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**Master's degree in
European and Global Studies**



BEYOND LIKES AND SHARES:

THE PRESENCE, CONTENT, COMMUNICATION, AND
COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAME OF FAR-RIGHT GROUPS IN
NORWAY ON FACEBOOK IN JANUARY 2016 AND AUGUST 2023

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Abstract:

Europe today is often described to be in a “far-right wave”¹ where right-wing parties are gaining momentum by seizing political power in countries such as Sweden, Finland, Germany, Italy, and France, and although the strength of far-right groups in Norway has received a lot of attention by scholars, there are very few analyses conducted on this. During this “wave” of far-right movements, has Norway remained the exception? Already in 2015, scholars found that the far-right movements in Norway had moved from “the streets” to “the internet” (Bjørge 2015; Ravndal 2016), and in 2018, Bjørge (2018) found that they increasingly use Facebook to spread information and propaganda. This thesis therefore aims to cover a gap in the existing literature by mapping the presence, content, communication, and collective action frame of five prominent far-right groups in Norway on Facebook in August 2023. This thesis aims to answer three research questions: 1) Is the far-right more/less present on Facebook in August 2023 compared to January 2016?, 2) Has the type of activity/nature of the content changed since 2016?, 3) Is the collective action frame in August 2023 strengthened/weakened compared to January 2016? To answer these questions, this thesis relied on a mixed approach, using first a quantitative research method with data collected from the Facebook-pages of the five groups on the number of followers, posts, likes, comments, and shares, in order to say something about the strength and presence of the groups. The qualitative analysis relied on a content analysis of all the posts published during the month of August 2023 in order to say something about the collective action frame by analyzing the perception of “the problem”, the solution, and whether there were expressions of a willingness to translate these sentiments into action. For the comparative part, this thesis used a study conducted in March 2015 and January 2016 by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) by applying the same methodology and comparing their conclusions from January 2016 with the ones revealed by this thesis from August 2023. The five far-right groups included in this study are: Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN), the Norway Democrats (ND), the People’s Movement against Immigration (FMI), Pegida Norway, and The Norwegian People’s Party (NF).

Key words: Far right, Facebook, Nationalism, Extremism, Immigration

¹ Lynch, S. (2023, June 30). *Europe swings right - and reshapes the EU*. POLITICO. <https://www.politico.eu/article/far-right-giorgia-meloni-europe-swings-right-and-reshapes-the-eu/>

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Padova, November 2023

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1. Introduction

The strength of far-right groups on social media platforms in Norway has received a lot of attention from scholars and researchers, but few studies have carried out analyses on the phenomenon in Norway. One prominent study was however conducted on this in March 2015 and January 2016 by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017), who compared quantitative data (number of followers, posts, comments, shares, likes) of the Facebook-pages of seven prominent far-right groups in Norway, while also conducting a qualitative data analysis of the content of the posts to reflect on the collective action frame in analyzing the description of “the problem”, solutions, why is it important to act now (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017). The backdrop to the study of Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) was the so-called “refugee crisis” which saw its peak in 2015/2016, and they concluded that the “crisis” had an impact and a role in the conclusion that the presence and activity had increased on Facebook from March 2015 to January 2016 (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017). However, they found that the collective action frame was missing, and that the Facebook-pages functioned more as information channels than channels for communication or spread of information (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017). This study was a helpful original study as it provided a methodology that was possible to copy, and at the same time, it is one of the most prominent studies conducted on the strength, presence, content, communication, and collective action frame of the far right on Facebook in Norway. Since this study was conducted in March 2015/January 2016, many factors point to the importance of conducting an updated study on the current situation, which is exactly what this thesis aims to do in analyzing a new data set from August 2023, and comparing it with the one from January 2016.

Since the data collection was done in 2016, the world and Norway has gone through several tests in the shape of a pandemic in Covid-19, an ongoing war on the European continent, an energy crisis, and another lethal terrorist attack carried out by a far-right terrorist, making the backdrop for this updated analysis even more interesting and important, as it is possible to say something about whether or not the traction towards the extreme far-right is affected by the onset of different types of crises. Additionally, in the national threat assessment carried out annually by the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST), it was pointed out that:

“Individuals with extreme right-wing or extreme Islamist convictions will pose the most serious threat of terror against Norway in 2022. PST finds there to be an even chance that right-wing extremists or extreme Islamists will attempt to carry out terrorist acts in Norway” (Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste, 2022).

In addition to the crises and the national threat assessment, the political environment in Norway furthermore provided a backdrop for the importance of carrying out this research. As mentioned in the abstract, several right-wing parties across Europe have gained political power and support in Finland, Sweden, Germany, Italy, and France, however, according to political scientist Svein Erik Tuastad², the far-right populist party in Norway, FrP, is still less populist than other far-right parties across Europe, coupled with the fact that Norway has been sheltered from the frustration and deep crises as seen in other European countries. He also stated that one of the main reasons why European countries are witnessing a rise in support for far-right parties, is that the parties have caught anti-immigration supporters among the population, and that many people feel betrayed and let down by the traditional and established politicians³. Tuastad furthermore stated that although the frustration is “not as deep” in Norway, the far-right can find fertile ground in times of crises when people feel hopeless, and when they feel overlooked and let down⁴. The communal and regional elections in Norway held on 11/09/2023 revealed that the right-wing populist party FrP (Progress Party) jumped forward and had a successful election, gaining⁵ 3,1% in support compared with the elections in 2019 (from 8% to 11,3%), establishing itself as the third largest party in the communal and regional elections. The party was also the second-largest party among the youth, garnering a support of 19,5%⁶ in September 2023 among the youth in Norway. The most updated numbers on the support for the far-right in Norway therefore seems to be on the up if one looks at the communal and regional elections held in September 2023.

² Agdestein, E. (2023, July 5). *Derfor er Norge Annerledes*. ABC Nyheter. <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2023/07/04/195933108/ytre-hoyre-bolgen-derfor-er-norge-annerledeslandet>

³ Agdestein, E. (2023, July 5). *Derfor er Norge Annerledes*. ABC Nyheter. <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2023/07/04/195933108/ytre-hoyre-bolgen-derfor-er-norge-annerledeslandet>

⁴ Agdestein, E. (2023, July 5). *Derfor er Norge Annerledes*. ABC Nyheter. <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2023/07/04/195933108/ytre-hoyre-bolgen-derfor-er-norge-annerledeslandet>

⁵ Haraldsen, S. (2023, September 11). *Bedre Tall enn frp-forventet: – jeg er så stolt*. NRK. https://www.nrk.no/norge/bedre-tall-enn-frp-forventet_-_jeg-er-sa-stolt-1.16549973

⁶ Flølo, K. (2023, September 5). *Høyre og Frp Vant de Unge*. NTB Nyheter/Klartale. <https://www.klartale.no/norge/valg2023/2023/09/05/de-unge-vil-ha-hoyre-og-frp/>

Another important factor to this research is the element of social media, and more precisely, the platform of Facebook. A central finding on the strength of the far-right in Norway was done by Jupskås (2020) as he found that the far-right has grown by a substantial amount on social media in the period of 2015-2019. The internet and the online universe is relevant for the discussion because several studies have been published and conducted on the fact that the far right movements have moved from the streets and to social media. Both researcher Kristian Bjørkelo (2012), author Øyvind Strømme (2011), and senior researcher Jacob Aasland Ravndal (2020) more recently proposed that the far right environment is strong on social media, and that the most extreme groups and individuals exist online and are almost invisible to the public.

Using Facebook as the platform for analysis is just as relevant today as it was in 2016, as a recent study⁷ revealed that Facebook is still the platform that attracts the largest numbers of active users in Norway. The study conducted by Ipsos revealed that 82% of the population in Norway over the age of 18 report having a profile, and 66% report using it at least once daily⁸. This is higher than any other social media platform in Norway as of May 2023. There is furthermore a wide agreement between scholars that the extreme right wing groups are increasingly using the internet and social media for recruiting and radicalization (e.g. Sunde 2013; Koehler 2014, Corb 2014, and Gaudette et al. 2020). In cohesion with this, it was also pointed out that the internet has become an integral part of the life of most humans, and especially young adults and teenagers spend a lot of time online, using different websites and social media. There has been an increase of young adults who get radicalized in far right extreme groups in both Norway and in Europe, and these factors point to the importance of conducting further research regarding the presence of the far-right online, and the communication and content of the activity. By comparing the results from January 2016 as presented by Haanshuus and Jupskås (2017) with the findings from August 2023, it is possible to say something about the increase/decrease of online presence and activity on Facebook by far right groups in Norway during these months, as well as reflecting on the nature of the communication with the audience, and the frequency of it. Additionally, it is possible to

⁷ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). *Hvilke Sosiale medier er mest populære I Norge Akkurat Nå? - omnione as.* Ipsos Some Tracker. <https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

⁸ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). “*Hvilke Sosiale medier...*”. Ipsos Some Tracker. <https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

say something about whether there has been a change in the nature of the content, and whether it has become more or less extreme since 2016. According to Ravndal (2013), the most normal way to measure radicalization online is to study a person's or a group's communication online, and although this thesis will not look at radicalization online, it will look at the type of communication present on the Facebook-pages, which could serve as means for radicalization. A weakness of this approach is the fact that it is still impossible to say something about whether this process of radicalization was brought on by the use of the internet, or if it was due to other reasons and factors (Ravndal 2013). However, the aim is to contribute to covering a knowledge gap on the presence, content, communication, and the collective action frame of far-right groups on Facebook in Norway in August 2023, and although the method is in no way perfect, the aim is to be a contribution to enriching the existing literature on the topic.

