sup> Both Retriever and the National Library's purpose are to collect and digitize published content, such as content from Norwegian newspapers to be used for research and documentation.

relevant and important articles. In total 67 articles were included in the sample (see appendix 9.2).

The data collected from the Government and PST were information provided by Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland and Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen in public speeches, press statements and at the press conferences. The empirical data was collected from PST's official website and from the broadcasted video and radio pieces to ensure that the transcription would be as precise as possible. Bjørnland and Anundsen became the obvious spokespersons to focus on, as it was they who presented the information and thus led the crisis communication during the summer of 2014.

Assistant National Commissioner Vidar Refvik from the Police was also at the press conference July 24 and presented their emergency measures implemented after the information given by PST. The reason I do not include his statements in this thesis is because the police presented their response based on specific instructions from PST. The police were thus not involved in shaping the crisis communication surrounding the terrorist threat.

## **4.2 Semi-structured Interviews**

The statements from the authorities and media articles served as a foundation on which the interviews added further information not necessarily available in the existing data. Using different techniques when qualitatively studying crisis communication increase the trustworthiness of the study. Interviews can help the researcher to validate the analysis and strengthen drawn conclusions derived from the existing data (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

To gain rich, in-dept information from the interviews, purposive sampling was applied (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The sample criteria for selecting the authority informants were that they either presented the crisis communication or worked in sections of the Government and PST related to communication during the summer of 2014. I got two interviews with two key players: former Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen and Senior Adviser at PST's Communication Department Martin Bernsen. I also made two interviews with two key media commentators during the summer of 2014: Frithjof Jacobsen from Verdens Gang (VG) and Alf Ole Ask from Aftenposten. The reason I selected these two commentators as informants are because they are commentators in two of the leading newspapers in Norway and because they had different views on the authorities press conference. While Ask was mainly supportive, Jacobsen had several critical remarks in his comments. The aim of the four interviews was to gain personal insight regarding PST, the Government and media's intentional use of frames in their communication. In addition, I wanted to discuss my findings from the existing data and test whether my interpretation was consistent with their understanding. The interviews gave me firsthand accounts of the events that are not available in existing data and direct insight into the complex process of crisis communication.

Before I contacted the informants, I designed two interview guides with focus on the topic areas I wanted them to reflect on (see appendix 9.3 and 9.4). Even though the guides were quite long and detailed, they weren't always followed strictly. I chose semi-structured interviews because the interview guide helped me to keep focus on the topic without constraining the interviewees to a particular format. I wanted to have the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and give the informants the chance to pursue topics they regarded as

relevant to their answers (Bryman, 2012). Every interview was conducted in a quiet and private environment. The interview with Bernsen was conducted at PST's main office at Nydalen in Oslo and the other three interviews were conducted through video call on Skype. I recorded all audio from the interviews to ensure that no statement was lost. After the interviews, I transcribed them in verbatim in order to avoid leaving anything relevant out. The interviews lasted about 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted in Norwegian. I have translated all quotes from the informants to English. The original Norwegian quotes used in the thesis can be found in appendix 9.1. The informants have verified their statements, both the Norwegian statements and the translated statements in English to minimize the possibility of any misinterpretations.

### 4.3 Open Coding Guidelines

Open coding means that the researcher have read through the collected data several times and that each separate idea that emerge from the data is given a label (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The collected data was read and reread with special attention paid to IRT and SCCT strategies and was ultimately divided up according to the themes it dealt with. After dividing the data into topical areas, the specific topics were categorised according to IRT typology since I found IRT typology more suitable than the SCCT typology for the topical areas detected. The IRT typology has divided the different strategies more suitable for my thesis<sup>7</sup> and the name of the strategies were also more suitable for the frames detected in the authorities' statements. When the IRT typology was limited, new categories were created to fit the content. This was done to ensure the analysis was not forced. There was a natural fit between the data of this thesis and the typology by IRT (Elmasry & Chaudhri, 2010).

To detect other frames through open coding, this analysis was inspired by Entman's (1993) framing analysis, a method also used by Olsson et al. (2015), Canel (2011) and Nord & Olsson (2013). Entman's (1993) framing analysis is a method to identify the "*presence or absence of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments*" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Guided by Entman's definition, I focused on specific elements that were highlighted in the Government, PST and media's texts to detect frames that emerged from the data. Just like the coding guidelines by Olsson et al. (2015), the dominating perspectives of the statements were decisive for the coding. As stated by Olsson et al. (2015), "*in cases where diverging perspectives were offered, the dominating perspective, based on an overall evaluation of the unit, was decisive for the coding*" (Olsson et al., 2015, p. 9).

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<sup>7</sup> For example (as mentioned in chapter 3.3): While Coombs (2006, 2007) *diminishment strategy* includes two tactics, Benoit (1995, 1997b) has chosen to divide these two tactics into two different strategies: the *evade responsibility strategy* and the *reducing the offensiveness strategy*. This distinction by Benoit (1995, 1997b) is meaningful since it became easier to detect different and dominating frames in the authorities' statements, a distinction that could be more difficult to detect if SCCT had been the only theory applied in this thesis.

#### 4.4 Research Ethics and the Quality of the Study

When collecting data through human interaction, Daymon and Holloway (2011) point out the importance of paying close attention to ethical issues because of the inherent problems and dilemmas related to qualitative research. The interpretative method challenges the researcher's role in the study. As a researcher, I therefore believe it is important to mention that I was working as a journalist at the Norwegian Public Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) when the Government and PST informed the public about an imminent terror threat. Right after the press conference I reacted with disbelief and shock. I found it wrong to inform the public about an imminent threat that we could do nothing about. Shortly after I became unsure of my stance in the matter: I did not know the background on which they decided to inform the public and maybe it was the only option available to them. While I am unable to avoid this bias, this background gives me some benefits because having worked as a trained journalist I have obtained a good understanding of how communication works within the field of news journalism. In the interest of conducting ethical and professional research, I have acted honestly and strived to be transparent throughout the research process and addressed ethical issues explicitly in my thesis.

To ensure a high level of quality, trustworthiness and authenticity in my research, I have tried to follow these strategies (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 95):

- Member-checking
- Transparency
- Triangulation
- Thick description
- Searching for negative cases and alternative explanations

To increase the credibility of my findings, which is a criterion in order to measure the trustworthiness of a study, it is important that the people involved in it recognize the truth of the findings (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). I have strived to achieve this by discussing my interpretation of the data with the informants – also called *member-checking*– and asked for their comments. This enabled me to compare my interpretation with the perception of the people involved. Thereby I was able to minimize the risk of speculative conclusions (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). However, due to Anundsen and Bernsen's restraint to provide full account of the case and complete details about their information strategy, some of their answers will appear a tad vague. Bernsen and Anundsen could speak in general terms about their communicative strategy, but far from disclose everything and not many finer details. This restriction to give out information is thus a clear limitation of the data collected.

Another aspect of trustworthiness is transferability, which replaces the notion of generalization in quantitative research. Generalization, how the findings of the study can be applied to other similar situations, is impossible, and some would argue irrelevant, to achieve in a qualitative case study. However, despite the problems with generalization in qualitative research, this thesis attempts to transform observations from the case study into concepts within crisis communication (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). This is, according to Daymon & Holloway (2011) a way to contribute to theory building, so called *theory-based generalization*. This means that if the theory developed from the case study can be verified in

other situations, the ideas are generalizable – or said in a more suitable qualitative manner; the ideas are transferable – at least within the field of crisis communication. To do so, I have tried to produce a thick description, meaning a detailed and rich description of the social setting I am studying (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

A third aspect of trustworthiness, dependability, stresses the importance that my findings must be consistent and accurate (Bryman, 2012; Daymon & Holloway, 2011). To ensure this, I have kept all the transcripts from the press conferences and interviews throughout the research process, so I was able to look through them several times. The informants have also verified their statements from the interviews to minimize the possibility for any misinterpretations. However, this thesis was conducted three years after the event and in some instances the informants had difficulties remembering exact details, which is a limitation when trying to ensure accurateness in the findings.

The final aspect of trustworthiness, confirmability, measures the way in which the findings achieve the aim of the study and not the result of the researcher's preconceptions. A way to achieve this is to be reflective and self-critical of how the research has been done. I have tried to achieve this through member-checking, searching for negative cases (meaning inconsistent data), applied data and methodological triangulation and strived to have a transparent research process (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

Authenticity is when the strategies used are appropriate for the true reporting and when the study helps participants to understand their world (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Coombs (2007, p. 171) criticizes IRT to draw “*speculative conclusions*” based on “*case studies, not empirical tests of hypothesis*”. However, I think case studies can be a useful method, especially in cases of rare social phenomena. In addition, I have tried to avoid speculative conclusions and ensured the authenticity of my findings through member-checking, transparency, methodological triangulation and by building this case study on existing knowledge within the crisis communication field.

## **5.0 Frames Detected in Crisis Communications by PST and the Government**

The following two chapters (5.0 and 6.0) will unfold the analysis work aimed at providing a conclusive answer to this thesis' two research questions.

In the midst of the uncertainty surrounding this situation, PST and the Government had to strategically manage their communication to gain trust from the public. In chapter 5.0, the frames applied by PST and the Government in their aim to gain support and trust for their handling of the crisis and to protect or develop a more positive reputation will be examined (Boin et al., 2009; Nord & Olsson, 2013).

In this chapter, it will be shown that the predictive SCCT theory proved to be right. As expected were the arguments included in Coombs' (2006, 2007) *diminishment strategy* and Benoit's (1995, 1997b) *evade responsibility strategy* and *reducing the offensiveness strategy* detected in the statements by Bjørnland and Anundsen. When the IRT and the SCCT typologies were limited, I was lead by Entman's (1993) framing analysis to detect frames in

the texts, and two new categories were created to fit the content: the *cultural congruence frame* and the *united management frame*.

