



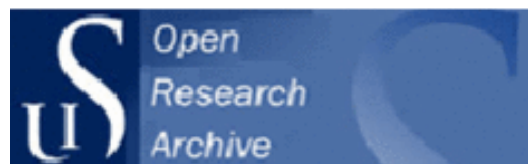
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# Norwegian media substantiation of counterterrorism measures

Sissel H. Jore

The aim of this article is to investigate how terrorism countermeasures have been justified and reasoned for in the public arena, specifically in Norwegian media discourses from 1993 to 2007. Changes in the media discourse on the terrorism threat and terrorism countermeasures have been investigated by analyzing the changes in the media representation of the terrorism threat and the arguments behind the implementation of counterterrorism measures. The analysis shows that the media's framing of terrorism has gone from presenting terrorism mainly as a threat against specific people or delimited events related to international conflicts in the 1990s to a threat against civilians and whole sectors of society after 9/11. Terrorism is presented through the media after 9/11 as an omnipresent, societal threat that citizens should be protected from no matter how low the probability of this terrorism might be. In parallel, counterterrorism measures have gone from being described as threats against civil liberties in the 1990s to a necessity after 9/11. The media articles have given a picture of terrorism countermeasures as a topic not defined on the basis of traditional normative risk criteria. As presented in the media, these measures seem beyond rational evaluation and assessment. They have primarily been described as necessary and independent of the risk; factors such as precaution, compliance, solidarity, and moral obligations have been the dominant underpinning arguments behind their implementation. This approach to counterterrorism might (if unquestioned) pave the way for further implementation of such measures.

**Keywords:** terrorism; terrorism countermeasures; risk; media

## Introduction

Ericson (2006) claims that terrorism strikes at the foundation of the 'risk management culture' that dominates contemporary Western societies, because it is a stark reminder of the limits of risk management: 'It brings home the potential ungovernability of modern societies, and how those with little power can work cheaply and effectively to destroy' (Ericson 2006, 347). Bearing in mind, the counterterrorism measures implemented in Western states in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001 (9/11), it would be tempting to say that Ericson's statement is incorrect. Western authorities have definitely tried to manage the risk of terrorism. However, this does not mean that counterterrorism measures are implemented because of their risk-reducing effects. According to Beck (2009), states are forced to take precautionary measures against terrorism, because guaranteeing the security of citizens

is one of their primary tasks, even though the authorities may not necessarily have the corresponding instruments at their disposal. The risk-reducing effect has also been questioned by Lum, Kennedy, and Sherley (2006), who discovered an almost complete absence of research that evaluated counterterrorism measures. From the evaluations that they found, it appeared that some interventions either did not achieve the outcomes sought or sometimes increased the likelihood of a terrorist attack.

Several scholars have pointed out that terrorism countermeasures have negative side effects in terms of threatening civil liberties (Amoore and De Goede 2005, 2008; Aradau and Van Munster 2007; Balzacq and Carrera 2006; Mythen and Walklate 2008; Stern and Wiener 2006; Viscusi and Zeckhauser 2003; Zedner 2006). Consequently, it is plausible to assume that the initiation, implementation, and sustainment of these measures in a democratic society would imply widespread public acquiescence to counterterrorism measures as being necessary and useful. The aim of this article is to investigate how terrorism countermeasures have been legitimized in the public arena by studying how the risk of terrorism and the legitimizing arguments have been presented in the media. Since most citizens do not have any first-hand knowledge of terrorism, the media will be the window where they get information about the risk of terrorism and subsequent ways of dealing with the threat. The specific instance here is the Norwegian media discourse in the period 1993–2007. Norway is an interesting case because this small, prosperous country, with literally no history of terrorism prior to 22 July 2011,<sup>1</sup> chose to implement several counterterrorism measures after 9/11. Additionally, studies have revealed that Norwegian citizens in general have had positive attitudes toward the implementation of such measures (Rykkja, Lægreid, and Fimreite 2011; Teknologirådet 2007).

### **Methodological approach**

Several studies have investigated the public's acceptance of counterterrorism measures and to what extent the public fears terrorism, using quantitative research designs (Fischhoff et al. 2003; Lemyre et al. 2006; Lerner et al. 2003; Rubin et al. 2005; Rykkja, Lægreid, and Fimreite 2011; Sjøberg 2002; Teknologirådet 2007). However, according to Ernst-Vintila, Delouée, and Roland-Lévy (2011), terrorism risk, like other collective risks, is elaborated as a social object through culture, interactions of all kinds, communications, and collective memory. These scholars also address the need for further exploration of how people view terrorism and the role of propaganda. This article investigates how terrorism has been represented in the media in order to capture these factors. How the media identify and highlight risks influences how individuals apprehend risks and directs what the general population defines as threats (Kasperson, Pidgeon, and Slovic 2003; Lupton 1999; Renn 2008).