The research questions this thesis aims to answer are:

- *Is the far-right more/less present on Facebook in August 2023 compared to January 2016?*
- *Has the type of activity/nature of the content changed since January 2016? (as a channel for information, communication, and/or distribution)*
- *Is the collective action frame in August 2023 strengthened/weakened compared to January 2016? (common understanding of: which parts of the society that are seen as problematic, how to rectify the situation, and why it is important to act now)*

This thesis consists of 10 chapters which are divided into sub-chapters with the different topics related to the larger topic. Chapter one is this one, and it provides an introduction to the thesis with the presentation of the objectives, aims, and the research questions this thesis aims to answer. Chapter two is the systematic literature review, which is divided into different sections based on the topic. The main topics of the literature review are: ultra-nationalistic sentiments: racism, xenophobia, democracy and anti-democratic sentiments, factors for radicalization online, and finally the internet as a facilitator. Chapter three is an overview of the background of far-right extremism in Norway in

order to understand how we have arrived at this point, and the historical background starts from the 1980s and runs until present day. Chapter four is a presentation of the original study conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås which was published in 2017. The methodology of this thesis relies on the one used in this original study as well as on their results to compare them with the data collected for this thesis. Chapter five is the methodology, which relies on both qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to answer the research questions in a more careful way. This chapter presents the methodology of how the empirical research was conducted, and also includes a presentation of the units of analysis, which are the five far-right groups studied. These are: Norgesdemokratene, Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring, Pegida Norge, Stopp islamiseringen av Norge, and Norsk folkeparti. The sixth chapter presents the findings of the quantitative data collection and includes descriptive statistics on the number of followers, posts, likes, shares, and comments during the month of August 2023. This chapter is therefore split into four different sections, and they are: posts, likes, shares, and comments. The seventh chapter includes the qualitative research conducted for this thesis, which is an analysis of all of the posts published on the five different Facebook-sites during the month of August 2023. The eighth chapter is the discussion and comparison of the findings from January 2016 and August 2023. The ninth chapter presents the conclusions in answering the three research questions posed in the introductory chapter of this thesis. The tenth and final chapter includes two sections: one on the implications of the thesis, and one section that identifies areas for future research.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter will present a systematic literature review in addition to the theoretical framework as it relates to the topic of this thesis. The main theory used in this thesis is the theory of ultra-nationalistic sentiments, exclusionary nationalism, as well as the concept of democracy and anti-democratic sentiments. These were the main findings in the study conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) which this thesis relies on. However, the concept of ultra-nationalistic sentiments can encompass an abundance of other theories and concepts, including, in its most extreme form, racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiments. The systematic literature review will also include the current research conducted on the different factors for radicalization, as well as the current literature on the internet as a facilitator for radicalization. The current publications and studies conducted on these concepts in relation to radicalization online will also be presented in this chapter. This is an important aspect of the thesis as it can shed light on the possible effect of the strengthened presence of the far-right on social media platforms such as Facebook.

2.1 Systematic literature review

The literature review will be a systematic review of the existing literature on the topics relevant to the topic of this thesis, which is the presence of far-right groups in Norway on Facebook. This thesis will consist of both qualitative and quantitative research methods as these are well suited to provide an answer to the research questions. The qualitative part of the study will aid in developing an understanding of the social phenomena (Thagaard, 2018), and furthermore, a systematic literature review will provide the necessary building blocks for understanding the background and state of the art of the research questions. In the literature selected for this review, no personal cases are included (except for the public one of Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik) due to both practical and ethical reasons. The literature included provides both empirical and normative examples. The empirical studies focus more on facts and have an aim of uncovering the factual relationships of the society (Grønmo, 2016). The normative studies are more value-based and reflect on questions regarding the outlook of the ideal society (Grønmo, 2016).

A systematic literature review should include works that are centered around a specific topic and therefore aid in providing answers to the research questions (Aveyard, 2018). Although there are different types of literature reviews and different approaches to them, this literature review will be a systematic review which identifies, selects and evaluates different relevant studies which are critical in order to answer the research questions and provide a background on the existing state of the art in the field (Ridley, 2012). Considering the vast research already conducted on the internet and far-right radicalization, a systematic literature review was appropriate for this paper. Aveyard (2018) provides guidelines for how a systematic literature review should be conducted, and states that it should include: the research questions, a methodical chapter which clarifies the search, choice of method, evaluations, criteria and analysis, a presentation of the empirical findings and a critical evaluation of them, and lastly, a reflection around the results.

2.1.1 Overview of the selected literature

The documents selected are studies or research papers, and they were mostly selected through using structured searches on the database entitled Google Scholar, which allows for a wide and cross-reaching selection of papers and studies. Google Scholar includes different academic publications across sectors, including articles, reports, journals, and books. The search words used were a combination of these:

- far right radicalization
- social media / internet / Facebook
- right wing / far right / extreme far right
- extremism
- populism
- immigration
- racism
- nationalism
- Norway

To ensure that only the most relevant information and data are included in the systematic literature review, some criteria for inclusion and exclusion were put in place

(Aveyard, 2018). The inclusion criteria were: research papers or studies published no later than in 2000, inclusion of one of the search words listed above, the language had to be in English, Norwegian, Swedish or Danish, and the research paper or study had to be peer reviewed, published by an authoritative body, or by a respected Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The exclusionary criteria were any research papers or studies which did not fulfill these criteria. Some studies and research papers were also selected using the snowball method, where some of the articles were selected based on the fact that they were referenced to or used in several of the other original studies and research papers found in the large search in the database. Including newer articles and research papers was of importance during the literature review, especially works written after 2016, as this was when the original study of Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) was written which this thesis will compare its findings with. This was an important factor because this thesis aims to provide a new and updated study of the far-right presence online on Facebook in Norway, and not repeat or reuse the material used in 2016 by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017).

2.1.2 Analysis of the data

During the process of selecting the studies and research papers that were relevant to the research question of this paper, the pool of available papers and studies had to be narrowed down. Through the process of reading the papers in their entirety, several relevant topics and themes emerged, allowing for a categorization of all the studies and papers included based on the topics or themes discussed. The goal of the systematic literature review was to evaluate the relevance of each paper and study, and each one highlighted different and overlapping factors and themes relevant to this paper and its research questions. In the following chart, each topic/theme is listed with a corresponding list of the relevant studies and papers selected that address these topics.

2.2 Table with selected literature & corresponding topics

Topic/theme	Research paper/study
Nationalistic sentiments	Ekman, M. (2022). The Great Replacement: Strategic

	<p>mainstreaming of far-right conspiracy claims. <i>Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies</i>, 28(4), 1127–1143. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221091983</p> <p>Haanshuus, B. P., & Jupskås, A. R. (2017). Høyreklikk! en analyse av Ytre Høyrepå sosiale medier I norge. <i>Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning</i>, 58(2), 145–165. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1504-291x-2017-02-01</p> <p>Knutsen , T. S. (2019). Norsk høyreekstremisme på Facebook. <i>The University of Bergen</i>.</p> <p>Døving , C. A. (2018). Konspirasjonsteorier i det ytterliggående høyreland-skapet i Norge. In T. Emberland (Ed.), <i>Høyreekstremisme i Norge: Utviklingstrekk, konspirasjonsteorier og forebyggingsstrategier</i>. Essay.</p> <p>Bieber, F. (2020). Global nationalism in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. <i>Nationalities Papers</i>, 50(1), 13–25. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2020.35</p> <p>Malešević, S. (2020). Grounded nationalism and cultural diversity. <i>Religion and Neo-Nationalism in Europe</i>, 85–98. https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748905059-85</p> <p>Muddle , C. (2019). The far right today. <i>Cambridge: Polity Press</i>.</p>
Anti-democratic sentiments/ democracy	<p>Døving , C. A. (2018). Konspirasjonsteorier i det ytterliggående høyreland-skapet i Norge. In T. Emberland (Ed.), <i>Høyreekstremisme i Norge: Utviklingstrekk, konspirasjonsteorier og forebyggingsstrategier</i>. Essay.</p> <p>Knutsen , T. S. (2019). Norsk høyreekstremisme på Facebook. <i>The University of Bergen</i>.</p> <p>Fukuyama, F. (2017). Political order and political decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the globalization of democracy. <i>Royal National Institute of Blind People</i>.</p> <p>Huntington, S. P. (2014). The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of world order. <i>Penguin</i>.</p> <p>Goodhart, D. (2020). The road to somewhere: The populist revolt and the future of politics. <i>Hurst Co</i>.</p>
Racism	<p>Knutsen , T. S. (2019). Norsk høyreekstremisme på Facebook. <i>The University of Bergen</i>.</p>