The four frames the *evade responsibility frame*, the *reducing the offensiveness frame*, the *cultural congruence frame* and the *united management frame* detected by the dominating perspectives in the statements by Bjørnland and Anundsen will now be further explained:

### **5.1 Evade Responsibility Frame**

Olsson et al., (2015) claim that issues related to responsibility often are at the forefront when crisis communication is discussed, and the responsibility frame was highly manifested in the authorities' crisis communication, especially in PST's framing efforts. Within this frame, Bjørnland addressed the causes and the responsibility for the crisis. PST and the Government accepted some connection to the crisis, since they chose to inform about the situation. However, they argued that they had limited responsibility for the crisis since it was caused by an exogenous factor, in this case: individuals affiliated with an extremist Islamist group in Syria. Even though this frame was highly manifested in the framing efforts by PST, the uncertainty surrounding the situation caused problems and the information about the threat was given in a very general manner, e.g. Bjørnland statement at the press conference July 24 2014:

“PST recently received information that individuals affiliated with an extreme Islamist group in Syria may have the intention of carrying out a terrorist action in Norway. PST receives this sort of information from partner services from time to time, but it often turns out not to be correct after we have carried out our investigations to be able to confirm or deny the information. In our preliminary investigations in this case, the credibility of the information was however strengthened. We also have information indicating that a terrorist action against Norway is planned to be carried out shortly – probably in a few days. We have no information about who is behind such an attack, how it will be carried out, the target or in what way such an attack will be carried out” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

Thus, the public was not informed about who was behind the threat, what the threat was about, how an attack would be carried out or how PST had received the information. The only information the public got was that a credible terror threat against Norway, from with people with links to an extremist Islamist group in Syria, was imminent. The authorities addressed the issues of who was responsible, the motives and the causes several times, but repeatedly stated that they could not provide specific details and that there were elements they still needed to verify:

“We have received information. I can't say from whom. And it is unspecific in terms of objectives in Norway and who one wishes to frame” (Bjørnland at the press conference, VG, 2014b).

Bjørnland informed that the people behind the threat had participated in combat actions on the ground in Syria, but she did not comment on whether these were Norwegian

citizens (VG, 2014b). When asked about why PST took this threat so seriously, Bjørnland responded again in very broad terms:

“It is the follow-up investigations [...] that makes us regard this [threat] as credible, without it being verified” (Bjørnland at the press conference, VG, 2014b).

After this statement, Bjørnland urged everyone to acknowledge that PST’s work is sensitive and that cautiousness must be shown when giving out details. She explained that PST had more details about the case, but that they had to keep them close in order to protect their sources:

”I hope we have your understanding that the information PST possesses can be very sensitive. That is why we are quite careful to comment on details. We have some details, but we are cautious due to protection of sources” (Bjørnland at the press conference, VG, 2014b).

Bjørnland also underlined that this case is unusual: Information on terrorist threats is something PST regularly receives, but in this case they were unable to either confirm or deny the information:

“PST handles a great amount of threats each year. The majority of these threats are threats that it would be neither correct nor possible for us to comment openly on. In the current situation however I believe that to inform the public is the right thing to do” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

The crisis spokespersons thus accepted some connection to the crisis, since they chose to inform about the situation. However, obviously they argued that they had limited responsibility for the crisis since it was caused by an exogenous factor, in this case terrorists with links to an extremist Islamist group in Syria. Anundsen argued in a radio interview on NRK Dagsnytt 18, the same day as the press conference, that it would be wrong not to inform the public about the terror threat and the visible measures, since general armament is not common practice in Norway:

“There is a specific threat that we believe is important to inform about [...] It would be a very difficult situation to see police carry out the measures they are now conducting, without letting people know the reasons and background as to why these measures were implemented. [If we hadn’t informed] it would obviously have created insecurity and fear. I think it is important that we are as open as possible, as early as possible” (Anundsen, 2014a).

Benoit (1997a) argues that we tend to only hold people responsible for factors that are under their own control. By emphasizing the root of the problem as an exogenous phenomenon, both Bjørnland and Anundsen strengthened the *evade responsibility frame*. If the public accepts that the authorities merely responded to another’s offensive act and that their behavior should be seen as a reasonable act to that provocation, Benoit (1997a) argues

that the damage to PST and the Government reputation will be reduced. Within this *evade responsibility frame*, Benoit (1997a) points out that the spokespersons are able to argue that they were provoked to act and hence that they should be held less responsible for the event, e.g. Bjørnland statement at NRK Dagsrevyen:

“The information has been so credible, that we think that we hadn’t done our job as a security agency if we hadn’t informed. Our main goal is to deter and prevent [terrorism]” (Bjørnland, 2014a).

In addition to framing the crisis as an exogenous factor that they merely responded to, the authorities argued that their press conference should be seen as a reasonable reaction to an offensive act. This also extended to their arguments that 1) the press conference could have a deterrent effect on those who threatened to terrorise and 2) the information could contribute to make the public extra vigilant:

“When we choose to make this information public after all, it is because we believe it can have a preventive and a deterrent effect” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

“Perhaps this information can contribute to make people extra vigilant” (Anundsen at the press conference, VG, 2014b).

Through these statements the *evade responsibility frame* is strengthened by the argument that their press conference should be seen as a reasonable reaction to an offensive act. If accepted by the public, Benoit (1997a) argues that these claims will reduce the blame towards the authorities and repair a possible damaged reputation.

It was first in the press conference on July 31, when the terror threat had been weakened, that Bjørnland argued that due to the credibility of the threat on July 24, that PST and the police found it necessary to implement temporary general armament of the police:

“From the point when we received the intelligence, all available resources were set in to verify the information. The preliminary findings strengthened rather than weakened its credibility [...] This was the reason why we and the regular Norwegian police service decided that it was necessary to implement a series of preventive security measures” (Bjørnland, 2014d).

She also argued on July 31 that these visible measures were something they had to inform the public about:

“The fact that these measures would be obvious to the general public immediately was one of the reasons why we chose to inform about the potential threat” (Bjørnland, 2014d).



Interestingly enough, Senior Adviser at PST's Communication Department Martin Bernsen speculates in hindsight whether the incident could have been clarified earlier if the threat had emerged at another time:

“We had doubts on whether we should inform or not, but decided that we couldn't take the risk of not informing since there was a lot of uncertainty. This is speculation, but it is possible that the outcome had been different if this hadn't happened in the middle of the summer holidays, when many employees are on vacation. Perhaps we had been able to clarify the situation faster if more people had been at work” (Bernsen, 2017)<sup>8</sup>.

As previously shown, the information given to the public was very general and unspecific because of the uncertainty surrounding the situation. Bernsen (2017) says that this way of informing the public is not ideal:

“We placed the public in a difficult situation, because we said something, but couldn't inform about the details [...] This is not good communication, but what could we have done differently?” (Bernsen, 2017).

However, Bernsen (2017) argues that PST is a completely different organization than they were in the 90s. From being a closed organization that no one talked to, to now being an organization that most people trust. Bernsen tells that precision is an important part of their information strategy, which is important in order to gain trust from the public:

“You rarely read bragging stories about PST. That is a deliberate strategy, we will not brag about ourselves [...] We want to inform about the situation with precision [...] We have no ambition to be popular, we want to be trusted. It can lead to challenges when working closely with other agencies and ministries because our communication has different goals. Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Police have each their communications strategy, which may differ slightly from ours. But in this case the partnership was unproblematic” (Bernsen, 2017).

To sum up this subsection, Benoit (1997a) argues that we only tend to hold people responsible for factors under their control. PST and the Government accepted some connection to the crisis, since they chose to inform about the terror threat, but of course argued that they had limited responsibility since it was caused by an exogenous factor (i.e. individuals affiliated with an extremist Islamist group in Syria). Thus, the authorities were portrayed as actors who merely responded to another's offensive act. The authorities main argument was that due to the credibility of the terror threat, they found it necessary to implement temporary general armament of the police and they argued that they had to inform the public about the visible measures implemented to avoid insecurity and fear. They also

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<sup>8</sup> The full statements in Norwegian by Senior Adviser at PST's Communication Department Martin Bernsen and former Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen given at the interview in 2017 can be found in appendix 9.1.

strengthened the *evade responsibility frame* by arguing that their press conference should be seen as a reasonable reaction to an offensive act. This was noticeable in their arguments that the press conference could have a preventive and deterrent effect on those who threatened to terrorise and that the information could contribute to make the public extra vigilant. If the public accepts these claims and if the frame is disseminated in the media coverage, Benoit (1997a) argues that it should contribute to reduce the blame towards the authorities handling of the crisis.

## 5.2 Reducing the Offensiveness Frame

Benoit (1997a) argues that when organizations and governments are faced with a crisis, the spokespersons can attempt to reduce the offensiveness of the act in question. This can be done by downplaying the act deemed as offensive and placing the authorities' action in a broader and more favorable context (W. L. Benoit, 1997a). PST and the Government made use of this strategy and minimized the perceived damage caused by informing about the terror threat. This frame includes the following arguments: 1) this is not an unusual situation in other countries, 2) this is an expected situation and 3) this is a type of situation we must get used to, e.g. explained by Anundsen at the press conference:

“The situation we are in now is unusual in Norway, in Norwegian context. However, this situation is not that unusual in other countries that have lower threshold for alerting the people. With the new threat assessment we have in Norway, I think we rather have to get used to that similar situations will appear more often in the future” (Anundsen, 2014a).

By stating that this is not an unusual situation in other countries, Anundsen minimized the perceived damage of informing about the terror threat and strengthened the *reducing the offensiveness frame*. By comparison with other countries more unpleasant and disturbing actions, Benoit (1997a) argues that the Norwegian authorities act should seem less offensive.