The definition of terrorism has been the subject of extensive academic discussions. That terrorism researchers found over 100 definitions on the concept and the saying 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' have become clichés in terrorism research (Bjørge 2005). The debates concerning the meaning of the concepts of terrorism illustrate that what is perceived as terrorism is contingent on historical, cultural, and political framing; consequently, the terrorism concept cannot be separated from the context (Jackson et al. 2011). In this article, terrorism is not seen a neutral word used to refer to an independent, objective, phenomenon, but as a frame that shapes and constructs how individuals and society view a phenomenon of violence and

associated threats. In a world of multiple threats, the fact that some groups are defined into the security agenda as terrorists against the Norwegian society is due to a social–political construction of specific groups of activists being framed as an extraordinary type of risk that has another dimension other than just being political activists or criminals. In this framing process, media play a central role, because communication is the medium through which individuals or a society gain knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism. The topic of media frames is a much debated topic in the communication literature. Media frames can be defined as the process by which a communication source ‘defines and construct a political issue or public controversy’ (Johnson-Cartee 2005, 24).

This approach to the phenomenon of terrorism also has consequences for the view on the legitimacy of counterterrorism measures. Crelinsten claims that ‘How we conceive of terrorism determines to a great extent how we go about countering it, and what resources – money, manpower, institutional framework, time horizon – we devote to the effort’ (Crelinsten 2009, 19). According to this perspective, what society perceives as effective ways to counter terrorism will depend on how society comprehends terrorism as a threat. In order to capture this perspective, the methodology used in this study builds on a ‘conventional content analytical’ perspective (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Content analysis is a qualitative research technique used to interpret the meaning from the content of text data. Research using qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. The purpose is to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and significance of what the document contains both in a literal and in an interpretative sense.

The following research questions have guided the analysis:

- *Concrete changes*: Which counterterrorism measures have been implemented, according to the media?
- *Decision support*: What are the arguments behind the implemented counterterrorism measures, according to the media?
- *Media representation of the risk of terrorism*: How has the terrorism risk phenomenon been represented in the media articles?

These research questions are addressed and investigated through the lens of the media in the time period 1993–2007. This period was selected because this research is a part of a bigger research project that looks at how terrorism was perceived and dealt with in different sectors in the Norwegian society within this time frame. The empirical material was gathered from the two major Norwegian daily newspapers with national distribution and readership: *Verdens Gang* and *Aftenposten*. To delimit the search, keywords related to terrorism and security were used.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, articles describing terrorism as a threat to Norwegian society and those discussing any kind of counterterrorism measure were selected. Seven-hundred and fifty one articles met the criteria: 125 articles covered the time period from 1993 to 11 September 2001 and 626 covered the period from 11 September 2001 to 2007.

In the data analysis, all newspaper articles were read in succession several times to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole and an understanding of the development and changes in the conceptualization of terrorism and counterterrorism measures. The aim was to look for argumentative structures that occurred over time and could be found in several different documents. Thereafter, each article was read

word by word, and key words in the text that appeared to capture key thoughts concerning the risk of terrorism, what measures were deemed appropriate counterterrorism measures, and what were the arguments behind the implementation of counterterrorism measures were highlighted. The media’s conceptualization and description of the phenomenon of terrorism during the studied time period was studied by looking for how the risk of terrorism was described in the documents. Risk descriptions could either be risk assessments of the threat or qualitative descriptions about terrorism risk that could be a threat toward Norway. Such qualitative descriptions could include who were described as terrorists, what were the terrorist’s motivations for selecting Norwegian targets, what would be their potential weapons, what targets were deemed vulnerable to terrorism and should be protected. Media’s representation of counterterrorism measures was studied by having an open approach to what a counterterrorism measure could be. The measures that were mentioned in the media articles as a means to meet the terrorism threat were recorded, and this process resulted in 92 different measures which were categorized into 6 main categories. In addition, arguments behind the implementation of security measures were looked for. Arguments could either be risk assessments, or other arguments for implementing counterterrorism measures. Since the intention with this study was to explore the changes in the understanding of terrorism and counterterrorism measures in a historical–political context following a conventional content analytical perspective, pre-defined categories were not used when analyzing the data, instead the categories were allowed ‘to flow from the data’ (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1279). This inductive category development was chosen in order to allow new insights about the risk of terrorism and counterterrorism measures to emerge. The interpretation–classification process was conducted by the author of this article, in cooperation and under continuously discussions with one more researcher. The articles were read several times to see if the classification and interpretation of the data gave meaning and were in accordance with the data material.

### Terrorism risk and countermeasures in Norwegian media 1993–2007

Figure 1 illustrates the media cover of terrorism and countermeasures during the studied time period.