	<p>Muddle , C. (2019). <i>The far right today</i>. Cambridge: Polity Press.</p> <p>Ekman, M. (2022). The Great Replacement: Strategic mainstreaming of far-right conspiracy claims. <i>Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies</i>, 28(4), 1127–1143. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221091983</p> <p>Haugstvedt , H., & Bjørge , T. (2022). Ungdom og ekstremisme i 2021. <i>C-REX - Center for Research on Extremism</i>.</p>
Xenophobia	<p>Bordeau, J. (2010). <i>Xenophobia: The violence of fear and hate</i>. Rosen Pub.</p> <p>Knutsen , T. S. (2019). Norsk høyreekstremisme på Facebook. <i>The University of Bergen</i>.</p> <p>Corb, A. (2014). Online hate and cyber-bigotry 1. <i>The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime</i>, 306–317. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203578988-26</p> <p>Koehler, D. (2014). The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet. <i>Journal for Deradicalization</i>, 1, 116–134.</p> <p>Døving , C. A. (2018). Konspirasjonsteorier i det ytterliggående høyreland-skapet i Norge. In T. Emberland (Ed.), <i>Høyreekstremisme i Norge: Utviklingstrekk, konspirasjonsteorier og forebyggingsstrategier</i>. Essay.</p>
Factors for online radicalization	<p>Schils , N., & Verhage , A. (2017). Understanding How and Why Young People Enter Radical or Violent Extremist Groups. <i>International Journal of Conflict and Violence</i>, 11 (2), 1–17. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-3084</p>
Identity & sense of belonging	<p>Gaudette, T., Scrivens, R., & Venkatesh, V. (2020). The role of the internet in facilitating violent extremism: Insights from former right-wing extremists. <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 34(7), 1339–1356. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1784147</p>
A sense of injustice/unfairness	<p>Aalen, I. (2013). En kort bok om sosiale medier. <i>Bergen: Fagbokforlaget</i></p> <p>Sunde (red), I. M. (2013). PHS Forskning 2013:1. <i>Politihøgskolen, Oslo</i>.</p> <p>Ravndal , J. A. (2013). Anders Behring Breivik’s use of the Internet and social media 1. <i>Journal EXIT-Deutschland</i>.</p> <p>Bjørkelo , K. (2012). Estremisme og verdveven. In K. H. Partapuoli</p>

	<p>(Ed.), Høyreekstremisme i Norge . essay, <i>Antirasistisk senter</i>.</p> <p>Strømmen , Ø. (2011). Det mørke nettet. Cappelen Damm.</p> <p>Geeraerts, S. (2012). Digital radicalization of youth. <i>Social Cosmos</i>, 3 (1), 25–32.</p> <p>Rieger, D., Frischlich, L., & Bente, G. (2013). Propaganda 2.0. Psychological Effects of Right-Wing and Islamic Extremist Internet Videos. <i>Luchterhand Verlag</i>.</p> <p>Corb, A. (2014). Online hate and cyber-bigotry 1. <i>The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime</i>, 306–317. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203578988-26</p> <p>Alava, S., Frau-Meigs, D., & Hassan, G. (2017). Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research. <i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</i>.</p>
<p>The internet as a facilitator for radicalization</p>	<p>Conway, M. (2016). Determining the role of the internet in violent extremism and terrorism: Six suggestions for progressing research. <i>Studies in Conflict & Terrorism</i>, 40(1), 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2016.1157408</p> <p>Alava, S., Frau-Meigs, D., & Hassan, G. (2017). Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research. <i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</i>.</p> <p>Corb, A. (2014). Online hate and cyber-bigotry 1. <i>The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime</i>, 306–317. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203578988-26</p> <p>Gaudette, T., Scrivens, R., & Venkatesh, V. (2020). The role of the internet in facilitating violent extremism: Insights from former right-wing extremists. <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 34(7), 1339–1356. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1784147</p> <p>DeCook, J. R. (2018). Memes and symbolic violence: #proudboys and the use of memes for propaganda and the construction of collective identity. <i>Learning, Media and Technology</i>, 43(4), 485–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1544149</p> <p>Rieger, D., Frischlich, L., & Bente, G. (2013). Propaganda 2.0. Psychological Effects of Right-Wing and Islamic Extremist Internet Videos. <i>Luchterhand Verlag</i>.</p> <p>Koehler, D. (2014). The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet. <i>Journal for Deradicalization</i>, 1, 116–134.</p>

	<p>Schils , N., & Verhage , A. (2017). Understanding How and Why Young People Enter Radical or Violent Extremist Groups. <i>International Journal of Conflict and Violence</i>, 11 (2), 1–17. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-3084</p> <p>Geeraerts, S. (2012). Digital radicalization of youth. <i>Social Cosmos</i>, 3 (1), 25–32.</p>
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Table 2.2. Table with the topics of the literature review with the corresponding selected literature.

2.3 Ultra-nationalistic sentiments

2.3.1 Preserving what is “ours” at the expense of globalization and modernization?

Nationalism has assumed a central role as an ideology and practice across the world especially during the last two decades. Contemporary society relies on the feature of nationalism as states define themselves as nation-states (Malešević, 2019). There are several factors that are prominent in the nationalistic ideology that are relevant for this comparative analysis. It is perhaps easiest understood as a:

“narrow ideology that values membership in a nation more than belonging to other groups and it gives preference to political representation by the nation for the nation” (Bieber, 2020).

In short, the principle of nationalism often structures the world in nations, and the nation is of political and social importance (Bieber, 2020). Nationalism does not have to be negative, and in Haanshuus and Jupskås’ study (2017), their inclusion criteria of far-right groups included in their study relied on the notion that they all practice *exclusionary* nationalism. Exclusionary nationalism has become more prominent in recent years. Exclusionary nationalism and the political far-right are strongly connected as the political parties seek to establish ethnocracies, which is a state dominated by a nation that is defined in narrow ethnic terms (Bieber 2020, Muddle 2019). Political actors who practice exclusionary nationalism often rely on multiple narratives, including populism in which the far-right groups claim to represent “the majority against an alien elite” (Bieber, 2020). A common theme focused on in exclusionary nationalism is the threat posed by migration and Islam, which is a discourse that has

found fertile ground also in Europe in the wake of the “refugee crisis” (Bieber, 2020). The far-right parties and candidates have had success in recent years, and this has led to a mainstreaming of the exclusionary ideas, causing them to become more socially accepted and widespread (Bieber, 2020). Bieber (2020) also argues that exclusionary nationalism is “highly polarizing and divisive”, and points out that exclusionary nationalism often functions in tandem with both populism and authoritarianism (Bieber, 2020). With the increased nationalistic sentiments, there has also been an observable rise of authoritarian and populist regimes all over the world, reinforcing the idea that the three are often mutually reinforcing (Bieber, 2020).

Prominent terrorists in Norway including Philip Manshaus and Anders Behring Breivik were both a part of the right-wing extremist forum online named Stormfront, which is the world’s largest website for white nationalism (Ravndal, 2013). A lot of different types of nationalism exist today as demonstrated, and they rely on different factors, such as being politically or ideologically motivated, but no single definition can be given of the term. Several different definitions will therefore be provided, and first up is Benedict Anderson (2006), who described the feeling people within a nation have of belonging and solidarity despite not knowing each other, as nationalism (Anderson, 2006). Anderson wrote in his famous book “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism” that the shared history, language, narratives and symbols are the driving forces behind nationalism and the sense of belonging within a nation (Anderson, 2006). Interestingly, Anderson also pointed out the important role of the printing press as a way to connect people who otherwise would not have had much contact, and today, a clear and daunting parallel can be drawn between the internet, as the modern printing press, and the possibility of people who normally would never find each other, but now can. The common and shared culture, symbols and narratives, as well as the role of the media and communication, were all pointed out by Anderson (2006) as contributing factors to creating and fostering a kind of “imagined” community and sense of belonging (Anderson, 2006).

The political scientist named Ernest Gellner also defined nationalism, and his definition regarded the argument that nationalism is political, and his argument centered around the notion that the political and national unit should be coinciding (Gellner et al., 2013). Gellner pointed out the link between nationalism, modernity and culture, and argued

that the term and ideology arose due to modernization, where people needed homogeneity both socially and culturally (Gellner et al., 2013). He also held that the construction of a nation relies on the idea of a shared historical and cultural heritage where there exists a collective will and power to continue that heritage (Gellner et al., 2013). Gellner (2013) also pointed out that nationalism plays a crucial part in creating a sense of identity, and stated that nationalism “invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner et al, 2013), and emphasized the idea that nationalism is constructed and is “not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness” (Gellner et al, 2013). Anthony Smith (2014) also argued that nationalism is political, and stated that the political and national unit should function in harmony. Smith (2014) further argued that the harmonization of political and national boundaries is an important principle of nationalism. Hans Kohn, on the other side, mentions the term “ideology” when defining nationalism, and in his work entitled “The Idea of Nationalism” (2017), he defined nationalism as “... not a mere political programme; it is a way of life, a complete ideology and an emotional commitment” (Kohn, 2017), characterizing the term as something that at large is based on emotions and ideology rather than something that is purely politically motivated. These different definitions provided by several scholars of nationalism shed light on the multifaceted nature of the term.