Bjørnland on the other hand minimized the perceived crisis by arguing that this is a situation we have to get used to because of the increase in international terrorism. This way of minimize the perceived damage was first detected in the statement by Bjørnland on July 31, after the terror threat had been reduced:

”We record that both extremist groups and individuals make statements glorifying and legitimizing the use of violence. We also see attempts being made to recruit young, impressionable individuals to extreme communities. Individuals travelling to conflict areas to join terrorist groups give particular reason for concern. These challenges are by no means resolved, and new threats and difficult situations may arise, maybe previously announced or maybe not” (Bjørnland, 2014d).

With this statement, Bjørnland minimizes the perceived damage of informing about the terror threat by preparing the public that new threat situations may occur:

“This is not a state of emergency, but rather the state of normality” (Bjørnland,

2014d).

To sum up my conclusions in this subsection: within this frame the authorities tried to repair/maintain their reputation by minimizing the perceived damage caused by informing about the terror threat. In other words, the authorities did not minimize the actual crisis, but they minimized the crisis associated with the fact that they had chosen to inform about the terror threat. This was done by focusing on a less offensive element of the crisis event and placing the authorities' act in a broader and more favorable context. The authorities argued that 1) this is not an unusual situation in other countries, 2) this is an expected situation and, 3) this is a situation we have to get used to. Benoit (1997a) argues that if the public agrees that the act is less offensive than it first appeared and if this *reducing the offensiveness frame* is disseminated in the media coverage, it will contribute to reduce the blame towards the authorities handling of the crisis.

### 5.3 Cultural Congruence Frame

According to Entman (2003), frames that employ culturally resonant words have the greatest potential for influence. A *cultural congruence frame* uses terms and words that are highly salient in the culture, words that are “noticeable, understandable, memorable and emotionally charged” (Entman, 2003, p. 417). With the terror attacks on July 22 2011 clear in mind, Bjørnland emphasized the criticism they had received by the July 22 Commission and the Traavik Committee:

“PST handles a great amount of threats each year. The majority of these threats are threats that it would be neither correct nor possible for us to comment openly on. In the current situation however I believe that to inform the public is the right thing to do. Both the July 22 Commission and the Traavik Committee have emphasized the importance of PST being as open as possible about threats to our society” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

In the above statement, Bjørnland portrays PST as considerate people with doubts that genuinely strive to do the right thing for *our society*. Bjørnland identifies PST as an organization that has taken the feedback from the July 22 Commission and the Traavik Committee seriously and adopted new improved guidelines: they strive to be *as open as possible*. In the statement above, Bjørnland uses an emotionally-charged and memorable event in Norway, July 22 2011, to emphasize the importance of being *as open as possible*. The mention of July 22 did most likely reactivate the Norwegian public's negative feelings, bringing back memories of the event and how it was handled, such as the Government's lack of terrorism response and its fatal consequences. By addressing the authorities' improvements (or their wish for improvements) after July 22 2011, the authorities signaled that they had learned from past mistakes and that they were now closely monitoring threat towards Norway:

“In PST's threat assessment for 2014, which we made public in the beginning of March, we stated the following among other things: The terror threat against Norway

is considered to be aggravated. Extremist Islamism is still the most serious terror threat against Norway. Also, we state that it has for a long time been a strategy to recruit extremist Islamists in war and conflict zones to carry out terrorist actions in Europe, and that Syria at the time being is considered to be one of the leading arenas for this recruitment” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

In addition to word *open*, Bjørnland also used other emotionally charged terms in her statements made on July 31, when it was announced that the terror threat was weakened and the authorities had cancelled the security measures introduced July 24:

“The public is our best and most important partner; we have a joint responsibility and a shared interest in securing society [...] Our open and democratic Norwegian society is vulnerable, and although the relevant threat has been toned down we are facing a considerable residual risk” (Bjørnland, 2014d).

By framing the terror threat as a threat to *our open and democratic Norwegian society* and stressing that we have *a joint responsibility* and *a shared interest in securing society*, Bjørnland managed to create a sense of *we*<sup>9</sup>. In doing so, Bjørnland succeeded to identify the authorities as the leading defenders to secure our society, and by doing so, framed themselves as guardians of democracy. However, Bjørnland also gave an impression that *we* – i.e. the public - needed to stand together against terror to protect our democratic Norwegian society. *We* are thus portrayed as team members with *a joint responsibility* to secure Norwegian values against terror. The endorsement of Norwegian values, *openness* and *democracy*, and by stating that the Norwegian society is *vulnerable*, it was clearly signaled that the terror threat posed an existential risk to *our society*. Anundsen also framed the threat as destructive to our society and stated that it could *destroy our way of living*:

“The terrorists’ main purpose is to create fear and destroy our way of living. It is important that they do not succeed with this. Meanwhile, this threat is of such a distinctive character that I agree with PST that it is necessary to alert the population” (Anundsen, 2014a).

Anundsen’s mention of attributes that are highly regarded in Norway’s democratic society, such as *an open approach*, contributed to frame the authorities handling of the situation favourably:

”I understand that people feel a certain fear in the situation that is now occurring. Moreover, I believe that it is important that we, the authorities, have an open approach about the situation that has arisen” (Anundsen, 2014a).

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<sup>9</sup> Even though Anundsen (2017) and Bernsen (2017) did not point out the speeches after July 22 2011 as inspiration sources to handle this case, the creation of *we* has similarities to the Norwegian Government crisis communication after July 22 2011. After the terror attacks in 2011, the Government also emphasised Norwegian values such as *democracy* and *openness*, and framed the attack as being an *attack on the democratic society* (Olsson et al., 2015).

Interesting to note is that Bernsen admits that the wording *openness* to describe PST is not entirely accurate. Bernsen (2017) acknowledges that *more available* would be a more correct description of PST:

“There are lots of things PST cannot be open about. One may therefore ask whether PST really is more open than before. And no, we are not really more open than before. But we have become much more available. We arrange interviews, we respond to media requests and we publish threat assessments. However, the content is the same now as it would have been fifteen years ago. So no, we might not be so much more open, but we are definitely more available” (Bernsen, 2017).

To sum up conclusions in this subsection, within the *cultural congruence frame* the authorities framed the crisis as a threat towards Norway’s *open* and *democratic* society. The authorities framed themselves as considerate people who had taken the feedback from the July 22 Commission and the Traavik Committee seriously. This gave an impression that they had learned from past mistakes and that they strived to be as open as possible. The authorities framed themselves as the leading defender of *our society’s* security and thus framed themselves as guardians of democracy. The endorsement of Norwegian values, such as *openness* and *democracy*, and statement that our society is *vulnerable*, was a way to show that this threat was a threat to society as a whole. Bjørnland emphasized that *we*, including the public, have a *joint responsibility* and needed to stand together against terror. Anunden’s and Bjørnland’s mention of attributes that are highly regarded in the Norwegian society, such as *an open approach*, protection of *our democratic society* and *our way of living our lives*, contributed to frame the authorities acts against the terror threat favourably. According to Entman (2003) frames that employ culturally resonant words have the greatest potential for influence. Thus, if the public accepted these claims and if this *cultural congruence frame* is disseminated in the media coverage, it will contribute to reduce the blame towards the authorities handling of the crisis.

#### **5.4 United Management Frame**

The Traavik Committee highlighted in their report after July 22 2011 that the authorities lacked cooperation, for example between PST and the Norwegian Police (Traavik et al., 2012). During the press conference July 24 2014, PST and the Government made it clear that this cooperation was now in place, and that they were doing everything in their power to handle the terror threat. Employees from the police, PST and the Government were called back from vacation and the terror threat was their highest priority (Johansen et al., 2014). Within the *united management frame*, PST and the Government most important message was that they had learned from July 22 2011. They had now a close cooperation, clear division of responsibility and they were doing everything they could to clarify the situation, e.g. Bjørnland’s statement:

“PST is currently working on verifying the information we have received, in close cooperation with the Norwegian Intelligence Service. The Joint Counter Terrorism

Centre is in this relation important in order to ensure a rapid and good flow of information between the services. PST also has a close dialogue with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Police Directorate in this matter, and the National Police Commissioner will inform in more detail about the measures to be undertaken by the police [...] [We] will do our utmost to determine whether the threat is real or not – in order to prevent it” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

While Bjørnland emphasized that they had close cooperation and that they were doing everything they could to clarify the situation, Anundsen emphasized their clear division of responsibility:

“As known, there is a division of responsibility between PST and the police, which we will state clearly through this presentation. PST will now put forward the current threat assessment. The police will then present the measures they will implement to meet this threat” (Anders Anundsen at the press conference VG, 2014b).

Later that day, Anundsen got a question from a journalist about how concrete this terror threat was. He responded that this was not something he as Minister of Justice and Public Service should answer, but rather PST (Anundsen, 2014a). Anundsen (2017) confirms that this,

“Clear division of responsibility between PST, the police and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security was one of the main points I wanted to highlight during the press conference” (Anundsen, 2017).

These statements gave an impression of an orderly and clear division of tasks and an impression that the authorities took responsibility for solving the situation, all of which strengthened *the united management frame*. Anundsen (2017) says that it was important that the authorities appeared united and coordinated to avoid unnecessary uncertainty and misunderstandings:

“PST, the police and I have different roles, but our strategy was to appear united. We probably chose our words a little differently, but the content was the same. PST communicated the threat assessment that they held [...] The police informed about the measures implemented and I aimed to give the overall picture and ensure that the public didn’t get more concerned than there were grounds for. Overall, the most important thing for us was that the message was coordinated, that information was planned in advance and that we spoke clearly to avoid misunderstandings” (Anundsen, 2017).