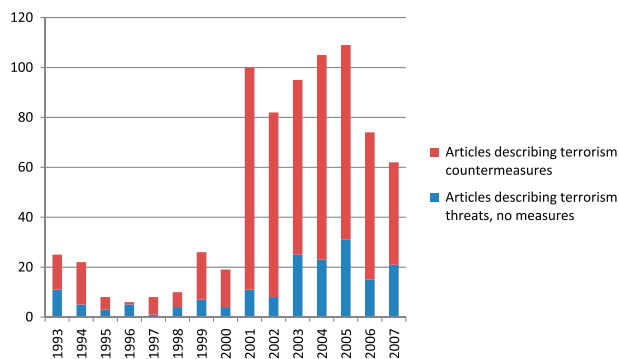


Figure 1. Distribution of selected articles.

Figure 1 shows that the topics of terrorism as a threat against the Norwegian society and counterterrorism measures received minor media attention in the 1990s. In the years 1995–1998, there are a total of 10 or fewer articles each year in the two biggest newspapers in Norway, so terrorism and counterterrorism measures were not topics the media was concerned with at the time. This figure also illustrates the enormous increase in media attention to terrorism as a threat against Norwegian society and counterterrorism measures as a direct response to 9/11. Figure 1 also reveals that there is a minority of newspaper articles that deal with terrorism as a risk to Norwegian society without also mentioning countermeasures. This may reflect an implicit assumption in society that countermeasures are a natural corollary of this risk. An alternative explanation is that the media’s interest in terrorism after 9/11 was aroused by the counterterrorism measures subsequently put in place. Media cover of the topic has diminished during the last two years of this study, which could imply that the implemented counterterrorism measures have been accepted as necessary and in line with the threat situation.

### *Variation in attitudes toward counterterrorism measures*

The newspaper articles that deal with counterterrorism measures have different attitudes toward the implementation of counterterrorism measures in society. Figure 2 highlights whether counterterrorism measures are described in positive, neutral, or negative terms in these articles.

Figure 2 shows that, except from the years 1995–1996, the newspaper articles that describe counterterrorism measures in negative or critical perspectives constitute a minority of the articles as a whole. Most of the articles frame terrorism countermeasures in a positive or neutral way, especially after 9/11. This framing of counterterrorism measures probably influences the public view of counterterrorism measures as a necessity.

### *Developments and intensity in media cover*

Table 1 shows an overview of the six main categories of counterterrorism measures presented through the newspaper articles.

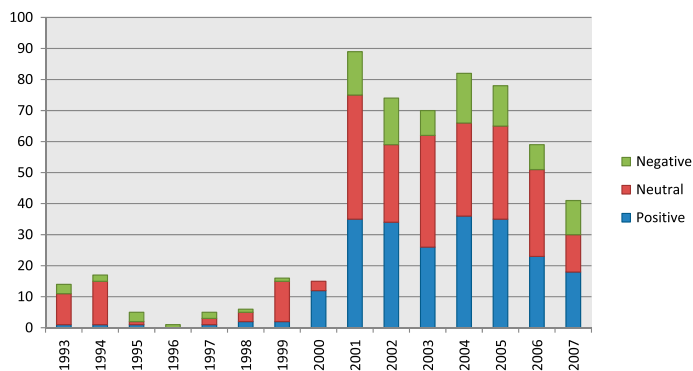


Figure 2. The variation in attitudes toward counterterrorism measures.

Table 1. Overview of counterterrorism measures.

Main category	Description	Main area/sector	Classes of measures
Events and celebrity protection	Measures related to protecting concrete events and public figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delimited arrangements</li> <li>• Specific people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical protection</li> <li>• Guarding and control</li> </ul>
Infrastructure and key object protection	Measures aiming to prevent terrorist attacks from happening by protecting infrastructures and specific objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embassies</li> <li>• Aviation</li> <li>• Maritime security</li> <li>• Petroleum</li> <li>• Railways and subways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical protection</li> <li>• Guarding and control</li> <li>• Technical</li> <li>• Equipment</li> <li>• Information protection</li> <li>• Anti-radicalization</li> </ul>
Legal and regulatory changes	Laws and regulations that propose specific means to mitigate or punish acts of terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International regulations</li> <li>• National laws and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN conventions</li> <li>• EU regulations</li> <li>• National legislation</li> </ul>
Actor strengthening measures	Measures strengthening actors e.g. official bodies by giving them broader scope of responsibility or increased resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Military Defense</li> <li>• The Police Security Service</li> <li>• The Coast Guard</li> <li>• The Custom Services</li> <li>• The Civil Defense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational and structural</li> <li>• Financial</li> <li>• Legal measures</li> <li>• Technical</li> <li>• Equipment</li> </ul>
Damage mitigation	Measures aimed at dealing with the consequences of a terrorist attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Police</li> <li>• The Fire Department</li> <li>• Health personnel</li> <li>• The Civil Defense</li> <li>• The Military Defense</li> <li>• National Security Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge acquisition</li> <li>• Technical</li> <li>• Equipment</li> <li>• Training/rehearsal</li> </ul>

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Main category	Description	Main area/sector	Classes of measures
International measures	Measures in other countries than Norway to reduce the domestic terrorism threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Military</li> <li>● Foreign policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● International cooperation</li> <li>● International military operations</li> <li>● Financial aid</li> <li>● Democracy and peace building</li> </ul>

In the present article, time and intensity of media cover are considered two important factors for measuring the development in media discourse. Figure 3 shows a time-line over the newspaper articles included in the data material and to which category they are related.