There are a lot of ongoing discussions on whether the onset of different crises have affected the rise of nationalistic sentiments across the world. Bieber (2020) looked at exclusionary tendencies such as whether increased nationalism during the Covid-19 pandemic was reinforced. Several scholars stated that nationalism might have been a result or consequence of the pandemic and the restrictive responses by states (Rachman 2020; Tisdall 2020; Harari 2020). Bieber (2020) argues that the restrictive policies that were implemented, including border closures, “solidarity”, and increased fear, could aid in making nationalism more salient as it became increasingly important to support and protect “their own communities” (Bieber, 2020).

Several other works have been published on the nationalistic and anti-immigrant factors which are prominent in many far-right groups and ideologies. In Norway, research shows that this is no exception as Haanshuus and Jupskås (2017) and Knutsen (2019) all did research on the content published by prominent Norwegian far-right groups in Norway on Facebook. They found that immigration in general was one of the most

debated and important topics. Knutsen (2019) found in her analysis of over 172 351 Facebook comments using four far right groups in Norway: Stop Islamization in Norway (SIAN), Norwegian Defence League, Movement Against Immigration, and the Democrats. Knutsen (2019) looked at the content published since the inception of the different Facebook groups and until 2019, and she reports an overrepresentation of comments published on the rhetoric of “us” and “them”, and she states that the concept of nationalism is an important characteristic of the ideology found in the comments. She points out that the rhetoric centers around the notion that the ethnic Norwegians should have the rights to participate in the cultural and Christian traditions, whereas “the others” should not, and more importantly, “the others” should not be able to influence the Norwegian culture and traditions (Knutsen, 2019). She states that the comments in the far right groups on Facebook are largely underlining the importance of Norwegians having a common culture, history, language and ethnicity, and she is supported by the research conducted by Døving and Emberland (2018), whom studied conspiracy theories based on Muslims, and stated that the cultural overtaking is almost as important as the political power fight. The national identity, what it means to be Norwegian, Norwegian traditions, values and symbols are interpreted as threatened by immigrants and Muslims, encouraging this divide between “us” and “the others”, making it increasingly clear that “the others” threaten and hurt “us” (Døving & Emberland 2018; Knutsen 2019).

Ekman (2022) considers the conspiracy theory of the ‘Great Replacement’, which is anchored in the idea that the homogenous populations in European countries are being replaced by people who are not ethnically European as a political discourse open to be capitalized on by far-right and mainstream right-wing actors. Ekman (2022) therefore argues that the narrative fronted by the political elite in controlling the public narrative is an important point, using the example of e.g. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán who has cultivated the idea of a ‘replacement’. Orbán has campaigned on the narrative of anti-immigrant sentiments and policies, and has framed immigration as an “existential threat” (Ekman, 2022). During an international conference with the title the ‘Budapest demography summit’ which took place in 2019, Orbán stated that ensuring that only Europeans are populating Europe is of the utmost importance, and that if this is simply taken for granted, then “we are speaking about an exchange of populations” (Ekman, 2022). He also stated that within Europe, there are strong forces “who want to

replace the population of Europeans with others” (Ekman, 2022). Since Europe faced one of the biggest so-called “refugee crises” in 2015, this narrative has gotten increased attention and traction, especially among far right political discourses (Ekman, 2022).

According to Ekman and additional research, the changing demographic brought on by immigration can “lead to increased negative attitudes towards minorities/immigrants” and increased perceived threats of economic costs, more pressure on the welfare system, as well as changing values and culture (Craig et al., 2021; Ekam, 2022). The main argument put forward by Ekman (2022) is that the mainstreaming process of conspiracy claims, specifically those related to immigration, pose a threat “not only to democratic institutions and societies, but also to people of immigrant backgrounds” (Ekman, 2022). Ekman (2022) looked at for example the narrative fronted by the militant neo-Nazi organization entitled the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) which is active in Sweden, Norway and Finland. The main narratives fronted are centered around the idea that immigrants are an “alien race” and claim that refugees are “lifestyle immigrants” arriving in Europe only to improve their economic situation (Ekam, 2022). The group also claims that the “invasion” is “orchestrated by foreign powers”, quoting a Christian orthodox nationalist historian who claimed that the influx of “non-whites” is orchestrated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Ekam, 2022). There are two parts of the arguments of the group, one being the notion that immigrants pose an existential threat to the native population, and the other being that elite collaboration and secrecy is the reason behind this threat (Ekam, 2022).

2.3.2 A democracy under pressure from all “sides”

The term “democracy” is something most people are familiar with and have a relationship with, despite the fact that there exists a range of different definitions and perspectives on it. It should be pointed out that no single or widely accepted definition of democracy exists, and that different scholars and prominent political figures have different versions and elaborations of the term. However, in order to understand the principle of anti-democratic sentiments, an understanding of democracy itself must first be provided. A core principle of this analysis hinges on the understanding of democracy as well as the understanding of anti-democratic sentiments as these can be prominent in

far-right groups, environments and ideologies. A widely known definition of democracy can be summed up in a statement made by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, where he stated that: democracy is “the government of the people, by the people, for the people” (Bassler, n.d). This definition aligns with the one provided by Merriam-Webster, which also states that a democracy is: “government by the people” and especially through “rule of the majority” (Merriam-Webster, “Democracy definition & Meaning”, n.d.). It is highlighted that the word “democracy” often “refers to a form of government in which people choose leaders by voting” (Merriam-Webster, “Democracy definition & Meaning”).

In a speech to the House of Commons in 1947, Winston Churchill stated that democracy “is the worst form of government, except for all the others” (Langworth, 2022). This is an interesting quote because it says something about the flaws and shortcomings of democracy, but at the same time, he underlines the superiority of democracy in comparison to alternative systems and forms of government. John Locke points to the importance of the interplay between the rule of law and the preservation of freedom as important in relation to democracy (Locke, 2017). He stated in his work entitled “Two Treatises of Government” published in 1689 that without law, there cannot be freedom, and democracy must be seen in relation to ensuring and persevering freedom through upholding the rule of law (Locke, 2017). In his book “On Democracy” which was published in 1998, Robert Dahl points to other rights that must be protected and included in order to call a political system a democracy. He points to the right to vote, the election of a government in a free and fair way, and he also states that universal suffrage and competitive elections are all a part of modern democracy (Dahl et al., 2021). Across all the different versions and elaborations of the term democracy, it seems that some common denominators can be traced, such as the government needing to be chosen by the people, and that the people can vote for the government representatives.

The drivers of hostility towards the democratic state are found to be e.g. the notion that the political elite consist of members of conspiracy theories across the different Facebook groups. This notion is supported by the research conducted by Døving and Emberland (2018) who hold that this conspiracy theory has become more concrete and popular in recent years which is attributed to a rapid rise in right-wing populism and increasing doubts in the democratic state. In Knutsen’s study (2019), this notion is

further supported by the finding of many comments regarding the politicians not working for the majority of the population and their needs, but rather conspiring with the Muslims and the immigrants. The political party that meets the most animosity from the far-right in online forums is the Norwegian Labor Party (AP), which is singled out as an important enemy and is accused of conspiring with the Muslims (Døving & Emberland 2018; Knutsen 2019). Knutsen (2019) furthermore found that there is an overwhelming majority of the people who leave comments regarding the idea that the fundamental rights should not be equal, but that certain rights should apply only to the “ethnic”, the “white” and the “real” Norwegian people (Knutsen, 2019).

There are also scholars and works that argue that increased immigration can put pressure on the frameworks of the liberal democracies, eventually posing threats to it and its proper functioning. The main arguments are centered around the lack of effective integrative measures coupled with mass-migration from countries that have fundamentally different cultures and way of life, possibly resulting in challenges to the social cohesion, creating increased levels of tension within the population, and as a driving force behind causing a divide within the population (Fukuyama 2017; Huntington 2014; Goodhart 2020). David Goodhart launched the theory of “Somewheres” and “Anywheres” as two different groups, where the latter are “free of nostalgia” (Goodhart, 2020), and are objective when it comes to their views on race, sexuality, and gender (Goodhart, 2020). Goodhart also argues that this group is more open to change and that they often feel connected to a larger identity rather than to the national identity (Goodhart, 2020). The former category, “Somewheres”, instead see “change as loss” (Goodhart, 2020), believing that the government has to put the interests of the (in this case) Britons first, and they feel a sense of unease when it comes to the “modern” world (Goodhart 2020). The latter group, according to Goodhart (2020), feels betrayed and marginalized by the political elite, who have pursued policies and measures that resonate more with the “Anywheres” and their values. The divide between the two groups has become clear, and Goodhart (2020) argues that this causes a political and value-based divide in the society. Goodhart (2020) therefore claims that this has led to a democratic backlash, where the category of “Somewheres” end up supporting populist movements that they see will protect the fundamental values and “way of life” (Goodhart 2020).