The authorities gave out frequent press releases and press statements to keep media and the public informed about any new developments and actions taken to handle the terror threat, which furthermore strengthened *the united management frame*. The *united management frame* thus has elements of Benoit’s (1995, 1997a) *corrective action strategy* in

it. Within the *correction action strategy*<sup>10</sup>, the crisis spokespersons promise to prevent the problem. Benoit (1997a) argues that a willingness to prevent the problem can help the accused's image. Accordingly, the authorities reassured several times that they did everything they could to verify the terror threat and clarify the situation, e.g. Bjørnland and Anundsen statements:

“PST will to the greatest extent possible inform the public about further developments in this matter [...] PST, in collaboration with the Norwegian Intelligence Service, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and our other national and international partners, will do our utmost to determine whether the threat is real or not – in order to prevent it” (Bjørnland, 2014c).

“It is important to emphasize that these measures must be considered preventive. This means that the police will be more vigilant than normal” (Anundsen, 2014b).

According to Anundsen had they learned from July 22 2011 that “*it is important to provide the right information in a timely manner*” (Anundsen, 2017). The frequent contact with the press kept the journalists and the public informed about actions taken by the authorities, which contributed to the impression that the authorities were continuously working to clarify the situation and protect the society. Anundsen (2017) and Bernsen (2017) argue that continuous contact with media was important to avoid citation errors, misinterpretations and to maintain good relations with the journalists:

“I think the media handled the situation in a good way. They took the information seriously. They conveyed the matter in an orderly and professional manner. I believe the continuous contact with the media contributed to a successful communication” (Anundsen, 2017).

“I will say that one of the key elements for conducting successful communication is to have good relations within the largest media houses” (Bernsen, 2017).

However, this dialogue with the media did not only occur via press releases and press conferences, but also through more discrete channels such as background information handed to selected journalists:

“I would say that the background information that I give to journalists is the majority of my job. In this case, I was concerned because it was summer, when temporary and inexperienced journalists are typically in office. In a situation like this I usually try to

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<sup>10</sup> As pointed out by Coombs (2007), crisis spokespersons can use one or several crisis response strategies to establish a certain frame. Benoit's (1995, 1997a) *corrective action strategy* is just a part of the *united management frame*, since, as stated in the open coding guidelines, the dominating perspectives of the statements were decisive for the coding. In other word, this strategy was not apparent enough in the crisis spokespersons' statements to become its own category.

get an overview of who is on duty and contact the journalists I trust. I then give some key journalists more background information, that I can't be quoted on, but which provide them with a better understanding of the situation - but of course information that is within the law [...] Many citation errors can be prevented by doing background talks with journalists" (Bernsen, 2017).

When the threat had lessened and the temporary security measures cancelled, Anundsen argued that this threat had demonstrated that Norway now has an emergency system that works. Through this statement, Anundsen created an impression that the authorities had handled the situation in the best possible way and thus created an impression of success in his statement, which strengthened the *united management frame*:

"These measures were absolutely necessary to implement. We would have behaved irresponsibly if we had not taken the information we received with the utmost seriousness [...] This threat also made it clear that we have a system that works. Emergency measures can be implemented quickly when the conditions require so" (Anundsen, 2014c).

To sum up conclusions in this subsection: within the *united management frame*, PST and the Government managed to send out a message that they had learned from July 22 2011. The clear message to the public was that they were now acting as a united management with high levels of cooperation, clear division of responsibility and an emergency system that was able to respond fast. The authorities also argued that they were doing everything they could to handle the crisis. Benoit (1997a) argues that a willingness to prevent the problem can help the accused's image. Overall, the statements examined in this subsection, gave an impression that the Norwegian public now had a competent and united management capable of handling this and future crises, which should contribute to frame the authorities act favourable.

## **6.0 Media's Response to the Information Given by PST and the Government**

In order to explain successful or failed crisis communication both the frames applied by PST, the Government and the media need to be taken into account (Nord & Olsson, 2013). Following the SCCT's logic, there is a high chance that the media will accept the authorities' frames and the public will not likely develop a negative perception of the Government and PST's handling of the crisis (see table 2) (T. Coombs, 2006; Olsson et al., 2015). Again, the predictive SCCT proved to be right, which will be shown in this chapter. The following frames detected in the media<sup>11</sup> will now be presented: the *evade responsibility frame*, the *reducing the offensiveness frame*, the *cultural congruence frame*, the *united management frame* and the *exploitation of the crisis frame*.

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<sup>11</sup> When I henceforth use the word "media" it is in reference to the 67 articles included in this analysis.



## 6.1 Evade Responsibility Frame

The *evade responsibility frame* was found to be the frame predominantly applied by the authorities, but also in the media. The commentators reflected on the fact that the authorities had some connection to the crisis, since they chose to inform about the situation. However, overall the commentators argued – in line with PST and the Government’s frame - that the authorities had limited responsibility for the crisis since it was caused by an exogenous factor, in this case, individuals affiliated with an extremist Islamist group in Syria. The media supported the authorities’ argument that due the credibility of the terror threat, it was necessary to implement temporary armament of the police and that openness around these measures was the right decision. Thus, the media also framed the crisis as an exogenous phenomenon and that the authorities were merely responding to an offensive act, e.g. editorial in *Dagbladet* and *Dagsavisen*, and comments by Udjus from *Fædrelandsvennen* and Strand from NRK:

”We believe openness from the authorities was the right decision, and almost the only decision possible” (*Dagbladet*, 2014a).

“When police officers around the country are called home from vacation and armed police are placed at traffic connections and border crossings, we need to know why. We therefore believe it was right decision [...] to inform the public yesterday” (*Dagsavisen*, 2014).

“The authorities have probably thought very hard before they went out so massively with the terrorist threat. But they could not take the chance of not doing so” (Udjus, 2014).

”This is not tactic, but a virtue of necessity” (Sand, 2014).

The media interpreted the crisis as an exogenous phenomenon and supported the arguments made by the authorities by emphasising that they did not have any choice but to alert because of the increased emergency measures. In addition, the media also supported the authorities’ arguments that the press conference should be seen as a reasonable reaction to the offensive act, since the information could 1) have a deterrent effect on those who threatened to terrorise and 2) contribute to extra vigilant in the public and increase the possibility of alert if someone saw something suspicious, e.g. editorial in *VG*, *Dagsavisen*, *Drammens Tidende* and *Aftenposten*:

“In Norway, we are not used to armed police [...] The presence of these measures would have raised questions, and they [the authorities] would have had to give a reason for it” (*VG*, 2014a).

“Many people are asking why the authorities went out so broad yesterday [...] this is probably due to several reasons. The police hope the information can have a deterrent

effect. In addition, they want people who stumble upon disturbing information to alert the authorities” (Dagsavisen, 2014).

”Through warning the nation about the terror threat, the authorities have also warned the terrorists that Norway is prepared, which can have a deterrent effect” (DrammensTidende, 2014).

“For some triggers, the combat experiences [for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)] a mental process where their barriers against the use of violence are gradually dismantled. This can have dramatic consequences when they return to Norway. It is therefore important that they get a clear signal that the Norwegian authorities are keeping an eye on them” (Aftenposten, 2014).

Any attempts to reframe the crisis, such as criticism from academics and politicians, were severely refuted by commentators in the press. For example, the former operational commander in the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), Hans-Jørgen Bonnichsen, criticism of the Norwegian Government and PST’s openness about the terror threat was rejected several times in the media, e.g. in an editorial by Sunnmørsposten:

“He [Hans-Jørgen Bonnichsen] argues that PST already has given the terrorists a victory and describes Norway as a country in state of shock and alarm [...] This description is far from reality and must be because the former PET operational commander has poor intelligence about the situation in Norway” (Sunnmørsposten, 2014a).

Member of the Progress Party and the Justice Committee of Parliament, Jan Arild Ellingsen, also criticized the authorities’ decision to inform the public. Ellingsen is from the same party as Anders Anundsen, and characterized the authorities’ handling of the threat as a contribution to noise and public anxiety. Ellingsen stated to VG that, *“it’s like shouting “wolf-wolf”. There is a limit to how many times the public can be extra vigilant. Next time, there is a risk that the public does not take such a message as seriously as now”* (A. B. Foss, 2014). This criticism from Ellingsen was also rejected among commentators in Norwegian media, e.g. editorial in Agderposten:

“With his statements yesterday, Ellingsen went against his own Government’s assessment and management of the threat towards Norway. Ellingsen’s statements yesterday were at best badly timed, but regardless unfortunate for himself as a member of the Justice Committee and for the ruling party he represents [...] Not since 1973 has the Norwegian authorities informed about a similar terror threat. When they alert after 41 years, it can hardly be characterized as shouting “wolf” too often” (Agderposten, 2014).

An editorial in the newspaper Fædrelandsvennen also criticized Ellingsen’s statements, calling his statements frivolous:

“If not Ellingsen possesses unique insight into this case, it appears very easy to criticize those who have been responsible for dealing with the situation [...] To call this a victory for the terrorists is frivolous. Ellingsen also received a response from the Minister of Justice and Public Security. He [Anundsen] calls the criticism from Ellingsen "insightless". That is a powerful reprimand from a party colleague” (Fædrelandsvennen, 2014).

Even after July 31, when the authorities informed that the terror threat had lessened and the temporary security measures were cancelled, the media was still mainly supportive of the authorities’ handling of the situation, e.g. editorial in VG and comment by Bonde in Morgenbladet:

“That the threat proved to be false, does not necessarily mean that the intelligence work was bad. When this situation is to be evaluated, one must look at what information they [PST] had available when the decision was taken” (VG, 2014c).

“The upside for PST is that an evaluation this time will be based on a presumption that the police have done a good job to protect us. Usually, it is a failure that causes an investigation” (Bonde, 2014).

