The Lone Wolf behind the Norwegian Tragedy: The Ideological Foundations of Anders Behring Breivik

Siri Merethe Neset
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo

Daniel Heradstveit
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo

G. Matthew Bonham
Syracuse University
Abstract

This paper illuminates the ideological base of Anders Behring Breivik the Norwegian behind the atrocities 22/7 -11 in Oslo and Utøya. Cognitive mapping has been used to categorize and to clarify belief structures within his ideological discourse. Two ideological subcategories have been derived for further analysis; Utopia and Strategies. The results reveal, that Utopia according to Breivik is a mono-cultural, conservative Christian, and totalitarian-like society secured through a violent crises maximization strategy and the creation of a European macro-nationalistic consolidation.
Background

The 22\textsuperscript{nd} of July 2011 my husband and I were on our way to the airport after few days’ vacation following the ISPP conference in Istanbul when we got a message from my mother. It was very short: \textit{A bomb has gone off in the city center of Oslo – your sister and Chomsky (our dog) are safe. Don’t call!} (The communication systems could potentially have suffered a breakdown, I later learned).

We immediately picked up the Iphone and started to read the Norwegian newspapers. Because the blast appeared to have all the traces of an Al Qaeda operation, almost all the commentators speculated about whether the horrific possibility that even Norway could have been hit by this terrorist organization. I remember we talked about how the Norwegian society could be altered by this terrorist act. The already existing skepticism towards the Muslim community in Norway could get out of control - a thought that was both frightening and saddening.

Then, right before boarding the plane, there appeared to be more and more reports coming out on alleged shootings at the Labour Party youth camp on the island of Utøya.

Upon our arrival in Norway the gruesome situation at the island were gradually revealed and we could follow it live, almost paralyzed, on TV – a bit like 9/11. The stories of the horror endured by survivors and the desperate search (after their children) by parents were shattering to watch.

Who had done this? – there were rumors about a captivation of the terrorist and not long after, the name and the picture of Anders Behring Breivik (ABB) appeared on the screen; a young, ethnic, Norwegian from the Westside of Oslo.

The last 49 days I have, together with my colleague Professor Daniel Heradstveit, been attending the trial court against ABB, accused of killing 77 people. I can assure you that this has been a shaking experience. From the point of view of research, we certainly feel privileged to have been allowed to observe the accused in court. At the same time it has been devastating to listen to the survivors of this enormous tragedy.

Since the question of guilt is already answered the central theme in the courtroom has been to reveal whether ABB can be held accountable for his actions or if he was psychotic at the time when he committed the murders? What role does his ideology
play? It seems to us that the court has been struggling to find the connection between attitude and action. In this regard a quotation from Henrik Ibsens’ Peer Gynt has frequently been uttered by every actor of the court, namely; “Yes, think about it; wish for it; even want it, - - but to actually do it!”

After 49 days in court the issue of what caused him to do it still remains a mystery.

In this paper we set out to illuminate the ideological universe of ABB. His attacks are the worst the Norwegians’ has experienced since the World War II and one of the worst attacks committed within Europe. We think that it is imperative to examine the ideology which ABB gives as the rationale behind his actions. Primarily, because of the potential resonance this ideology may have in certain segments of the population both in Norway, but also in Europe and the US. Especially in Europe some of the structures of this ideology are rooted in the European culture, ready to be absorbed. Furthermore, history tells us that economic crisis promote nationalism alongside with the need for a common enemy.

Various facets of extreme right-wing ideology are already evident in several countries in Europe. In Greece, for example, the right-wing extremist political organization, Golden Dawn, has already established itself in the parliament gaining 6.97% of the popular vote in the Greek Parliament elections in 2012. And in Norway, Lars Gule who has been following the extreme right-wing Norwegian discussion-groups on the internet for years, estimated during his testimony in court that ABB have between 12-15000 sympathizers in Norway.

We don’t know how much, or what kind of impact ABBs’ distorted ideology will have in the years to come, but we can say it is on increase.

There has been substantial focus on ABBs psyche in the court. We will not get into this heated debate on possible psychological malfunctions that may or may not have contributed to his actions. But you should know that, in the Norwegian court system this question has decisive impact upon the verdict. To claim that the pivotal variable is psychiatry is a very courageous position to take – it will be hard to argue that

---

1 Especially with regards to Nazism, Fascism and Communism.
ideology doesn’t play a central role in ABBs’ atrocities and if this is the case, studying his ideological base becomes highly relevant for research.