2.3.3 The superiority of the “white culture”

There are several definitions of racism, however, Knutsen (2019) uses a theory of the “new racism” which emphasizes culture as the most important factor and criteria, and points to a hierarchy of cultures, where the “white” culture is at the top of this hierarchy (Muddle 1995). Based on this definition, Knutsen (2019) found an abundance of comments related to Islam and Muslims which are categorized as racist due to labeling Muslims as dangerous and violent, and stating that they do not have any right to be in Norway. Knutsen (2019) pointed out that there are racist statements in almost all of the comments she found in her study of the Norwegian far-right Facebook groups, but that the main idea is centered around the notion that the Western and Norwegian culture is not compatible with other cultures. Hatred is expressed towards Islam as a religion in general, and according to Knutsen (2019), these attitudes are comparable to antisemitism, and furthermore, her study found that Islamophobia is one of the most prominent characteristics of the online content found on Facebook in the relevant far right groups. She points out that there are some examples of comments that are critical towards Muslims and the religion of Islam, but still believe that they can live in Norway as long as they adjust to the Norwegian culture (Knutsen 2019). Nevertheless, she concludes by stating that there is an overrepresentation of comments that look at Islam as an ideology that seeks to destroy the world, and reject any ideas of possibilities of Muslims integrating into Norwegian society and culture (Knutsen 2019).

Ekam (2022) also concludes his research with stating that the theory of ‘The Great Replacement’ hinges on the “capability to foment fear within the citizenry” (Ekam 2022). The extreme right often uses the anti-Semitic perception of a ‘global’ and ‘evil’ Jew, and this is a trend which can be observed among political leaders today, e.g. in Hungary as mentioned above, contributing to a mainstreaming of anti-Semitism (Ekam, 2022). Ekam argues that although the theory of the ‘Great Replacement’ is extreme, the media can also play in part in how they narrate the phenomena, ensuring that it fits the established and respectable actors’ way of communication as well (Ekam, 2022). This shows that these seemingly ‘extreme’ theories belong not only to the extreme, as they can be reframed in a way that resonates with more people, e.g. through depicting immigrants as existential and symbolic threats against the population. Ekam also mentions research done on public attitudes in Norway towards the ‘replacement theory’,

which revealed that support for the theory also meant support for discriminatory practices because the theory relies on portraying the majority population as “victims whose ethnicity is under existential threat”, which can in turn allow for a greater use and justification of violence in order to combat these threats (Ekam 2022).

Another influential research project worth mentioning was carried out by Haugstvedt and Bjørgo and is entitled “Youth and extremism in 2021” published by C-REX through the University of Oslo. The study looked at young people’s view on extremism in Norway today, and evaluated their knowledge and willingness to use preventive measures against radicalism and violent extremism (Haugstvedt and Bjørgo, 2022, p.1). A key finding in this study was that right-wing extremism is considered to “have been a serious societal problem in Norway for the past three years”, and the study also revealed that most of the 2588 respondents considered “serious violence against Muslims, gay or transgender people” (Haugstvedt & Bjørgo, 2022, p.1) with motivation anchored in hatred against these groups as “likely” in the future. The study also revealed that although the majority of the respondents were unwilling to defend the use of violence in order to create societal change, a group of 3.7% and 1.8% are “willing to do this to a large or very large degree”, with boys and young men being overrepresented as well as people with foreign-born parents, people with Islam as a religion, and people with low trust in other people among these (Haugstvedt & Bjørgo, 2022, p. 5). Overall, the study concluded that preventive efforts should be maintained in Norway when it comes to combating violent extremism. Many known risk factors among those who are willing to defend the use of violence have been identified, including “discrimination, intoxication from psychoactive substances and indications of delinquency”, as well as people with “parents born in other countries” and people with Islam as a religion (Haugstvedt & Bjørgo, 2022, p. 6). These categories are overrepresented when it comes to defending the use of violence, and Haugstvedt and Bjørgo (2022) conclude that universal preventive efforts must reach out to all parts of the population, because “no body or organization solves the challenge alone” (Haugstvedt and Bjørgo, 2022, p. 6.) They also pointed out that important actors (municipal, state, non-profit, religious actors etc.) should make an effort to “understand each other’s mandates and limitations” and come together to “work on issues related to extremism at an early stage” (Haugstvedt and Bjørgo, 2022, p. 6.)

2.3.4 Certain people are seen as “outsiders” based on fear

The concept of xenophobia is often used interchangeably with the concept of racism, and there are ongoing discussions and differences in opinion regarding the difference between the two. However, in his book entitled “Xenophobia: The violence of fear and hate”, Jamie Bordeau argues that xenophobia means “an irrational fear or distrust of foreigners” (Bordeau, 2010). Bordeau (2010) further argues that the term racism regards “the belief that one race is superior to another” (Bordeau, 2010), while xenophobia is “the hatred of foreigners based on fear” (Bordeau, 2010). Bordeau (2010) also mentions the definitions given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which points to racism being “prejudice based on differences in physical characteristics”, while xenophobia relies on the notion that some people are “outsiders” and “foreign” to “the community or nation” (Bordeau, 2010). In the study conducted by Knutsen (2019), a presence of xenophobia was found in most of the online content published by far-right groups on Facebook, with an emphasis on ‘the others’ or ‘the strangers’. Conspiracy theories of Muslims having an agenda of ruining Norway or secretly trying to convert the country to one primarily identifying with Islam are often at the root of the fear, hate and hostility (Knutsen, 2019). There is a tendency of generalization as all Muslims are seen as one category of which constitutes a threat against Norway, Europe, the West, and finally, against the world (Knutsen, 2019). The notion of not trusting the government or political figures is also mentioned, as Knutsen (2019) found evidence of the belief that the government or the political elite is unable or unwilling to protect the people against this threat. Corb (2014) also holds that lack of trust is an important element in the process of radicalization, and that a general disappointment in the society can lead young adults towards the path of right wing radicalization. Corb (2014) also points out that young adults are more vulnerable and can therefore easily be affected and influenced by radical content online, arguing that through radical behavior online, individuals can get a sense of reinforcement and trust. This is supported by Koehler (2014), who also studied the process of radicalization online.

In the study conducted by Knutsen (2019), she also uncovered a mistrust in the media among the participants and leaders of far-right groups in Norway. She revealed an

attitude on the online forums regarding the media and the notion that the media has an agenda in hiding news from the people, especially when it comes to the dangers of immigration and Muslims (Dølving & Emberland 2020; Knutsen 2019). According to the research conducted by Dølving & Emberland (2018), a clear link can be found between far right sympathizers and the lack of trust in the established media. Knutsen's findings support this, as she found that many comments centered around the negative consequences of immigration, especially regarding Muslims, the belief that these are hidden from the media, and the mistrust in the politicians is a clear indication of the mistrust in the democracy (Knutsen, 2019). However, she also points out that there are no comments that completely reject democracy, and despite many of them disagreeing with politicians and the policy on immigration, a lot of the comments indicate an understanding and respect for the fundamentals of the democracy.

2.4 Factors for online radicalization

2.4.1 Online echo-chambers

Receptive factors for young adults online and the explanation of why some people are more responsive to right-wing radicalization online have to do with feeling a sense of belonging and the evolution of identity according to a diverse selection of scholarly sources. The initial motivation and interest in right wing ideologies is often attributed to a sense of belonging and being a part of a larger movement as presented by prominent studies conducted by Gaudette et al. (2020) and Schils & Verhage (2017), revealing that $\frac{3}{4}$ percent of the participants in their studies were isolated from family and friends and reported feelings of vulnerability and receptiveness towards radicalization and recruitment from far-right movements and environments. Gaudette et al. (2020) included mostly adults in their study, whereas Schils & Verhage (2017) included young adults, however, their findings were similar: the need for social inclusion and a sense of meaning in life were integral parts of why certain individuals were more receptive of far right ideologies than others.

Social information processing theory can build up under this, as it explains that personal relations can form and grow solely based on internet-based communication, albeit in a much slower manner than in real life (Aalen, 2013). The use of social media is

completely integrated into people's everyday lives, and Sunde (2013) points out that at the time of the publication of her book, young adults were already quite isolated in their homes, but they were nonetheless together online. Aalen (2013) holds that separating social media from real life is increasingly difficult, and that social media has become an integral part of the way we communicate. The internet, on one side, provides for dynamic communication, allowing people to connect easily to form new friendships and environments, but it also runs the risk of letting people become influenced negatively if individuals for different reasons come across extreme environments (Sunde, 2013).

In her book on preventing radicalization and violent extremism on the internet, Sunde (2013) points to the fact that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are perfect arenas to pull people into different environments and to recruit them, and the internet furthermore removes the physical barriers of radicalization as the requirement for physical contact is not as important anymore. Feeling a sense of community and belonging are therefore closely connected and related to the process of radicalization, and Sunde (2013) also holds that the internet and socialization online seems to have an effect on the formation of identities. In a study conducted by Ravndal (2013) on the Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, Ravndal held that there were two important mechanisms active and vital in the time leading up to the attacks. Getting responses on opinions online from people he admired aided in confirming the world view that Breivik himself had, and secondly, the compensation mechanism can come into play if the person is not met with acceptance or encouragement (Ravndal, 2013). In the case of Breivik, he was shut down and ignored by someone he admired when he presented his manifesto, and subsequently, the compensation mechanism was activated, and he sought to compensate for this "loss" by forming his own radical group and ideology (Ravndal, 2013). Ravndal (2013) also pointed to the anonymity aspect of the internet, where the process of radicalization does not necessarily happen in the public eye, and that actors such as Breivik can be willing and able to translate their extreme ideologies into violent acts, however, they might never express violent traits online (Ravndal, 2013).