To sum up the conclusions in this subsection, in line with the authorities *evade responsibility frame*, the media also interpreted the crisis as an exogenous phenomenon and supported the authorities’ arguments by emphasising that they did not have any choice but to alert because of the increased emergency measures. In addition, the media also supported the authorities’ arguments that the press conference should be seen as a reasonable reaction to the offensive act, since the information could 1) have a deterrent effect on those who threatened to terrorise and 2) contribute to extra vigilance in the public. Benoit (1997a) argues that we tend to hold people responsible only for factors under their own control. By the media’s emphasis that the root of the problem was an exogenous phenomenon, the media strengthened the authorities’ *evade responsibility frame* and accepted that PST’s and the Government’s behavior should be seen as a reasonable act to the threat. It is therefore safe to argue that the authorities’ *evade responsibility frame* was successfully disseminated to the media.

## 6.2 Reducing the offensiveness frame

Within the *reducing the offensiveness frame*, PST and the Government tried to repair and/or maintain their reputation by minimizing the perceived damage caused by informing about the terror threat. Benoit (1997a) argues that placing the authorities acts in a broader and more favorable context can contribute to maintain/repair a reputation. This *reducing the offensiveness frame* includes the following arguments: 1) this is not an unusual situation in other countries, 2) this is an expected situation and 3) this is a situation we have to get used to. These ways of minimizing the crisis were also detected in the media coverage, e.g. a comment by Alf Ole Ask from Aftenposten:

“To warn about possible terror events can create the fear that the terrorists are hoping

for. However, it is a long way before Norway is there. In Norway, as in many other countries, we must reckon with increased terror risk. Thus, similar situations will occur occasionally. People in cities like London and New York are living with terror danger on a daily basis. We travel there as tourists, but only react when the same security measures are enforced at home” (A. O. Ask, 2014a).

Through this statement, Ask minimizes the perceived damage by emphasizing that this is not an unusual situation in other countries and that this should be an expected situation in Norway. By stating that this is a situation we have to get used to, Benoit (1997a) argues that the acts by the authorities seem less offensive than they first appeared. This way of minimizing the perceived damage was detected in several media articles, e.g. editorial in *Aftenposten* and comment by Hansen in *Romerikes Blad*:

“Conflicts around the world have become a part of our everyday lives. Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland says that the recent terrorist threat against our country is *serious, but expected*. Unfortunately, she is right that the increased terror danger, as a holiday quiet Norway now been warned about, does not come as a surprise. PST has in its annual threat assessment, the last one in March this year, pointed to the danger that extremist Islamism represents” (*Aftenposten*, 2014).

“[A similar] situation will certainly arise again, the same way that the terror threat assessment also has been raised and lowered between low and moderate in our peaceful corner of the world” (Hansen, 2014).

Also Simonnes from *Vårt Land*, Sand from NRK and an editorial in *Sunnmørsposten* and *Stavanger Aftenblad* emphasized the increase in global terrorism. They argued that due to new technologies, terrorists can easier reach out to previously inaccessible places and audiences:

“Most wars and conflicts, wherever they take place on the globe, has the potential to affect people and areas far away from where they started” (Simonnes, 2014).

“PST has earlier this year warned about Norwegian foreign fighters in Syria [...] How thoughts, ideas and people can easily flow across borders becomes particularly clear in the face of this event and shows us globalization’s negative sides” (Sand, 2014).

“Norway is still one of the safest countries in the world [...] However, in light of the global development, we must take into account that we are entering a time of increased danger of terrorism. This must have consequences both in the use of resources, methods and legislation. We must act with a clear mind, but not allow ourselves to be naive” (*Sunnmørsposten*, 2014b).

“Anders Anundsen (Progress Party) thinks the public will receive information about terror threats more often in the future. [Terror] experts do not disagree. There are now

several thousand Europeans that are fighting in Syria and many of them are fighting with Al Qaeda-inspired groups. Some of them may be affected. Last year, four Britons were arrested for planning terrorist attacks after combating in Syria” (StavangerAftenblad, 2014).

These four statements are examples of articles that contributed to place the authorities’ act in a broader context, and thus also contributed to frame the authorities’ handling of the terror threat more favorably for PST and the Government.

Even though Alf Ole Ask from Aftenposten was mainly supportive of the frames given by PST and the Government, Ask (2017) argues that it was difficult for the media to frame the event differently, since the only source of information was from the authorities. During the summer of 2014, Ask worked hard to get hold of alternative sources to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the terror threat, but he was not able to obtain any specific details about what the threat consisted of:

“We did not know anything more than what we wrote. I attended several of the press conferences [held by the authorities] and the same questions were asked over and over again, but we did not get any new information from them” (A. O. Ask, 2017)<sup>12</sup>.

Ask (2017) says that the few sources created a difficult situation for the Norwegian media:

“There’s a lot of pundits out there, but it was hard to find anyone that could say something concrete [...] If we had known that this threat was put forward by for example Al-Qaeda, we could have talked to alternative sources and one could have checked more closely up on what the terrorist threat was about. But since we did not know who was behind, it was difficult to comment on the matter. We knew that it was a threat, but not much more than that. This created a problem for us [journalists] because the only source we had was the Norwegian authorities” (A. O. Ask, 2017).

To sum up the conclusions in this subsection, the commentators and authorities used many of the same arguments to reduce any potential offensiveness in the authorities’ decision to inform about the terror threat. The media contributed to place the authorities’ act in a broader and more favorable context, by supporting the authorities’ arguments that 1) this is not an unusual situation in other countries, 2) this is an expected situation and, 3) this is a situation we have to get used to. Since the authorities’ arguments were accepted and reflected on by the media, the *reducing the offensiveness frame* was successfully disseminated in the media coverage, which contributed to frame the authorities’ handling of the terror threat as favourable.

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<sup>12</sup> The original Norwegian statements by Alf Ole Ask from Aftenposten and Frithjof Jacobsen from VG given at the interview in 2017 can be find in appendix 9.1.

### 6.3 Cultural Congruence Frame

Within this *cultural congruence frame*, the authorities used terms and words that are highly salient in Norwegian culture, words that are “*noticeable, understandable, memorable and emotionally charged*” (Entman, 2003, p. 417). According to Entman (2003), frames that employ culturally resonant words have the greatest potential for influence. With the terror attacks on July 22 2011 clear in mind, the authorities emphasized that the decision to inform about the terror threat was in line with the new more *open* guidelines implemented based on feedback from the July 22 Commission and the Traavik Committee. PST and the Government managed to launch cultural words highly salient in Norwegian culture, which were picked up by the media, e.g. the word *openness* in editorials in VG and Adresseavisen.

“We are delighted by the openness that our authorities show and assume that they are doing everything in their power to avert the danger we face” (VG, 2014a).

“Openness deprive terrorists the benefit a surprise may involve, and it makes it harder to succeed with a larger terror action” (Adresseavisen, 2014b).

A word that was used to a much greater extent than *openness* was the word *trust*. The word *trust* was neither used by PST nor the Government, but is a word that describes democracy and is a word that is highly salient in Norwegian culture, e.g. written in an editorial in Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen:

“An open society is vulnerable. This is how we want to have it. Even more important is that our open society have trust [to the authorities]” (Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen, 2014).

To *trust* authorities is an essential part of our society, e.g. written by Egeland in Dagbladet:

“The authorities had no choice, but it was nevertheless right to publicly inform about the terror threat. It was a question of trust [...] The goal of terror is always to weaken, preferably destroy, the trust that exists in a society. This trust among the people is a prerequisite for a good and well-run society. Equally applies to the trust between the authorities and the public” (Egeland, 2014 ).

Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland created a sense of *we* in her statements by arguing that the authorities and the public had a *joint responsibility* and a *shared interest in securing society* against terrorism. However, the media commentators did not reflect on this creation of *we*. Instead, several commentators wrote that they *trusted* the authorities’ handling of the situation, e.g. Ask from Aftenposten and a editorial in VG:

“To trust the work the police is doing now is built through openness and accessibility. So far the police have passed the test” (A. O. Ask, 2014b).

“We trust PST’s handling of the situation and believe it is good that emergency measures are increased as long as there is credible information about a possible terror

attack towards Norwegian [...] Until the danger is over, we have to live as normally as possible and follow the advice given by the police” (VG, 2014a).

Several articles also mentioned July 22 2011 and the authorities’ improvements since then. In line with authorities’ framing of the event, the media also framed the authorities as guardians of democracy and argued that this event showed that the authorities were no longer naive, e.g. Lars Nehru Sand at NRK:

“In the face of the terror on 22 July, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg was praised for the way he gathered the political Norway and people behind the message for more openness and democracy, but never naivety. The week we celebrated openness and democracy, we also tested our naivety. It was therefore important to inform the public” (Sand, 2014).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Senior Advisor at PST’s Communication Department Martin Bernsen admits that the wording *openness* might not be an entirely correct word to describe PST. Bernsen (2017) argued that *more available* might be a more correct description. However, in my data, I only found one commentator Frithjof Jacobsen at VG that questioned the wording *openness*. However, in Jacobsen’s article *Nervous twitches over the puzzle*, he didn’t focus so much on the lack of openness surrounding the terror threat. Instead, Jacobsen called for greater openness surrounding the uncertainties inherent in PST’s work, which Jacobsen (2014) argued had given the public a better and more enlightened debate:

“There are so many unnecessary questions that linger after this summer’s terror week, which shows that there is a long way to go before openness and mutual understanding between the population and the intelligence agencies are good enough. It is urgent to do something about it” (F. Jacobsen, 2014).