The general tendency in the data material is that media cover of terrorism countermeasures has been triggered by critical events that the media somehow finds associated with Norwegian security. Before 9/11, these events were mostly related to events within Norway or political decisions concerning international issues, for example, the Olympics at Lillehammer in 1994, Norwegian participation in the peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine in the 1990s, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize. The most critical event in the data material was 9/11, and after this event, media coverage of terrorism countermeasures was related to terrorist attacks in other countries. After 9/11, the most critical events were the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. These terrorist attacks led to a sharp focus on whether Norway had measures in place designed to deal with a similar situation. This reactive approach is typical of Norwegian media coverage of terrorism countermeasures after 9/11.

### Categories of counterterrorism measures

The following presentation of the empirical data will describe and elaborate on the different categories of counterterrorism measures presented in Figure 3 and Table 1.

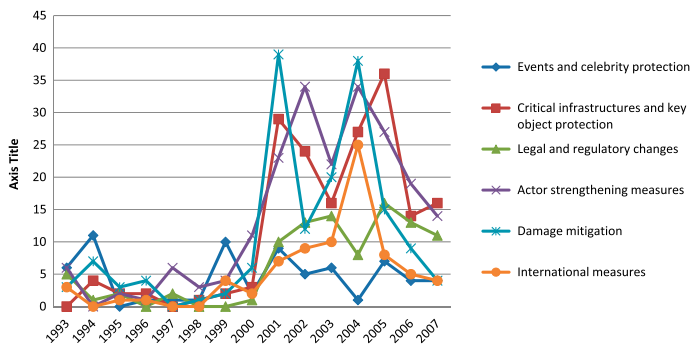


Figure 3. Trends in media cover of counterterrorism measures.



The further presentation will focus on how the different categories have developed during the studied period, and account for the legitimating arguments behind their implementation.

### *Events and celebrity protection*

‘Events and celebrity protection’ includes measures implemented to secure concrete events like state visits, or other big arrangements where the security level is *temporarily* heightened, either because the event itself is deemed a possible terrorist target, such as the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer in 1994, or because of the presence of people who are considered potential targets of terrorism e.g. state visits. This category also includes measures aimed primarily at protecting specific people, such as politicians, the royal family, or other public figures. Measures here include body-guarding, metal detectors, fences, bulletproof windows, and surveillance of possible perpetrators.

### *Media representation of terrorism and counterterrorism measures*

In the 1990s, the media were not really concerned with whether Norway in itself was a terrorist target. Terrorism was primarily understood as a political problem present in other countries. In most cases, when terrorism was mentioned in the media in the 1990s, it was either because Norway was involved in political conflicts in other countries, or because foreigners who could be a target of political assassination were visiting Norway. At the time, the media had no clear picture of potential perpetrators, and terrorism was portrayed as a threat against specific events or people related to the terrorists’ political agenda.

The immediate aftermath of 9/11 heightened media focus on the security of political symbols like the Prime Minister and the Royal Family. After 9/11, ‘the increased terrorism threat’ or just ‘the terrorist threat’ was given as additional reasons for implementing a higher security level for public figures in Norway. The ‘terrorism threat’ was used as an argument not only for legitimizing these types of measures but for justifying all the security measures implemented after 9/11. These claims about the terrorist threat were not based on any substance or publicly known risk assessments, but simply assumed, as if it was a brutal fact that Norway was under such a threat. The level of media interest in these measures was on almost the same level before and after 9/11. The stability in media focus is probably related to the fact that celebrities have been considered potential terrorist targets during the whole studied time period.

### *Legitimizing arguments*

The main argument behind the implementation of these measures before and after 9/11 was that they were a consequence of the classified risk assessments made by the Police Security Service. However, these risk assessments were never made public, and the subsequent measures were never fully accounted for in the media. There was a general assumption in the newspaper articles that risk assessments and related measures concerning events and celebrity protection should not be transparent or a topic for public debate. The measures that fall under this category are not disputed topics in the newspaper articles, either before or after 9/11. This could indicate that

the measures are considered necessary and that it is generally agreed that the Police Security Service's risk assessments are not a topic for media discussion.

### ***Infrastructure and key object protection***

'Infrastructure and key object protection' is a set of counterterrorism measures aimed at preventing terrorist attacks from happening and at protecting systems, sectors, or specific objects from acts of terrorism. These systems are mainly the transport infrastructure: aviation, public road and rail transportation, and shipping. Key objects deemed to be terrorist targets are oil and gas installations, governmental buildings, and foreign embassies in Norway. Measures that fall under this category are guarding, identity checks, security checks of people and goods, fences, barricading and making public places inaccessible, surveillance, protection of security-sensitive information, risk and vulnerability analyses, and emergency plans. This category also includes integration and anti-radicalization measures within Norwegian society.