The fact that echo chambers and ideological greenhouses increasingly exist online can also aid in providing a feeling of belonging to an environment or group (Sunde 2013). Aalen (2013) also held that people who engage in political blogs and websites are often

people of the same political or ideological opinion as the websites they seek out, and the emergence of cookies and algorithms further push this, feeding people with more and more information related to what they usually look for. Bjørkelo (2012) supports this, stating that half of the point of social media is to connect and create bonds between people who share similar opinions and interests, strengthening a sense of identity and belonging in groups. Although certain terrorists have been labeled as “lone wolves” or scholars have argued for the fact that self-radicalization can take place in loneliness, this is put under a critical light by e.g. Strømme (2011), Bjørkelo (2012) and Sunde (2013). They point out that the “lone wolf” and self-radicalization theories rely on the notion that someone has been radicalized completely on their own, however, the authors find this very unlikely both before and after the emergence of the internet. It was stated by Strømme (2011) that Breivik, who has been labeled a “lone wolf”, was merely a “lone wolf” emerging from a flock, and as pointed out by Bjørkelo (2012), the impact of the internet and the ability to form and evolve identities as well as gaining a sense of belonging and reinforcement online should not be underestimated in the radicalization process.

In a study conducted by Geeraerts (2012), a central finding was the fact that not only do young people use the internet more often, but the internet is also used to experiment with their identity. Rieger et al. (2013) holds that the internet has become a place to “hang out” for young people, and that during the evolution of their identity, the internet plays an important role. The search for and the exploration of identity is a factor that is pointed out by several studies and authors, namely Schils & Verhage (2017) who further stated that young adults on the search for identity and meaning are predisposed and more vulnerable for right wing radicalization. Corb (2014) points out that group polarization can increase the sense of identity on the internet, and research actually suggests that ideology plays a smaller role in the beginning phases of a process of radicalization, and rather states that seeking an identity and a sense of belonging are more important. Alava et al. (2017) also holds that the internet can aid in creating a collective identity which is right wing oriented. In their study of young adults and violent extremism online on social media, the key findings revealed that the spread of information, discussion, recruiting, organization of events and networking on the internet allowed for the evolution of identity and a feeling of belonging (Alava et al., 2017). Corb (2014) further supports this, arguing that extreme right-wing groups go

beyond the national scale and take advantage of the vulnerability of young people seeking an identity and a sense of belonging.

2.4.2 Far-right movements as the “solution” to injustice

The sense of unfair treatment or negative experiences with the society are also mentioned as important factors to vulnerability to radicalization according to Gaudette et al. (2020) and Schils & Verhage (2017). The sense of unfairness could run the risk of causing a feeling of alienation from the people around them, resulting in the feeling that society at large can not help with explaining or providing answers to their problems. In close to all the participants of the study conducted by Schils & Verhage (2017), a sense of unfairness and inequalities in the society was the starting point for violent radicalization. Schils & Verhage (2017) hold that in research conducted on the far-right radicalization process, a pre-phase often takes place, which usually creates the building blocks for further radicalization. Different factors are mentioned, such as political, social and economic processes as well as local factors such as unemployment or/and poverty. Common for all these factors is the ability to provoke and bring forth a sense of mistrust and discontent which can push individuals in a direction of radicalization as this can be interpreted as “the solution” (Schils & Verhage, 2017) to these problems.

The study conducted by Schils & Verhage included right-wing radicals, left-wing radicals and radical islamists (Schils & Verhage, 2017). A feeling of injustice and the interpretation by individuals that the government or society are not able to solve these problems is furthermore brought up as an important breeding ground for radicalization (Schils & Verhage, 2017). The right-wing radicals who participated in Schils & Verhage’s study (2017) reported a feeling that a certain group of foreigners were the root of the sense of injustice, and while they report that they do not want a complete overturning of the society, they do want these problems addressed. A general disappointment in the society and the desire for a solution to this is concluded to be the driving force behind radicalization rather than pure ideology according to the study conducted by Schils & Verhage (2017). They point to the fact that radical groups often provide solutions to these problems, and Gaudette et al. (2020) further point out that

digital arenas such as Facebook will allow for people to get in contact and communicate with people who have the same feelings and thoughts of injustice.

2.5 What about the internet?

As portrayed in the previous section, the internet is a facilitator in the process of radicalization for young adults, and there are certain features of the internet that enable the possibility of violent radicalization. These factors are e.g. anonymity, access to and spread of content, as well as being an arena for socialization. There are multiple studies and research papers which hold that the features of the internet is vital in today's radicalization process (Conway, 2017), which holds that the internet is an enabling environment for radicalization (Alava et al. 2017), and which holds that the internet is a driver and enabler for the process of radicalization (Corb, 2014). These studies revealed that the internet, including social media, coupled with other factors, including social and psychological ones, can all contribute together and alone towards a process of radicalization among young adults.

The fact that the internet and certain websites offer the opportunity of remaining anonymous is pointed out as an important feature enabling the process of radicalization by multiple studies. Gaudette et al. (2020) maintain that right wing extremists can use different platforms online and use certain coding in order to avoid tracking or to ensure anonymity, while DeCook (2018) explains that forums such as 4chan and Reddit offer anonymity to their users, and it was observed that certain extreme right-wing content was spread on these platforms. Rieger et al. (2013) maintained that due to the option of anonymity, right wing groups can weaponize the internet due to the possibility of manipulating content and avoiding persecutions for the content. Koehler (2014) points out another facet to the internet, namely that the anonymity, coupled with the sense that the internet has no bounds, can cause individuals to go further in their expressions and actions online than they ever would in real life.

The easy access and spread of content is another function of the internet which can impact the process of radicalization. The internet is available almost everywhere and it knows no bounds, which are factors pointed out by Rieger et al. (2013) as well as Corb

(2014). Young adults are able to search and locate material on social media or on the internet which is tailored to their interests, and Alava et al. (2017) argue that this leads to social media and the internet having a reinforcing effect when it comes to the process of radicalization. The access to information and content on right wing radical content is unlimited on the internet which allows for individuals to dive as deep as they want into the world of radical content and communities (Gaudette et al., 2020). What might have started as a predisposition towards violent extremism, extreme ideologies and groups can be further reinforced by the positioning and functions of the internet, which makes sure that extreme right wing content is available at any time, and can even serve as an encouragement (Gaudette et al., 2020; Schils & Verhage, 2017). The study conducted by Gaudette et al. (2020), revealed that the participants continued using the internet to access right wing material due to the wish to feel a sense of belonging, and half of the participants spent a meaningful amount of time on the internet during the process of radicalization to ensure access to extremist content and to dig deeper into the extreme ideologies. It is also argued by Corb (2014) that the internet opens up a world of opportunities, also for recruiting directly and providing an easy platform for access to unfiltered information of extreme nature and ideology.

It is therefore maintained across studies and research that large amounts and groups of people's access to the internet allows for the extreme far right to gain a large and accessible audience, as pointed out by e.g. Schils & Verhage (2017). Rhetorics and ideologies which have been present for centuries also have the opportunity to present their content in new and more engaging ways (Corb, 2014), and as argued by Alava et al., (2017), the extreme far right exploits this coupled with the freedom of expression which is granted by a number of countries. This allows for the extreme far right to post hateful speech which does not qualify as hate speech or unlawful actions, despite the fact that hate speech is punishable by law in e.g. Norway. Corb (2014) also points out that a lot of the recruiting and publishing of ideologies and content related to the extreme far right is happening on arenas that allow content created by the users, such as Facebook or Twitter.

Especially the younger generation tend to use social media and other digital platforms as arenas of education and engagement, and based on this, they can also provide areas of socialization. Conway (2017) points out that the internet is a cheap and efficient

means of communication, and it can also provide high levels of social interaction. It can be a way to communicate, network, organize meetings and arrangements, and thus, it can be a form of integration (Koehler, 2014). The participants in Koehler's (2014) study reported that the majority of the networking was done on the internet, while Rieger et al. (2013) state that the different sites online can provide opportunities for like-minded people to find each other and organize meetings. Corb (2014) points out the fact that before, extreme right wing groups had to organize physical meetings, but now, they have access to millions of people every day, every hour. Gaudette et al. (2020) also showed through their study that previous right-wing extremists felt alone in the real world, but online, they found a community where they felt a sense of belonging.

The literature provided above suggests that the process of radicalization among the young adults often begins from a point of discontent with different aspects of the person's life, the society, or a combination of the two (Schils & Verhage, 2017). It is maintained that people who feel a strong sense of discontent can seek out people who feel the same way online, and the process of radicalization is therefore likely to proceed along with the like-minded online. Anonymity, simplicity and accessibility, which are the very core of the nature of the internet, enable this process (Schils & Verhage, 2017). The participants in the study conducted by Gaudette et al. (2020) reported that the sense of belonging to these communities online functioned as a reinforcement of their beliefs, and enabled them to continue the process of radicalization. However, as pointed out by e.g. Geeraerts (2012), there are not only like-minded individuals online as some of the communities are not based on politics, but also other interests. The study conducted by Koehler (2014) revealed that the internet provided a major sense and conviction that the extreme right-wing movement would be able to achieve its goals and seize power through the activity on discussion forums and websites.