First, we will take a look at ideology in general before we turn to a concise description of the ideological landscape that ABB was inspired by. Second, we will give a brief account of the methodology applied to study ABBs’ ideology. In our analysis we have derived from the ideological construct of ABB two subcategories, namely, Utopia and Strategy, to make ABBs’ ideological beliefs more easily accessible and we will discuss these within ABBs’ cognitive maps.

**Ideology**

Ideology is, according to Fiske, Lau and Smith (1990), represented in the human memory as a schema - that is; a learned knowledge structure consisting of an interrelated network of beliefs, opinions, and values. This makes ideology very resistant to change.

There are abundance definitions of what constitute an ideology. One of the more comprehensive definitions and which we find relevant for our research purpose is McClosky’s. McClosky (1964:362) states that “ideology is systems of belief that are elaborate, integrated, and coherent, that justify the exercise of power, explain and judge historical events, identify political right and wrong, set forth the interconnections (causal and moral) between politics and other spheres of activity, and furnish guides for action”.

According to Jost, Federico and Napier (2009) ideology has a discursive (socially constructed) superstructure and a functional substructure. Whereas the superstructure is typically transmitted from the political elites to the public, the functional substructure refers to social and psychological needs, goals and motives that drives the individual and are served by the discursive contents of ideology.

Why are human beings receptive to ideologies? The partial answer to this can be found in one or more of the following motive-clusters; relational motives, epistemic
motives (need to reduce uncertainty, complexity and/or ambiguity), and existential motives (need to manage threatening circumstances) (Jost et al., 2009).

Ideologies manifest and communicate collective beliefs, opinions and values of a specific group or society. Although ABB apparently was a lone wolf in committing and planning the atrocities, he is part of a larger milieu that some researchers call anti-jihadism or counter-jihad. The counter-jihad movement is a network of foundations, bloggers, political activists and street gangs. It is anti-Islamic, islamophobic, far-right, and intellectual movement that gained considerable momentum after 9/11. With regard to ideological content, counter-jihadist movements build, to a large extent, on the ideas from Bat Ye´ors` “Eurabia” (2005) and “Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide” (2001) as standard reference literature. Influential actors (writers) within this milieu today are Fjordman (Peder Are Nøstvold Jensen), Serge Trifkovic, David Horowitz, Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller, to name a few.

ABB presents a two-faced enemy image that is consistent with that of the counter-jihadist movement. This two-faced enemy image is composed of internal enemies and external enemies. The external enemy is Islam and Muslims. The internal enemies are left-wing/ Marxist/internationalists/multicultural elites within academia, politics and the media. Where ABB takes this enemy image a step further is in his categorization of internal enemies. They are by ABB categorized within a traitor classification system – Category A, B, and C traitors. Category A and B traitors are clearly identified as legitimate assassination goals. Category A traitors includes political leaders, media leaders, cultural leaders, industry leaders. Category B traitors are cultural Marxists’/multiculturalist politicians and EU- parliamentarians, their advisors and any public and /or corporate servant. Further, it can also be: journalists, editors, teachers, lecturers, university professors, various school/university board members, publicists’, radio commentators etc. Category C traitors are less influential and lower priority targets – often individuals who have facilitated category A and B traitors.

ABB is thus influenced by counter-jihadistical thoughts predominantly with regards to what and who he is against (Sørensen, 2012). When it comes to a more comprehensive understanding of ABBs’ worldview more ideological elements have to be included.
The Swedish historian Mattias Gardell who testified in the court, described the ideological universe of ABB as a mixture of Islamophobia, cultural conservative nationalism, anti-feminism, elements of white supremacist ideology, elements of right-wing Christian-fundamentalist and national-romantic temple-order traditions. Furthermore, he has also been branded as a fascist/ Neo-fascist and a neo-Nazi.

Furthermore, in an article in the New York Times the Norwegian terrorism-researcher, Thomas Hegghammer (2011), states that: “ABB and Al-Qaeda are manifestations of the same generic ideological phenomenon: macro-nationalism – a variant of nationalism applied to clusters of nation-states held together by a notion of shared (transnational) identity”. Extreme nationalists within this ideological faction therefore view their people as being under attack and fight in their defense. This point made by Hegghammer will be elaborated later in this paper.

**Methodology**

In this research the data collection consists of ABBs` statements in court and his 1518 pages long manifest. We have attended the sessions in the trial of ABB and here we have paid attention to ABBs` testimony, his numerous comments, and his concluding commentary. In addition we have studied ABBs` manifest: “2083 A European Declaration of Independence”(2011). The manifest starts with an instruction on the best procedures to distribute the document. The introductory gives an explanation on how “cultural” Marxism gradually infiltrated our post World War 2 society. The rest of the manifest is divided into three parts which he denominates Book 1, 2, and 3. Book 1: *What you need to know, our falsified history other forms of cultural Marxist/multiculturalist propaganda*; Book 2: *Europe Burning*; Book 3: *A Declaration of pre-emptive War*.