### ***Media representation of terrorism and counterterrorism measures***

In the time period before 9/11, there was almost no media interest in protecting entire systems or sectors from terrorism, nor did the media focus on specific objects in society that could be vulnerable to terrorism. However, after 9/11 Islamic terrorism was described as a major international threat to all western countries, including Norway. The threats made by Al-Zawahiri against Norway in 2003 and 2004 reinforced the impression that Norway was no longer a quiet outpost in Europe, and since Norway had Muslim immigrants, the threat could come from someone within Norwegian borders as well. The presence of radical Muslims in Norway became visible in the trials against Mullar Krekar and Arfan Bhatti, who were both charged, but not sentenced, under the new terrorist legislation. With a clear enemy in sight, the media began to focus exclusively on possible Islamic terrorists and their likely targets and weapons. Media coverage debated whether there were vulnerable objects or sectors in Norway that could be potential terrorist targets either because an attack on such objects could cause large-scale damage to society, or because they were somehow interwoven with international security. The assumption was that Norway would be vulnerable to terrorism if adequate counterterrorism measures were not implemented.

Since the terrorist threat was portrayed as an international threat, Norway could also be a target of terrorism and therefore needed security measures at the same level as other countries. As a direct consequence of 9/11, airport security became a major issue and matter of concern in the newspapers. In the aftermath of 9/11, newspapers ran articles criticizing the fact that aviation security measures had not been implemented in Norway simultaneously with those in other European countries. When, however, in 2004, a pilot was attacked by an asylum seeker with an axe onboard an aircraft in Norway, the EU regulations were implemented in the Norwegian aviation system within days. After these regulations had come into force, journalists began to probe the system for weaknesses that could be exploited by someone with malevolent intentions. Other newspaper articles were more critical, querying whether the security control of passengers actually could detect a terrorist. This was particularly so after the implementation of the liquid ban in 2006, when aviation security measures were even more critically scrutinized and questioned.

Even though there are many media articles that deal with securing of infrastructures, they do not elaborate on what type of measures actually have been implemented and whether there were risk assessments behind the implementation. Security measures aimed at protecting infrastructures and key objects were presented through the media as a topic that should not be publicly discussed but should be left to those responsible for security in society. The exception to this was the location and securing of the American Embassy, problems which have been extensively debated in the newspapers. The American Embassy was regarded a potential terrorist target, because 9/11 and other worldwide terrorist attacks against American targets had demonstrated that terrorists were willing and able to attack American targets abroad. The embassy's location in downtown Oslo caused extensive debates about its security and optimal location, probably because the public saw foreign targets as more likely targets than Norwegian ones. The location of the American embassy has also been framed as a matter for national decision, and consequently people felt that they could influence this decision.

Before 9/11, terrorist attacks in other European countries never evoked discussions on whether Norway had the necessary security. This changed with the subsequent terrorist attacks in London and Madrid, which triggered great public concern as to whether Norway had the necessary means to deal with similar attacks. After the terrorist attacks in London, which were carried out by second generation immigrants, measures directed toward this group of possible perpetrators became a media topic. Moves to improve integration and anti-radicalization efforts among young Muslim immigrants were described as means of combating terrorism. These moves represented a new type of preventive measure not seen in the media discourse prior to the London attacks, because they were directed against specific groups in Norwegian society.

### *Legitimizing arguments*

Two arguments dominated the reasoning underpinning the implementation of measures related to infrastructure and key object protection: compliance with international political decisions and the need for precaution. Security measures in aviation and shipping were presented as international commitments that Norway was obliged to comply with. Since the terrorist threat was perceived as international, Norway had to have the same level of security as other European countries. Precaution was a common argument for implementing security measures designed to protect key objects or infrastructure. Despite the implementation of security measures, it was often denied that this was necessitated by an increased terrorist threat in Norway. The argumentation was based on worst case scenario thinking: no matter how low the risk of terrorism, society should take steps as long as there was any possibility of a terrorist attack.

### *Legal and regulatory changes*

'Legal and regulatory changes' includes national and international laws and regulations concerning terrorism either by treating terrorism as a special form of crime in the legal system, by outlining different ways to combat it or by regulating how society should be protected from acts of terrorism. These measures include international conventions on terrorism, EU regulations on aviation and maritime security, specific

terrorist laws or paragraphs in the national legislation, specific terrorist paragraphs in the Criminal Code and the Immigration Act, legal permission for the Police to use extraordinary equipment and investigation methods in terrorist crimes, and extended powers of authority for financial actors to freeze and close bank accounts. Common to most of these measures is the fact that they threaten citizens' legal protection and treat terrorism as an extraordinary type of crime or threat.