3. How did we get here? A historical background of the far-right movement in Norway

This chapter will provide the background and history of far-right extremism in Norway from 1980 to present day. The aim of this chapter is to provide the background and context that sets up the framework for why the research is important, and in order to understand the current situation in Norway, it is necessary to understand the past.

There is a wide agreement in Norway among scholars of the far right movement that the nature of the ideology and movement has changed substantially over the past decade (e.g. Ravndal 2020; Bjørge et al. 2018.) In order to understand the relevance of conducting a comparative analysis of the online activity on Facebook by far right groups between January 2016 and August 2023, it is necessary to understand how the movement has changed over the last years and decades. Jacob Aasland Ravndal (2020), a post-doctorate at the Institute for Political Science and the Center for research on extremism (C-REX) has published a research paper on this, and he is supported by Bjørge's (2018) research. The main purpose of providing this background information is due to the fact that in order to understand the situation as it is today, it is crucial to understand the past.

Starting from 1980-2001, this period was characterized by racist violence and the culture of the skin heads (Ravndal 2020). This period included several bombings aimed at immigration centers as well as more prominent use of violence, usually in the form of street violence and fights, usually targeted at immigrants and anti-fascists (Ravndal 2020). The skinhead culture brought with it the establishment of a number of organized groups belonging to the neo-Nazi ideology, and groups such as Hvit Arisk Terror (HAT - White Arian Terror), and Boot Boys were emerging (Fangen, 2001). This period was the most violent one, and the active groups developed an agenda that were angled towards terrorism (Ravndal 2018; Ravndal 2020). The event that marked the end of this period was the murder of Benjamin Hermansen, who was a 15 year old boy of mixed ethnicity. His murder is considered to be a vital turning point in the threat assessment of the far right groups in Norway. He was murdered the 26 of January 2001, and the murder resulted in many reactions which eventually became the driving forces behind

the halt to the growth of the right-wing groups in Norway (Ravndal 2020). The new period still had a main focus of immigration, but the movement had now moved online (Ravndal 2020). Additionally, the hostility towards immigrants was channeled towards one main group rather than all of them, and the focal point became Muslims (Ravndal 2020).

The next period took place from 2001-2011, which was the period of a strong hostility towards Islam and the emergence of lone actors (Ravndal 2020). The beginning of the increased hostility towards Islam is attributed to the terrorist attack in New York, well known as 9/11, which provided fertile ground for the Islamophobic movement in Norway (Berntzen 2019; Ravndal 2020). This was a period of right-wing terrorist attacks in Europe, which were mostly carried out by lone actors (“lone wolf”), however, most of them were a part of an online society and were active online with people who shared the same beliefs (Ravndal 2020). In 2008, a 26 year old man shot a Somali taxi driver 13 times with a rifle, and the shooter had written a “to do list” for his future goals, and killing a Muslim was one of them (Ravndal 2020). The shooter had been active on online far-right forums, most notably on Stormfront, which is a website the well-known ethnic Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik also was active on prior to carrying out his two terrorist attacks in 2011.

On 22 July 2011, Norway witnessed and experienced the deadliest incident on Norwegian soil since World War 2⁹. A far-right terrorist named Anders Behring Breivik killed a total of 77 people, placing first a bomb outside government offices in Oslo, including that of the Norwegian Prime Minister at the time, Jens Stoltenberg, killing a total of 8 people¹⁰. He then proceeded to drive to an island called Utøya, where the Norwegian Labour Party was hosting their annual summer youth camp, and dressed as a police officer, he shot and killed 68 people, 32 of them under 18 years old, and the two youngest being 14 years old¹¹. Following this shocking and devastating day in

⁹ Andersen, N., Lied, H., Andersen, A., Lønnes, S. T., Lydersen, E. K., Kallestad, G., Hammarström, N., Heir, T., Stang, L., Ryste, M. E., Njølstad, O., Refsdal, N. O., & Kärki, F. U. (n.d.). *Terrorangrepene i norge 22. Juli 2011*. Store norske leksikon. https://snl.no/terrorangrepene_i_Norge_22._juli_2011

¹⁰ Andersen, N., Lied, H., Andersen, A., Lønnes, S. T., Lydersen, E. K., Kallestad, G., Hammarström, N., Heir, T., Stang, L., Ryste, M. E., Njølstad, O., Refsdal, N. O., & Kärki, F. U. (n.d.). *Terrorangrepene i norge 22. Juli 2011*. Store norske leksikon. https://snl.no/terrorangrepene_i_Norge_22._juli_2011

¹¹ Andersen, N., Lied, H., Andersen, A., Lønnes, S. T., Lydersen, E. K., Kallestad, G., Hammarström, N., Heir, T., Stang, L., Ryste, M. E., Njølstad, O., Refsdal, N. O., & Kärki, F. U. (n.d.). *Terrorangrepene i norge 22. Juli 2011*. Store norske leksikon. https://snl.no/terrorangrepene_i_Norge_22._juli_2011

Norwegian history, a main outcome was the acknowledgement by the Norwegian government of the lack of updated knowledge and information regarding right-wing extremism in Norway, and the realization that the phenomenon had changed substantially within the last 10-15 years (Døving et al, 2018, pp. 11). These terrorist attacks marked a divide not only in the Norwegian but also in the international far-right threat assessment (Ravndal 2020). This can be claimed due to the number of victims, which was extremely high for being a far-right terrorist attack, but also from the complexity of the terrorist attack (Ravndal 2020). The role of the internet for self-radicalization was also pointed out as an important factor of the fact that the far-right phenomena had changed (Ravndal 2020).

22 July 2021 marked the ten year anniversary of the terror attacks in Oslo and Utøya, and according to a report ordered by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security in an attempt to close the knowledge gap on right-wing extremism in Norway written and published by Børgo, Døving, Emberland, Gjelsvik and Haanshuus entitled “Right-wing extremism in Norway: Development trends, conspiracy theories and preventive strategies” (2018) in cooperation with the National Police Academy and C-REX (Center for Research on Extremism), the preventive measures that had been efficient in the 1990s which were mostly targeted at youth environments, were no longer relevant for the majority of today’s right-wing extremist groups (Børgo, Døving, Emberland, Gjelsvik and Haanshuus, 2018, p. 11). They also pointed out that the main problem was, at a larger degree, grown up people and environments that operate in digital environments, such as the internet or social media, and not anymore in racist youth groups which were considered to be the largest threat in the 1990s (Børgo, Døving, Emberland, Gjelsvik and Haanshuus, 2018, p. 11).

Naturally, a new phase was initiated in 2011 following the changing nature of far-right extremism, and it lasted until 2019 when this research paper was published (Ravndal 2020). The next period was characterized by right-wing militant activism, traditional subcultures and “trolling” online (Ravndal 2020). The period was initiated by the rise of the militant Nazi-group which today is entitled Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen (DNM) - The Nordic Resistance Movement (Ravndal 2020). Additionally, this period was strongly characterized by the role of the internet, which has aided in the growth of websites and subcultures that exist online (Ravndal 2020). These websites and

subcultures tended to romanticize violence which have been the motivating force behind a number of terrorist attacks, namely the attack against the mosque named Al-Noor in Bærum, Norway, which happened in 2019.

Ravndal (2020) stated that the internet provided people who might not feel a sense of belonging to their local communities with a new platform where it was possible to find like-minded people. Two subcultures were on the rise during this period: the SIEGE-subculture which was established by right-wing extremists, and the other was the chan-subculture, which became the meeting point for a new generation of right-wing extremists unpurposefully (Ravndal 2020). The SIEGE-culture is an ideological construction which values nationalism and socialism, and are critical towards communism and capitalism (Ravndal 2020). The culture is heavily influenced by Nazism, and believes that terrorism is necessary in order to establish a nation with a “clean” race (Ravndal 2020). The group established their own ideology consisting of nihilism, encouraging terrorism, conspiracy theories, and used praise of Anders Behring Breivik in their propaganda (Ravndal 2020).

The chan-subculture started with the establishment of 4chan, which was initiated in 2004 (Ravndal 2020). This was a place to share drawings and images accompanied by text, usually humorous, political or sarcastic. “Trolling” is done with an intention of provoking negative reactions of other people for the pleasure of the opposite group or person, and often includes shocking content that passes the “morally acceptable line” (Ravndal 2020). 4chan was used by anarchist internet activists which interpreted the internet as a global freedom project, and an opposition between the revolutionaries who wanted to use the internet for social and political change, and the “trolls” who wanted to joke around on the behalf of other people emerged (Ravndal 2020). Anonymous, the transnational collective of hackers, was established because of this divide, and it was established by the anarchists. 8 chan was later established in 2013, which was an even more extreme right-wing version of 4chan, and it was not rare that encouragements of violence or mass murders were expressed (Ravndal 2020). The terrorist attack against the Al-Noor mosque in 2019 would not have happened without the chan-subculture, and this example can shed light on the role of the internet in directly impacting the evolution of the threat assessment of far-right terrorist attacks (Ravndal 2020).