In his article, Jacobsen highlights that intelligence work is not an exact science. Intelligence work is a complex task with high risk of making critical errors. Uncertainty and ambiguity dominate intelligence work, which to some degree make failures inevitable (Lowenthal, 2015). The uncertainty inherent in the intelligence work by PST is something Jacobsen (2017) wants more openness about:

“The problem with threat assessments is that it gives an impression that the PST has full control over what is threatening us at any time. But PST cannot protect us from everything that is dangerous. There are threats that they simply fail to see. One must remember that PST informs not about the truth, but about predictions” (F. Jacobsen, 2017).

As an example, Jacobsen (2017) points out the difficulties in the intelligence work that led up to the war in Iraq in 2003 and how this calls for greater transparency and openness surrounding intelligence work:

“We must accept that intelligence information may be wrong. Intelligence work can at the best be an attempt to say something about what might happen” (F. Jacobsen, 2017).

Jacobsen (2014, 2017) argues, both in the interview and the article, that the uncertainty surrounding the terror threat towards Norway was not communicated successfully:

“The terror threat that was coming and going was a good example of intelligence services’ volatile nature. I do not think this was well communicated by the Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland” (F. Jacobsen, 2014).

To sum up the conclusions in this subsection, the media was generally supportive of the *cultural congruence frame* launched by the authorities. The media used many of the same expressions and arguments as the authorities, and should thus contribute to reduce the blame toward the authorities. The media framed the crisis - in line with the authorities frame - as a threat towards the Norwegian democratic society and argued that *trust* and *openness* was necessary to meet this threat, e.g. editorial in Adresseavisen:

“The authorities had a difficult decision to make before deciding that the best thing was to inform. However, since PST sees the threat as credible, without knowing either who is behind or the target, openness is nevertheless a strong measure to prevent and hopefully prevent that the action takes place. Openness deprive terrorists the benefit a surprise may involve, and it makes it harder to succeed with a major terror attack” (Adresseavisen, 2014a).

## 6.4 United Management Frame

Within the *united management frame*, both PST and the Government highlighted that they had learned from July 22 2011 and now had a close cooperation, clear division of responsibility and that they were doing everything they could to clarify the situation. The media articles portrayed the authorities in a way that was in line with PST’s and the Government’s own *united managerial frame* and reflected on the authorities improvements after July 22 2011, e.g. editorials in Bergens Tidende and Dagbladet and comment by Hegnar from Finansavisen:

“Yesterday’s press conference indicates that the Government has learned from 22 July” (BergensTidende, 2014a).

“The cooperation that was lacking between the institutions on 22 July 2011, now appears to be in place. This may seem like an accidental emergency exercise, which Norway could need” (Dagbladet, 2014a).

“We, on our part, think PST, the Government and the police reacted quickly and impressive. There is little doubt that we now have emergency measures that works



within a few days. If the overall emergency measures were weak three years ago on July 22, it is clearly better now” (Hegnar, 2014b).

Director General of PST Benedicte Bjørnland and Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen were portrayed as exemplary in their communication to the public and the overall image was that they led the nation through a difficult situation in a professional and trustful manner, e.g. Sunnmørsposten, Hegnar at Finansavisen and Stanghelle at Aftenposten:

“The most important basis for trust is the way the authorities communicate. Sufficient and credible information contributes to trust and safety. Director General of PST has so far passed the information exam” (Sunnmørsposten, 2014a).

“The terrorist threat against Norway seems to have been dealt with professionally by the Government, PST and police” (Hegnar, 2014a).

“The Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Public Service, Director General of PST and the Police Director appeared open and clear - also about things they did not know. There was therefore no visible fear or panic, despite the discomfiting and threatening situation” (Stanghelle, 2014).

To sum up the conclusions in this subsection, the authorities’ *united management frame* was to a large extent also present in the media coverage. The media emphasized that they thought the authorities were doing everything they could to handle the crisis, that the authorities had learned from July 22 2011 and that it seemed that the authorities had a orderly and clear division of tasks and a good cooperation. These statements must be considered favorable for the authorities. The authorities message of a united and competent management was reflected on and accepted by the media and the authorities’ *united management frame* was thus successfully disseminated in the media coverage.

## **6.5 Exploitation of the Crisis Frame**

The only counter frame that was detected in the media coverage was the *exploitation of the crisis frame*. This frame was a tad more critical towards the authorities and was mostly detected after the authorities had informed that the likelihood of a terror attack had been reduced. Within this frame, media focused on the potential effect and consequences of the event. The arguments were that an evaluation of the event had to be done, that PST and the Government should be careful to have several similar press conferences in nearby future and that the public should be aware of political exploitation of the crisis, e.g. Bonde from Morgenbladet:

“Of course it is much better that the police have too high than too low emergency measures and it is better to warn too often than too little. But there needs to be a limit somewhere. If there is too many warnings about increased terrorist risk without these

being verified, an increasing proportion of the public will question whether the police sees ghosts in broad daylight” (Bonde, 2014).

Due to the lack of concrete information about the potential terror event and little advice on how the public should respond to the terror threat, several articles mentioned that PST and the Government needed provide more information once the situation was more clarified, e.g. stated by Tallaksen at Klassekampen:

“Of course it is good that the police provide an explanation as to why the emergency measures are raised [...] Nevertheless, it is primarily the public across the country who are frightened by the information PST presented yesterday [...] We are left with little more than a general request that we should be afraid for an indefinite period going forward. Thus, this is a situation that the authorities must clarify as soon as they have more tangible information to go out with” (Tallaksen, 2014).

Overall, it was not emphasised that it was wrong of the authorities to inform about the terror threat, but instead media focused on the potential side-effects and repercussions of the decision. The media warned that this event could be used to implement new policies<sup>13</sup>, e.g. Stanghelle from Aftenposten and editorial in Bergens Tidende:

“There is no reason to believe that PST more or less constructed this summer's terrorist alarm to achieve even greater elbowroom [...] But it is striking how eager they are to use a situation like this to commemorate about their limited measures available” (Stanghelle, 2014).

“One thing is the cause, another is the consequences. The police and politicians may in the wake of the situation make suggestions for implementing new policies that we do not want, such as more extensive use of surveillance and armed police. Here we agree with Sveinung Rotevatn, the politician from the Liberal Party, about the necessity to be critical about new policy proposals” (BergensTidende, 2014b).

Several journalists wrote that there was a lot of controversy in the discussions about whether it was right or wrong of the PST and the Government to publicly inform about this terror threat, e.g. comments by Thorsen from Varden and Hegnar from Finansavisen:

”It is undoubtedly divided opinions on the fact that PST went public with the threat assessment” (Thorsen, 2014).

”Now that the terrorist threat against Norway seems to be reduced, it suddenly becomes popular to criticize PST and the Government”(Hegnar, 2014b).

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<sup>13</sup> About a month after the press conference, Bjørnland promoted a new bill that would allow PST to use big data and Anundsen sent out a new proposal about general arming of the Norwegian Police (Bjørnland, 2014b; Ege & Bjerkvik, 2014). However, how the media responded to these proposals have not been research in this thesis, but neither Bjørnland nor Anundsen got support from the Norwegian Parliament to redeem the new proposals.

However, except from the arguments within the *exploitation of the crisis frame*, I could not find many divided opinions among commentators in the Norwegian newspapers. The overall media coverage was supportive to PST and the Government's handling of the case. The most critical article found was an editorial in Dagbladet, entitled *Strategy for the police state*, which stated the following once the terror threat towards Norway had been reduced:

"The Director General of PST's statements indicate that the authorities threw the country into a state of emergency on the basis of insufficient or incorrect information. It is essential that this case will be thoroughly investigated, which will contribute to openness about what triggered the terrorist alarm. We must have assurance that such measures are based on sound, professional assessments, and not used to achieve political goals. There are already clear signs that emergency measures were used to achieve the intensification of state coercion" (Dagbladet, 2014b).

However, this article's argument was a clear exception among the interpretative articles analysed in this study. The critical remarks detected in some of the 66 other articles were about the consequences of the event and warned about exploitation of the crisis, not the actual way the terror threat was handled. The dominant perspective presented in the articles was that the authorities had handled the situation right and in a professional manner.

## 7.0 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to examine how the crisis communication by PST and the Government surrounding an imminent terror threat was given and received the media, and whether the authorities managed to communicate successfully or not. In order to explain successful or failed crisis communication both the frames applied by PST and the Government as well as the media were taken into account. Four frames were detected in the authorities' crisis communication. These frames were successfully disseminated in the media coverage, which contributed to frame the authorities' handling of the terror threat favourably:

The *evade responsibility frame* was an important frame, both by the authorities and in the media's framing efforts of the event. Benoit (1997a) argues that we tend to only hold people responsible for factors that are under their own control, and both the authorities and the media interpreted the crisis as caused by an exogenous phenomenon. By doing so, they strengthened the *evade responsibility frame*. The media also supported the authorities' arguments that it was necessary to inform about the threat due the increased emergency measures. In addition, the media supported the authorities' arguments that the press conference should be seen as a reasonable act, since the information could 1) have a deterrent effect on those who threatened to terrorise and 2) contribute to extra vigilant in the public.

The *reducing the offensiveness frame* was also detected in the authorities' statements as well as in the media. PST and the Government minimized the perceived damage caused by informing about the terror threat by placing their action in a broader and a more favorable

context. This frame includes the following claims: 1) this is not an unusual situation in other countries, 2) this is an expected situation and 3) this is a situation we have to get used to. These arguments were accepted by and repeated in the media coverage and thus contributed to minimize the perceived damage caused by informing the public about the terror threat. By placing the authorities' act in a broader and more favorable context, Benoit (1997a) argues that the information given at the press conference will be perceived as less offensive than it first appeared.