### *Media representation of terrorism and counterterrorism measures*

In the 1990s, the Norwegian authorities refused to implement specific terrorist legislation or to make changes in the existing legislation because such regulative changes were described as unnecessary and it was emphasized that such measures could threaten the principle of legal protection. With the Communist and Fascist dictatorships' suppression of citizens during the Cold War, fresh in mind, the media discussions were characterized by a general reluctance to accept that democratic freedoms should be curtailed for the greater good of the state.

After 9/11, terrorism was described as a group activity and as an international threat that could operate in several different countries, including Norway. Because of the perceived international character of terrorism after 9/11, it was deemed necessary for Norway to comply with international rules and conventions to support the international campaign against terrorism. After 9/11, the Norwegian authorities immediately started the process of adjusting national legislation to be in accordance with international conventions, and Norway signed several UN conventions such as UN Convention 1373 which was a direct response to 9/11 and a commitment to enhance cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

It was acknowledged in the media that specific terrorism legislation threatened the principal of legal protection in Norway. While democratic liberties had been considered the main values in the 1990s, these liberties were viewed as less important after 9/11 because security was the core value that needed to be protected since Norway was under a terrorist threat. Despite this, the ratification of international conventions and the changes in national legislation were passed without arousing more than limited dispute in the media. By using the balance metaphor of liberties vs. security, the impression was given that both liberties and security were safeguarded by the Norwegian authorities. Additionally, the media were vague as to what new legislation had been implemented. It was through prosecutions and trials of possible terrorists that the changes in national legislations became the subject of media attention. However, this was not the case for all regulatory measures. The EU aviation security regulations were also implemented in Norwegian legislation and were implemented in Norwegian airports toward the end of 2004, and while the other legal and regulatory measures have received less media attention, the EU regulations in aviation have been publicly disputed.

### *Legitimizing arguments*

The EU and UN conventions Norway endorsed were legitimated by the argument of compliance with international regulations and decisions. It was claimed that Norway had to comply with international rules in order to support the international campaign against terrorism and to show solidarity with the USA. Additionally, it was claimed that it was naïve to think that terrorist attacks could not happen in Norway, and that the lack of terrorist legislation could make Norway a free haven for terrorists and attract international terrorists to operate in Norway.

### *Actor strengthening measures*

'Actor strengthening measures' includes counterterrorism measures that give actors in society increased powers, for example, broadening of mandate or area of responsibility and increased budgets. These actors are most often official bodies appointed to deal with security. The measures that fall under this category are reorganizations, allocation of resources, new equipment, laws giving official bodies increased powers over citizens, and electronic registration of citizens' personal information.

### *Media representation of terrorism and counterterrorism measures*

The increased media focus on the mandates and organizational changes of the Armed Forces and the Police Security Service started in the late 1990s, and in many of these discussions a potential terrorist threat was used as an argument for getting increased funding. However, terrorism was described as one of many potential threats that could become a reality in the future.

The terrorist attack in the USA was described as an attack not only against the USA but against all NATO members, including Norway, being seen as modern warfare against democracy for the whole world. By framing terrorism as war-fare, it was no longer limited to political activism but became a threat to national security. The terrorist attacks on 9/11 were seen as the beginning of a new security political era and consequently official bodies had to make the necessary adaptations. Through new legislation, the Police Security Service obtained access to more radical investigation methods and received increased funding to be able to meet the perceived terrorism threat. The Armed Forces received resources to purchase motor torpedo boats, helicopters, and airplanes. In addition, the mandate of the Armed Forces in Norway was broadened to include permission to arrest civilians and guard civil society in peacetime, and in 2004, Norway joined the military 'war on terrorism' in Afghanistan. Several other official bodies used the terrorist threat and the new threat landscape as arguments for getting more resources and permission to reorganize e.g. the Customs Service, the National Security Authority, and the Civil Defense.

The measures that fall under this category are extensively disputed topics in the newspaper articles during the whole studied time period but reach a peak of media attention in the aftermath of 9/11. However, after 2004, there is a decline in the media coverage of authority-strengthening measures. This could be because the official bodies have found their roles in the new security political era, and that subsequently the media are not paying the same amount of attention to the issue.

### *Legitimizing arguments*

The main argument behind authority-strengthening measures has been that society after the end of the Cold War was facing a 'new threat landscape'. 9/11 was interpreted as a new security political era where terrorism was the imminent threat, and thus this event legitimized the already implemented measures and the further strengthening of official bodies.

### ***Damage mitigation***

'Damage mitigation' is a set of counterterrorism measures designed to increase society's ability to handle the consequences of a terrorist attack. These measures not only include emergency preparedness measures such as evaluations, rehearsals, new warning systems, and household preparedness, but also measures aimed at dealing with the threats of cyber, biological, chemical, and nuclear terrorist attacks, for example, chemical cleaning units, radioactive and nuclear detectors, and cyber-attack countermeasures.