We have made use of the principles from Cognitive mapping (i.e. Axelrod, 1976; Bonham & Shapiro, 1976; Bonham, Sergeev & Parshin, 1997; Young, 1996) as a method to help us to categorize the substantial data in a comprehensive manner. A cognitive map is a way of representing belief structures related to a specific subject (Bonham, Heradstveit, Narvesen & Shapiro, 1978).
In this paper we will give a small selection of the cognitive maps that constitute ABBs’ ideological worldview. Our research is at its initial stages and in the continuation of our research we are going to develop these maps further.

Analysis

In this part of the paper we present cognitive maps of ABBs’ ideological beliefs structures. In our analysis we have derived from the ideological construct of ABB two subcategories. These correspond to central parts in ideology as defined by McClosky (1964), presented earlier. The two subcategories are; Utopia and Strategy. This is by no means a comprehensive analysis. It is an initial description of the totalitarian ideology as presented by ABB.
The red arrows in the map indicate a positive and/or increasing correlation. The blue arrows indicate a negative and/or decreasing correlation.
The map above presents the idea elements of ABBs Utopia, not the centrality of the different elements.

Utopia, according to ABB, is a society where mono-culturalism prevail, in fact, the only culture that is tolerable is the cultural conservative based on European history and traditions. There is a conception throughout ABBs´ writings that the European civilization is a superior cultural product that needs to be cultivated and developed. Therefore, one needs to reclaim values that are about to evaporate. A principally emphasis is placed on a hierarchical and traditional social structure with considerable elements of elitism³.

Knights Templar, ABBs´ temple-order, will secure the establishment of the mono-cultural and cultural conservative Utopia and the establishment of the new institutions like the Conservative Guardian Council. This council shall guarantee and protect the overall political system that constitutes Utopia; “Certain political principles should be made permanent and unalterable in the future”

The council ensures the protection of traditions and values and subsequently preserves the European identity, culture, traditions and nation state. The parliament will have limited powers and are overseen by a Cultural and Scientific Overseer.

In addition to the council ABB presents another new institution, namely, a new pan-European Catholic Church with a “Crusader Pope” to direct the church towards cultural Christianity. Religion should influence all aspects of society, but in particular be involved in education and politics.

The mono-culturalistic utopia is a society where Islam is forbidden and Muslims are expelled which will have some positive consequences according to ABB. First, when we get rid of Muslims we also get rid of the Quran and Hadith which ABB considers genocidal political tools. Secondly, there will no longer be present parallel inferior cultures, norms, and ethics that impair the society’s moral, law and order. Third, a welfare state based on free market economy will be obtainable.

The cultural conservative utopia is hierarchical, patriarchal and authoritarian. Nuclear family values are put emphasis on. Matriarchal systems should be suppressed and ABB in particular stresses that self-determined abortion will be forbidden.

---

³ The belief in a chosen elite that sees connections and solutions that others don’t and for that reason alone are entitled to act as they see fit.
Strategy I

Increased censorship on moderate cultural conservatives

Increased polarization

Increased radicalization

Negative attention towards moderate cultural conservatives

Violent revolution/ war

Radicalization of moderate cultural conservatives

Mass killings of enemies

“Lone wolf” strategy in planning and executing

Peaceful revolution impossible

Violent revolution/ war

Utopia

Victory

Increased polarization

Increased radicalization

Increased censorship on moderate cultural conservatives

Trigger and provoke a witch-hunt on cultural conservatives
Strategy II

1. Establish cultural conservative student organizations in universities all over Europe
2. A pan-European conservative consolidation
3. Create an untainted cultural conservative patriotic youth movement
4. Anti-jihad movements merge with Christian movements and other cultural conservative movements
5. Anti-jihadists agree on a set of principles
The above cognitive maps (Strategy I and II) are not maps per se, but causal chains of events that explain different strategies that, according to ABB can lead towards Utopia. The first path (Strategy I) is derived from ABBs’ explanation in court in defense of his actions on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of July 2011. ABB stated in court that we are in a civil war with Islamism and Muslims and that if he and other cultural conservative don’t act now, Europe will succumb to Islam. He believes that this imminent submission is made possible by a deliberate policy, constructed by the left-wing/Marxist elite (that includes most liberals and bourgeois) within media, academia, and politics.