The third frame detected, the *cultural congruence frame*, is a frame that uses expressions that are highly salient in the culture, and was detected in both the authorities' statements and in the media coverage. Bjørnland used the emotionally-charged and tragic events that took place in Norway on July 22 2011 to emphasize the importance of PST being *as open as possible* about threats towards the society. By bringing up the authorities' improvements (or their wish for improvements) after July 22 2011, the authorities framed themselves as guardians of democracy and gave an impression that they had learned from past mistakes. Bjørnland also argued that *we*, i.e. the Norwegian public, had a *joint responsibility* and a *shared interest in securing society* from terrorism. However, the media commentators did not reflect on this creation of *we*. Instead, several commentators wrote that they *trusted* the authorities handling of the situation. The media argued that *trust* and *openness* were necessary in order to tackle this threat towards our *democratic society*, which contributed to frame the authorities handling of the terror threat favourable.

The last frame detected in both the authorities and in the media coverage was the *united management frame*. Within this frame, it was emphasised that the authorities had learned from the criticism they had received after July 22 2011. PST and the Government succeeded to send out a message of a united and competent crisis management, a message that to a large extent was present in the media coverage. The media emphasized that they believed the authorities were doing everything they could to handle the crisis and that the authorities had learned from July 22 2011. The commentators described the authorities as exemplary in their crisis communication to the public and argued that it seemed that the authorities now had a clear division of tasks and a good cooperation.

These four frames, detected in both the authorities statements and the media coverage, contributed to frame the event favorably for the authorities. The only counter frame detected in the media coverage was the *exploitation of the crisis frame*. Within this frame, the media argued that an evaluation of the event had to be done, that PST and the Government should be careful to have similar press conferences in the near future, and that the public should be aware of political exploitation of the crisis. In other words, it was thus not argued that it was wrong of PST and the Government to inform about the terror threat, but the media warned about possible exploitation of the event and unfavourable consequences, for example that this event could be used to implement new policies that could be deemed detrimental to an open democracy.

However, based on the media's overall acceptance of the authorities' frames, which contributed to frame the authorities handling of the crisis favourably, it is safe to conclude that PST and the Government successfully managed to communicate the terrorism threat. Given the consistency in the frames promoted by the authorities and the media, I conclude that the authorities managed to win the dominant narrative of the event in the Norwegian

media. Boin et al. (2005, 2009), S. An & Gower (2009), Sellnow & Seeger (2013) argue that the dominant narrative in the media contribute to define events and shape public opinion. According to the dominant narrative in this case news texts, came PST and the Government out of the crisis as professional and trustfully authorities that managed to steer the society through a difficult crisis. In this study, I have thus demonstrated how a crisis does not only pose a threat but also an opportunity for authorities. However, I want to emphasise journalist Alf Ole Ask from Aftenposten comment about this event. He argued that it was impossible to find alternative sources to the event and hence argued that it was very difficult to frame the event differently. Therefore, it could be speculated that the event would have had more counter frames in the media coverage, if the media could had gained more insight and found other sources to interview.

As mentioned in the introduction section, Boin et al., (2005, 2009) argue that if the authorities manage win the dominant narrative of the crisis, the authorities may even get rid of old policies and impose new ones. However, based on my collected data, I cannot say whether the authorities managed to gain support for new policies, such as PST's promotion of a new bill that would allow them to use big data and Anundsen's proposal of about firearms regulations presented about a month after the press conference. To propose further research, it would therefore be interesting to examine whether PST and the Government gained more political support for new policies after the event or whether the strengthened support in the media caused by this case quickly faded. In addition, since this conclusion is derived from a single case study with limited data, more research is needed on crises in other national and political contexts to increase knowledge on successful communication during threats of terrorism.

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## 9.0 Appendix

### 9.1 Original Norwegian Quotes from the Interviews

**The quotes are placed in order according to the thesis lay-out:**

“Informasjon om terrortrusler er noe PST ofte mottar. Vi mottok også informasjon om terrortrusler i 2016, men da klarte vi å ta fort ned trusselen og vi trengte derfor ikke å informere befolkningen om det. Det spesielle ved denne hendelsen var at informasjonen om terrortrusselen ble offentliggjort og at vi innførte midlertidig bevæpning” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Det er ikke veldig vanlig i Europa å informere om denne type trusselsituasjon som vi befant oss i. Vi hadde derfor ikke mange liknende situasjoner fra andre land som vi kunne lene oss på. Det var nybrottsarbeid vi gjorde i 2014. Det var en veldig spesiell situasjon som ga oss en utfordrende oppgave” (Anundsen, 2017).

”PST kan sammenliknes med et sykehus. En sykehusdirektør kan fortelle deg om hvordan sykehuset fungerer, men kan aldri fortelle om en konkret pasient. Det samme gjelder for PST. Vi kan fortelle generelt, men langt fra alt og veldig sjeldent detaljer om en konkret hendelse [...] Hvis vi hadde offentliggjort detaljer om hendelsen, så kunne vi risikert å ødelegge relasjonen vår til samarbeidspartnere i utlandet og vi kunne risikert å miste viktig informasjon” (Bernsen, 2017).

“In a commentator article, I write my understanding of an event. It is not a historiography or definitive analysis. It is a snapshot of a situation as it looks like inside my head right now. However, as a commentator, you will try to gain insight into an area that others may not have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with” (F. Jacobsen, 2017).

”Som kommentarjournalist skal du være en stemme i debatten og sette det som har skjedd i en sammenheng, men som kommentarjournalist er du ikke nødvendigvis mer kritisk enn en nyhetsjournalist” (Ask, 2017).

“Vi hadde tvilstilfeller om vi skulle informere eller ikke, men bestemte oss for at vi ikke kunne ta sjansen på å ikke informere på grunn av all usikkerheten. Dette er en spekulasjon, men det kan hende at utfallet hadde blitt annerledes om dette ikke hadde skjedd midt i sommerferien da mange ansatte var på ferie. Det kan tenkes at vi raskere hadde avklart situasjonen hvis flere hadde vært på jobb” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Vi satte befolkningen i en vanskelig situasjon fordi vi sa noe, men kunne ikke fortelle om detaljer [...] Dette er ingen god kommunikasjon, men hva kunne vi ha gjort annerledes?” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Du leser sjeldent skrytehistorier om PST. Det er vår strategi, vi vil ikke skryte av oss selv [...] Vi vil fortelle om en situasjon med presisjon [...] Vi har ikke mål om å bli populære, men vi ønsker å bli trodd. Det kan føre til vanskeligheter når man samarbeider med andre etater og departementer siden vi har forskjellige mål med kommunikasjonen. Justis- og

beredskapsdepartementet og politiet har hver deres kommunikasjonsstrategi som skiller seg fra våres. Men ved denne hendelsen var samarbeidet vårt uproblematisk” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Det er mange ting PST ikke kan være åpne om. Man kan derfor spørre om PST faktisk er mer åpne enn før? Og nei, vi er egentlig ikke mer åpne enn tidligere, men vi har blitt langt mer tilgjengelige. Vi arrangerer intervjuer, vi svarer på spørsmål fra media og vi publiserer trusselvurderinger. Men innholdet er det samme nå som det ville vært for femten år siden. Så nei, vi har nok ikke blitt mer åpne, men vi har blitt langt mer tilgjengelige” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Den klare ansvarsdeling mellom PST, politiet og Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet var ett av de viktigste punktene jeg ønsket å gjøre tydelig under pressekonferansen” (Anundsen, 2017).

”PST, politiet og jeg hadde ulike roller, men vår strategi var å fremstå samlet. Vi formulerte oss nok litt forskjellig, men innholdet var det samme. PST viste frem trusselbildet som de holdt [...] Politiet informerte om hvilke tiltak de ville gjennomføre og jeg forsøkte å gi et helhetlig bilde og sørge for at befolkningen ikke ble mer bekymret enn det det var grunnlag for. Totalt sett var det viktigste for oss at informasjonen ble koordinert, at informasjonen var planlagt på forhånd, og at vi snakket klart for å unngå misforståelser” (Anundsen, 2017).

“Jeg synes media håndterte situasjonen på en god måte. De mottok informasjonen seriøst. De gjenvartet informasjonen ryddig og profesjonelt. Jeg tror den jevnlige kontakten med media medførte til en vellykket kommunikasjon” (Anundsen, 2017).

“Jeg vil si at en av de viktigste elementene for å gjennomføre vellykket kommunikasjon, er å ha gode relasjoner innenfor de største mediehusene” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Jeg vil si at bakgrunnsamtalene som jeg har med journalister utgjør majoriteten av jobben min. Ved denne hendelsen var jeg bekymret siden det var sommer da det typisk er flere midlertidige og uerfarne journalister på jobb. For ved en slik hendelse pleier jeg å skaffe meg oversikt over hvem som er på jobb og kontakte de journalister jeg har tillit til. Jeg gir da enkelte journalister mer bakgrunnsinformasjon, som jeg ikke kan bli sitert på, men som gir dem en større forståelse for situasjonen – men selvfølgelig informasjon som er innenfor sikkerhetslovens rammer [...] Mye brannslukningsarbeid kan forebygges med bakgrunnsamtaler med journalister” (Bernsen, 2017).

“Vi visste ikke mer enn det vi skrev. Jeg deltok på flere pressekonferanser og de samme spørsmålene ble stilt igjen og igjen, men vi fikk aldri noe mer ut av dem” (Ask, 2017).

“Det er veldig mange synsere der ute, men det var vanskelig å finne noen som kunne si noe konkret [...] Hvis vi hadde fått vite at trusselen var fra for eksempel al-Qaeda, så kunne vi kontaktet alternative kilder og man kunne sjekket mer opp på hva denne terrortrusselen besto av. Men siden vi ikke fikk vite hvem som sto bak, var det vanskelig å kommentere saken. Vi visste at det var en trussel, men ikke så mye mer enn det. Det skapte et problem for oss [journalister] siden den eneste kilden for oss var norske myndigheter” (Ask, 2017).