### ***Media representation of terrorism and counterterrorism measures***

In the 1990s, the forms of anticipated terrorist attacks came under the heading of criminal acts e.g. arson, sabotage, and bombing. Consequently, there was no real need for extraordinary emergency measures to cope with the threat. After 9/11, the media began to focus on the possibility of terrorists developing new, more lethal weapons. The anthrax attacks in the USA, and the Norwegians authorities' purchase of protection and cleaning equipment to deal with chemical weapons, caused a swing in the media's focus to the likelihood of terrorists using weapons capable of devastating consequences for society. In the years after 2001, terrorists were described as religious extremists who would use suicide bombs or weapons of mass destruction if possible. After 9/11, there was a general expectation that Norway should have the necessary emergency resources to handle a terrorist attack, including attacks using weapons of mass destruction. Further demands in the media for emergency preparedness to handle a terrorist attack were triggered by the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid. The peaks in media cover of this topic were clearly related to the occurrence of major terrorist attacks committed by Islamic extremists in Europe. The countermeasures described under this category have not been disputed. On the contrary, the media have questioned whether Norway has the necessary preparedness to handle a terrorist attack if such an attack was to occur.

### ***Legitimizing arguments***

The perception that Norway could become a terrorist target was used to justify the implementation of emergency measures. The alleged changed character of terrorism to a more dangerous kind that would not hesitate to use new and more lethal weapons necessitated specific emergency measures related to cyber-attacks or attacks using weapons of mass destruction.

### ***International measures***

'International measures' refers to measures implemented in other countries than Norway to decrease the risk of domestic terrorism. Such measures span from international military support or invasions to collaboration in international security organizations such as the UN, NATO, and OSCE. Measures to promote democracy and combat poverty, peace negotiations and dialogue, and emergency aid also fall under this category.

### *Media representation of terrorism and counterterrorism measures*

International measures as a means of decreasing the terrorist threat within Norway was a topic that received only minor attention in the newspaper articles before 2001 because security was mainly seen from a national perspective. After 9/11, terrorism was presented as an international threat, and international counterterrorism measures were accordingly necessary to deal with the threat. Peace building, poverty combating, and democracy building in other countries were described as measures that could bolster Norwegian domestic security. These were goals that had been important for Norwegian politicians even before 9/11 but thereafter became part of the counterterrorism project. To follow the standards of international organizations and to promote peace and democracy were uncontroversial measures because they were presented in the media as having positive connotations.

Since the World War II, the USA and NATO have been the security guarantors in Norwegian foreign policy. When the USA was attacked by terrorists it was important for Norway to declare solidarity with the USA. The terrorist attack on 9/11 was declared an attack against all NATO countries and legitimized the use of military force in the battle against terrorism. Norway participated in the military intervention in Afghanistan in 2004 and supported the invasion of Iraq, but this did not go unnoticed in the newspapers. The peak in newspaper cover of international measures in 2004 is related to discussions of Norwegian military participation in Afghanistan as part of the ongoing international war on terrorism. Media focus on the topic then began to diminish, possibly because the country's participation in international operations was described as a solidarity campaign and peace building process and thus was framed in a positive manner as well.

### *Legitimizing arguments*

The main argument behind the international measures was that Norway had a moral responsibility to participate in the international fight against terrorism. In the written media it was claimed that Norway had to show solidarity with the USA and participate in the international counterterrorism campaign. Since the threat was viewed from an international perspective, international means were deemed important for dealing with the threat, and thus compliance with the policies of international organizations was also deemed important.

## **Discussion**

Media's influence on risk perception is a contested area in the risk perception literature (Lichtenberg and McLean 1998; Renn 2008). Citizens' acceptance of counterterrorism measures is not a straightforward process where the public passively accept the media's presentation of the threat. The public's attitude toward counterterrorism measures is a complex combination of fear, trust, political factors, and attitude toward civil liberties (Rykkja, Læg Reid, and Fimreite 2011). Additionally, the media will be just one of several different sources that influence how individuals perceive the risks (Kasperson, Pidgeon, and Slovic 2003; Lemyre et al. 2006; Renn 2008). However, there are several aspects of how terrorism and counterterrorism have been presented in the media that may have affected public acceptance of terrorism countermeasures.

The result of this study show that in the 1990s, the media had no clear picture of possible terrorists, and terrorism was described as a threat against specific people, objects, or events in Norway related to the political conflicts abroad. Terrorism in Norway was not a major concern and was primarily portrayed as a political problem related to political conflicts in other countries. At the time, terrorism countermeasures were not a common topic in the newspapers, and whether Norway had the necessary preparedness measures to handle a terrorist attack was not something that the media was concerned with. Counterterrorism measures were often described as threats against civil liberties, or a topic to be dealt with by those in charge of security in society.