Within this scenario he advocates a so-called crisis maximization strategy\textsuperscript{4} to fight the Islamization of Europe. First and foremost he, because of the state of our society where the internal enemy rules, upholds the importance of the lone wolf strategy\textsuperscript{5} in order to minimize the chances of being revealed when planning and executing attacks. A major attack with many casualties – in his words: “a minor barbarian act will sometimes be necessary to prevent an even greater barbarism”. This barbarian attacks can have two possible outcomes according to ABB. It can either force the Marxists governments to change its policy into more strict immigration policies and an overall skepticism of immigrants and Islam or lead to a chain of events as shown above. The killings of 77 peoples on the 22/7 will trigger and provoke a witch-hunt on moderate cultural conservatives. As a consequence moderate cultural conservatives will experience increased censorship which will accumulate in increased polarization within the society and cause further radicalization of cultural conservatives. This is seemingly counterproductive because the moderate cultural conservatives will experience amplified negative attention. But when these groups get persecuted many of them will also radicalize. In time, when peaceful revolution is made impossible,

\textsuperscript{4} Crisis maximization strategy is a well-known terror-strategy where the aim is to destabilize the regime and to create a revolutionary situation. The terrorists provoke the government to overreact or/and to make them paralyzed and incapable to protect the citizens against random violence (Bjørgo & Heradstveit, 1993). This strategy is clearly portrayed in The Turner Diaries; an ideological “Bible” and a central handbook in terrorism to the most extreme and violence-directed Neo-Nazi groups in Europe and the US. Here it is stated that: “one of the major purposes of political terror, always and everywhere, is to force the authorities to take reprisals and to become more repressive, thus alienating a portion of the population and generating sympathy for the terrorist. And the other purpose is to create unrest by destroying the populations` sense of security and their belief in the invincibility of the government” (MacDonald, 1980:51).

\textsuperscript{5} Burton and Stewart (2008) defines a lone wolf as: “a person who acts on his or her own without orders from-or even connection to- an organization”. A lone wolf also typically acts out of strong political, ideological and/or religious beliefs and furthermore, characteristically plan and prepare their attacks carefully and thoroughly (Spaaij, 2012).
then only violent revolution remains. If the cultural conservatives triumph, then Utopia can be realized.

As noted earlier, the Norwegian scientist, Thomas Hegghammer, has pointed out that there are traces in ABBs writings’ of the idea of a generic ideological phenomenon: macro-nationalism – a variant of nationalism applied to clusters of nation-states held together by a notion of shared (transnational) identity”. One of these traces, namely a new pan-European Catholic Church with a “Crusader Pope, was pointed out in the Utopia section. Another trace of this macro-nationalism can be found in his strategic thinking and are illustrated by the other causal chain of events above (Strategy II).

According to ABB it will be a strategic move to organize and create a pan-European conservative consolidation, a new conservative ideology (a political ideal) that will appeal to at least 20-35% of the Western European population. The path to achieving such a organization runs through the agreement among Anti-jihadists on a set of principles that can be accommodated. This will make it easier for them to merge with Christian movements and other cultural conservative movements with similar sets of principles. Then they will together be able to establish an untainted cultural conservative patriotic youth movement – this movement ABB suggest may be a version of Russia’s Nashi movement (Putin’s youth movement). This youth movement will prepare the ground for the establishment of cultural conservative student organizations in universities all over Europe which again will increase the chances of success for the pan-European conservative consolidation.

Concluding remarks

In this paper we have identified the ideological idea elements of ABBs’ Utopia and the correlation between these ideas. We have furthermore revealed his key strategies for achieving his ideological goal, that is, Utopia. The results show that his ideological Utopia is a mono-cultural, conservative Christian, and totalitarian society. The strategy leading to and secures Utopia is a parallel strategy between an (extreme) violent crises maximization strategy and the creation of a European macro-nationalistic consolidation. Our research is at its initial stages and in the continuation of our research we intend to develop these maps further. We also set forth to
examine the many facets of right-wing extremist ideology more broadly with the intention to look more closely at this ideologies’ potential in the more mainstream political landscape.

And last, but not least; is there a potential for extended and more direct lines of conflict between jihadist movements and right-wing extremists? ABB himself argues that there are/will be a war between jihadists and their western supporters and nationalists/cultural conservatives like him. This we don’t know - chiefly; we don’t know whether jihadist movements will pick up the ball if it is thrown by the right-wing extremists. This potential scenario is however worth attention. Especially, with regards to the observation that ABBs‘ manifest “reveals a new doctrine of civilizational war that represents the closes thing yet, to a Christian version of Al-Qaeda” (Hegghammer, 2011).
References