“Problemet med trusselvurderinger er at det gir et inntrykk av at PST har full kontroll over hva som truer oss til enhver tid. Men PST kan ikke beskytte oss for alt som er farlig. Det er trusler om at de rett og slett ikke klarer å oppdage. Man må huske på at PST ikke opplyser om sannheten, men om spådommer” (F. Jacobsen, 2017).

“Vi må akseptere at etterretningsinformasjon kan være feil. Etterretningsarbeid kan på det beste være et forsøk på å si noe om hva som kan skje” (F. Jacobsen, 2017).

## 9.2 Interpretative Media Articles Collected

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Journalist</b>	<b>Date</b>
Aftenposten	En utfordring for det norske tillitssamfunnet	Editorial	July 25
Aftenposten	Jakten på en usynlig fiende	Ola Storeng	July 25
Aftenposten	Muslim, islamist, terrorist?	Inger Anne Olsen	July 26
Aftenposten	Tillit til politiet?	Alf Ole Ask	July 27
Aftenposten	Trusselvurdering uten tydelig trussel	Editorial	July 28
Aftenposten	Skrem meg!	Alf Ole Ask	July 30
Aftenposten	Riktig, oppløftende- og farlig	Harald Stanghelle	August 12
Dagbladet	Et angrep mot Norge savner politisk logikk	Einar Hagvaag	July 24
Dagbladet	Et spørsmål om tillit	John Olav Egeland	July 25
Dagbladet	God beredskap må hvile på tillit	Editorial	July 26
Dagbladet	Strategi for politistaten	Editorial	August 2
Verdens Gang (VG)	Frykten er terrorens våpen	Editorial	July 25
VG	Leve normalt	Editorial	July 28
VG	Frykt, og knusende ro	Anders Gæver	July 30
VG	Trusselen som forsvant	Editorial	August 2
VG	Nervøse rykninger foran puslespillet	Frithjof Jacobsen	August 6
Bergens Tidende (BT)	Fornuftig åpenhet	Editorial	July 25
BT	Den vanskelege balansegang	Editorial	July 29
BT	Oppgjøret om terroralarmen	Editorial	August 4

Dagens Næringsliv (DN)	Sørgelige frukter	Kjetil Wiedswang	July 25
DN	Hvordan forebygge terror	Kjetil Wiedswang	July 26
Adresseavisen	Ny terror truer oss	Editorial	July 25
Adresseavisen	Når som helst kan det smelle	Harry Strang	July 25
Adresseavisen	Sommeren vi aldri glemmer	Stian Wallum	August 23
Stavanger Aftenblad	Riktig å informere	Editorial	July 25
Stavanger Aftenblad	Farleg ekstremisme	Editorial	July 29
Stavanger Aftenblad	Vi vart skræmt, ja	Sven Egil Omdal	August 23
Fædrelandsvennen	Terror eller unødig frykt?	Vidar Udjus	July 25
Fædrelandsvennen	Voldens rekkevidde	Editorial	July 25
Fædrelandsvennen	Lettvint om terror	Editorial	July 31
Morgenbladet	Det kan bli umulig å fastslå om PST har spredd unødig frykt. Likevel bør noen undersøke.	Aslak Bonde	August 1
Drammens Tidende	Med frykten som våpen	Editorial	July 25
Romerikes blad	Terrortrusselen	Editorial	July 25
Romerikes blad	Strømløs terror	Steinar Brox	August 1
Romerikes blad	Mye å være redd for	Lars M. J. Hansen	August 13
Sunnmørsposten	Må ruste oss mot aukande terrorfare	Editorial	July 25
Sunnmørsposten	Frykt er et viktig mål for terrorister	Editorial	July 26
Sunnmørsposten	Terrorismens nye rugekasse	Jan Erik Røsvik	July 26
Sunnmørsposten	Må gi nødvendig informasjon til folk	Editorial	July 29
Sunnmørsposten	Lærte vi noe av høy beredskap?	Editorial	August 2
Sunnmørsposten	I skyggen av terrortrusselen	Ivan Kristoffersen	August 2
Tønsberg blad	Når det ufattelige skjer	Audun Tjomsland	August 6
Vårt land	Terrortrusselen	Editorial	July 25
Haugesunds avis	Å forebygge et angrep	Editorial	July 25
Haugesunds avis	For å kunne være modig, må man først være redd	Einar Tho	August 2
Dagsavisen	Full terroralarm	Editorial	July 25
Dagsavisen	Nei, vi vil ikke venne oss til dette	Irene Halvorsen	July 29

Dagsavisen	Terroralarm på svensk	Hanne Mauno	August 1
Dagsavisen	Nødvendig aktsomhet	Editorial	August 5
Oppland Arbeiderblad	Politiet valgte rett taktikk	Editorial	July 28
Oppland Arbeiderblad	Viktig med fotballfest	Editorial	July 29
Oppland Arbeiderblad	I skyggen av en terrortrussel	Ivan Kristoffersen	August 1
Agderposten	Terrortrussel tas på alvor	Editorial	July 25
Agderposten	Terrorrykter i sosiale medier	Editorial	July 26
Agderposten	Upassende mot politiet	Editorial	July 31
Klassekampen	Frykt	Simen Tallaksen	July 25
Klassekampen	Fear is good. Tørkeslutt	Pål Hellesnes	July 26
Klassekampen	Politikken	Mari Skurdal	July 31
Klassekampen	Viten (PST har et lite omdømmeproblem)	Silje Bekeng	August 23
NRK	Hva gjør vi nå?	Lars Nehru Sand	July 24
TV 2	Hvem står bak terrortrusselen mot Norge?	Kadafi Zaman	July 24
Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen	Trusler som del av aksjonsplaner	Editorial	July 25
Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen	Terroralarm skal granskes	Editorial	August 2
Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen	Muslimer går ut i gatene	Editorial	August 21
Finansavisen	Terrorberedskap- et forslag	Trygve Hegnar	July 26
Finansavisen	Vant terroristene?	Trygve Hegnar	July 29
Varden	Frykten for frykten	Tom Erik Thorsen	August 16

### **9.3 Interview guide 1: Former Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen and Senior Adviser at PST's Communication Department Martin Bernsen**

Presentasjon av oppgaver 24. juli 2014:

- Hva var din rolle som justis- og beredskapsminister/seniorrådgiver i PST sommeren 2014 da dere informerte om terrortrusselen?
- Hvordan ble avgjørelser rundt kommunikasjonen tatt? Hvem hadde ansvar for hva?

PST/Regjerings informasjonsstrategi:

- Hva var det viktigste for dere å få frem under og etter pressekonferansen?
- Hvorfor akkurat disse elementene?
- Hva var det ved informasjonsutgivelsen du mener fungerte særlig godt?
- Er det noe i etterkant du/dere ville gjort annerledes?
- Hvilke ”informasjonsstrategier” finnes hos justis- og beredskapsdepartementet/PST ved en slik hendelse?
- Fikk du inspirasjon fra andre statsledere eller hendelser før dere informerte om terrortrusselen?
- Hadde Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet/PST en evaluering av kommunikasjonsarbeidet dere gjorde? Hva kom dere frem til?
- Vektla PST og Regjeringen forskjellige elementer under pressekonferansen? I så fall, hva da?

Medias reaksjon:

- Er medias reaksjon viktig for Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet/PST? Hvorfor?
- Hvordan planlegger du, som politiker/seniorrådgiver, når du/dere skal utgi informasjon til media?
- Hvordan syntes du informasjonen om terrortrusselen ble mottatt av media?
- Er det noen medier du/dere registrerte som skilte seg ut når det gjaldt mediedekningen av terrortrusselen?
- Var det noen ”mediebranner” du/dere måtte slukke?
- Opplevde du en forskjell på medias reaksjon og allmennhetens reaksjon? Hvordan? Hvordan måler dere allmennhetens reaksjon?
- Opplevde du/dere økt støtte til nye lovforslag/nye arbeidsmetoder etter informasjonsutgivelsen av terrortrusselen? For eksempel generell bevæpning?

Oppsummering:

- Alt i alt, hvordan syntes du at dere klarte å kommunisere terrortrusselen?
- Er det noe annet du ønsker å tilføye?

## **9.4 Interview guide 2: Journalist/commentator at Aftenposten Alf Ole Ask and commentator at VG Frithjof Jacobsen**

Presentasjon av deres rolle som kommentatorjournalister:

- Hva er din rolle som kommentatorjournalist?
- Hvorfor har man kommentarjournalistikk?
- Er kommentarjournalistikk mer kritisk vinklet en vanlig nyhetsjournalistikk?

Medias perspektiv:

- Hva tenkte du da PST, politiet og regjeringen informerte om terrortrusselen mot Norge?
- Hvilke overveielser gjorde du deg før du skrev kommentar om denne hendelsen?



- Hvilke elementer syntes du det var viktig å få frem i kommentarjournalistikken? Hvorfor disse?
- Var det utfordrende å kommentere denne saken? I så fall, hvorfor?
- Har dere i VG/Aftenposten noe retningslinjer/hatt noen diskusjoner om hvordan dere skal dekke terror? Hadde dere det i 2014?
- Hvordan opplevde du at norsk media tok imot informasjonen?
- Ifølge min foreløpige forskning, virker det som at media var støttende til PST og regjeringens utgivelse av informasjonen om terrortrusselen. Hvorfor tror du de lyktes med det?
- Ifølge min forskning var det få kritiske røster til PST og medias håndtering av hendelsen i kommentatorjournalistikken i norsk media, hvorfor tror du det?

### Oppsummering

- Er det noe annet du ønsker å tilføye?



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