After 9/11, the newspapers described Islamic terrorism as a major international threat which could target all western countries, including Norway. The presence of a Muslim population in Norway meant that the threat could equally come from someone within Norwegian borders. Terrorism was described as a threat in line with war-fare, which could attack civilians and infrastructures and hence now posed a threat against society as a whole. After 9/11, few actors said openly that countermeasures were unnecessary or not in line with the terrorism threat. Counterterrorism measures were presented as necessary because Norway could become a terrorist target. Since terrorism was described as a major threat against society and there was a clear picture of potential perpetrators, this might have helped to sway public opinion in favor of counterterrorism measures. Additionally, the focus on new types of weapons with devastating consequences for the civil population probably ensured that terrorism became seen as an intolerable risk to society and one which had to be countered with every available means.

### ***The arguments behind counterterrorism measures***

Several scholars have pointed out that the counterterrorism measures implemented in most Western societies in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the USA on 9/11 should be seen as part of a broader risk management culture that dominates contemporary societies (Amoore and De Goede 2005, 2008; Beck 2009; Ericson 2006; Heng and McDonagh 2009). Even though the counterterrorist measures as presented though the media can be seen as part of a broader risk management culture, the media articles have given a picture of the implementation of terrorism countermeasures as a topic not defined by traditional normative risk criteria where risk assessments and democratic decision-making play central roles, see for example, Renn's (2008) presentation of Risk Governance. If risk assessments are used as arguments for implementing measures, it is just stated that classified assessments are done, and the risk assessments and the background material is not made public.

Most counterterrorism measures as presented in the media seem beyond rational evaluation and assessment. Measures against terrorism are primarily described as necessary, independent of the risk, and factors such as precaution, international regulations, solidarity, and moral obligations are the dominating underpinning arguments. This being so, it is not evident that citizens have perceived counterterrorism measures as risk reducing, since the implementation of such measures has not been based on risk-reducing arguments.

Compliance with international rules and precaution has been the chief justification. For the Norwegian authorities, it was important to declare solidarity with the USA after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 by participating in the USA-led international



campaign against terrorism. This was done by implementing security measures dictated on the international level. Even though many of the terrorist countermeasures were implemented because of compliance with international regulations they had to be legitimized to the public. In this way, it is possible that all the media cover of terrorism countermeasures has contributed to make the Norwegian population feel as if it was under a terrorist threat. Instead of critically questioning the compliance arguments, the media have focused on the idea that Norway is under a terrorist threat for which it is unprepared. Additionally, the framing of several counterterrorism measures as international decisions Norway had to comply with, rather than as national ones, might have made counterterrorism measures something Norwegian citizens and politicians felt that they could not influence whether they found the measures useful or not. The counterterrorism measures that have been presented in the media as national decisions e.g. the location of the American embassy and the future direction of the Armed Forces have been more extensively disputed topics in the newspapers than the counterterrorism measures framed as international commitments.

Norway is just one of many countries that have implemented counterterrorism measures since 9/11. Thus, this study can provide knowledge about the political processes and the social construction of meanings that made terrorism a major threat in a country that had not been targeted by terrorism. Future research should address if the framing of terrorism and the arguments behind the counterterrorism measures are dominating in other countries besides Norway and if other countries have other cultural–political understandings of the meaning of terrorism.

Precaution has been one of the main arguments behind terrorism countermeasures and this approach might allow scope for further implementation. This type of argumentation builds on worst case scenario thinking, meaning that if something can happen in the future then society needs to be protected. It is an open-ended approach because there are no criteria for when to remove a measure or for evaluating whether a measure is effective or not. Future research should monitor the media debates in Norway to see how the terrorist attack on 22 July 2011 has influenced, and will influence, the public attitude to terrorism and counterterrorism measures.

## **Conclusions**

The descriptions of counterterrorism measures and the inherent risk of terrorism changed radically from 1993 to 2007 in Norway. The media articles have given a picture of terrorism countermeasures as a topic not defined on the basis of traditional normative risk criteria. As presented in the media, counterterrorism measures seem beyond rational evaluation and assessment. They have primarily been described as necessary, independent of the risk, and factors such as precaution, compliance, solidarity, and moral obligations have been the dominating underpinning arguments behind their implementation. This approach to counterterrorism might (if unquestioned) pave the way for further implementation of measures.

## **Notes**

1. The two attacks on 22 July 2011 were carried through by a single perpetrator, Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old Norwegian anti-multiculturalist and right wing extremist. The first attack killed eight people, and was a car bomb explosion in Oslo within the

- executive government quarter of Norway. The second attack killed 69 people, and occurred less than two hours later at a summer camp on the island of Utøya. The camp was organized by the AUF, the youth division of the ruling Norwegian Labour Party.
- The articles were collected from the database Retriever (<http://www.retriever-info.com/no/>) (search conducted 25 November 2008). The Norwegian version of the following key word were used: (terror\*) and (threats\* or danger\* or risk\*) and (safety\* or emergency preparedness\* or security\* or measures\*).

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