Furthermore, 8chan has been used to stream terrorist attacks by publishing a Facebook-link (Ravndal 2020). Philip Manshaus, who carried out the terrorist attack on the Al-Noor mosque in Norway, published a photo of the shooters from the Poway and El Paso shootings right before he carried out the attack on the mosque in 2019 (Ravndal 2020). Manshaus had an adopted sister who he also killed before he attacked the mosque, and reasons such as the imminent race war and the belief that non-ethnic Norwegians would not be allowed in Norway anymore were cited as his main motivations and justification of his actions (Ravndal 2020). During the investigation of Manshaus' attack on the mosque, it was concluded that Manshaus had used the internet for self-radicalization, and that he was heavily influenced and motivated by environments and people outside of Norway who he had connected with online, notably the chan-forums (Ravndal 2020).

Ravndal (2020) points out that the far right extremists who have carried out violent episodes have gone from representing the ones with a lot of resources, to representing the ones with the least resources today. In 1945 until 1980, the far right extremists recruited actively from the upper middle class and from universities, but now, far-right extremists are characterized by loneliness, feeling left out/lack of a sense of belonging, little or no education, use or drug addiction, criminality, and being on the outside of the working class (Ravndal 2020; Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste, 2022). This includes both the ones acting in groups as well as the lone actors or a "lone wolf".

Despite the increased focus, preventive measures and knowledge-expansion on the matter coupled with the fact that the national action plan against radicalization and violent extremism has been revised twice since 2011, Norway has experienced another terrorist attack since both of these major research projects have been published (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2020.) This terrorist attack took place on June 25, 2022, when a gunman opened fire in three bars in Oslo, killing 2 people and injuring 21 (Oslo politidistrikt, 2022). This attack happened only a few hours before the annual Oslo Pride parade was supposed to take place, and one of the bars targeted was the London Pub, which is the oldest gay bar in Norway and a popular meeting place for the LGBT+ community (Oslo politidistrikt, 2022). The shooter was a Norwegian of Iranian origin previously known by the police as he has an extensive criminal record as well as being known to intelligence services (PST) for his close ties with the Islamist movements in

Norway (Oslo politidistrikt, 2022). The widely-known Islamist Arfan Bhatti was also charged for aiding and abetting in the terrorist attack (Oslo politidistrikt, 2022). The incident was investigated as a terrorist attack as well as a hate crime due to the targeting of the LGBT+ community ahead of the Oslo Pride parade (Oslo politidistrikt, 2022). Since the terrorist attacks in Oslo and Utøya in 2011, the police security agency of Norway, the Norwegian Police Security Service (Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste (PST)), has highlighted the “emergence of extremist communities with antigovernment and conspiratorial attitudes” with a special attention towards extreme islamists as well as right-wing extremists (Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste, 2022).

4. The presence, communication, content, and collective action frame of the far-right in Norway on Facebook in January 2016

In conducting this thesis, using an original study was helpful as it provided a specific methodology to follow in addition to providing findings which can be compared to the new findings from August 2023. In this way, a comparison can be made regarding the strength of the presence, communication, content, and collective action frame of the far-right in Norway on Facebook in January 2016 and in August 2023. This chapter will therefore present the study conducted in 2015 and 2016 (published in 2017) entitled “The right click! An analysis of the far right in Norway on social media” written by Haanshuus & Jupskås. The authors collected data from the most popular social media platform at the time, Facebook, at two different times: March 2015 and January 2016 (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017). The research opened up an opportunity of looking at the development of activism and collective action frames after the “refugee crisis” as well as on the increased terrorist threat from militant Jihadism (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017). Their main conclusion was an overall increase in levels of activity by activism and collective action frames online in the aftermath of the “refugee crisis” (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017).

4.1 Table with the definitions of terms used in the study

Term	Definition
Collective action frame	“Descriptions of situations, solution-oriented and motivational statements” (Benford & Snow 2000). Haanshuus and Jupskås (2017) describe it as identifying the problem, who is to blame, what the solution is, and why it is important to act in this moment.
Motivational statements	“1) They are often about the survival of us (the culture), 2) it is urgent, 3) resistance is possible, 4) it is morally obliged” (Goodwin 2011; Haanshuus & Jupskås 2017)

Far-right groups inclusion criteria	“Groups that advocate for ethnic nationalism, often in combination with xenophobia and conspiracy theories” (Muddle 1995; Fennema 1997; Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017). Some of the groups are defined as anti-democratic, while others are illiberal (right-wing radicals)
Groups characterized as: Ultra-nationalistic	The ones “fighting for the Norwegian culture” when faced with increased immigration (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017) Groups see immigration as a threat to the homogenous society
Islamophobic	Groups that interpret the changing and evolving society as a persistent, existential fight between the West and the religion of Islam (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017) Terrorist acts threaten the society

Table 4.1: Definitions of terms used in Haanshuus & Jupskås’ study from 2017.

The collective action frame is a pivotal point as it is considered a crucial aspect of collective action, and this will again be crucial for whether or not acts can be mobilized by the groups. Studying this in the most prominent far-right groups in Norway can therefore say something about how united and strong the far-right movements are in Norway (Haanshuus & Jupskås 2017). The study looks at three main questions: “1) is the far right present on Facebook in Norway? 2) If they are, what kind of activity is present on the Facebook-pages of the groups? 3) Do the groups have a common action frame?” (Haanshuus & Jupskås, 2017).

4.2 Summary of method used in the 2017 study

Criteria for selection of groups	Ideology, organization, presence, openness
Groups included in 2017 study	Norgesdemokratene (Norway Democrats), Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring (FMI) (People’s

	Movement Against Immigration), Nordfront (Nordic Resistance Movement), Norges Frihetsparti (Norwegian Freedom Party), Norgespartiotene (Not active anymore, joined Norgesdemokratene in 2007), Norsk Folkeparti (Norwegian People's Party), Norwegian Defence League (NDL), Pegida Norge , Slavisk Union (The Slavic Union), Stopp islamisering av Norge (SIAN) (Stop Islamization of Norway) and Vigrid .
Material	Facebook-pages
Empirical evidence	Collected through using a mixed approach of quantitative data (level of activity through collecting the number of followers, posts, likes, comments, shares), and qualitative data (text, content of the posts)

Table 4.2: summarizing the method used in the 2017 study.

4.3 Summary of findings from 2017 study

The following section answers the three research questions posed by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017), and all of the information is based on the publication of their study entitled “The right click! An analysis of the far right in Norway on social media” published in 2017.

Is the far-right present on Facebook in Norway?

- In March 2015, the seven groups' Facebook-pages had a following base of around 10 500, while ten months later, the following base had increased to over 23 000.

- Base of followers increased from 2015 to 2016 *overall* in all of the groups, e.g. SIAN (Stop Islamization of Norway) went from 1150 to 6313, and Norgesdemokratene (Norway Democrats) went from 551 to 2552
- Number of Facebook posts nearly quadrupled during the 10 months (groups such as Demokratene and SIAN). Other groups had less activity, such as Pegida and the Norwegian Freedom Party.
- Posts got a higher number of responses and likes, with the highest noticeable difference recorded within the responses towards posts by SIAN.
- Increase of comments, going from an average of 4 in 2015 to an average of 16 in 2016.
- All the different forms of activity present on the Facebook-pages: likes, posts, comments and shares, were becoming more evident in Norway, with a doubling of posts, a tripling of the likes, and four times as many comments and shares between 2015 and 2016.

If they are, what kind of activity is present on the Facebook-pages of the groups?

- The study showed that Facebook is mostly used as a channel of information, and less as a means of communication.

Do the groups have a common action frame?

- Most of the groups were focused on how immigration in general, with an emphasis on Muslims, and how they affect and threaten Norwegian society.
- Some groups were more concentrated on “fighting for the Norwegian culture” when faced with increased immigration, while other groups interpret the changing and evolving society as a persistent, existential fight between the West and the religion of Islam.
- The trend was moving towards increased nationalism and less Islamophobia during the period of 2015 to 2016, focusing more on immigration, asylum seekers and refugees rather than Islam and Muslims.
- An enemy from the outside (the immigrant, the refugee or the asylum seeker) got the most attention, while there were also instances of an “enemy from within” (namely politicians and journalists) which got less attention.
- Other areas of focus include Norwegian and European authorities (Schengen, EU), politicians and the argument that the media is enabling increased asylum

seekers and refugees while hiding the negative consequences of this line of politics.

- Collective action frame was *lacking*, and the online behavior of the different far right groups were more concentrated on describing the problems rather than finding solutions or on motivating people to act.

5. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology and the material used in this thesis. This was based on the research study conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017), and the methodology is a mix of quantitative (number of followers, posts, likes, comments, shares) and qualitative methods (content analysis). This is a descriptive study as well as a comparative one, aiming to map the presence of the far-right on Facebook (followers), the nature of the content (posts), the communication with the followers (likes, shares, comments), and the collective action frame (content) which says something about the possibility of translating words into action, a common understanding of the problem, solutions, and motivational acts. In short: what is the problem, who is to blame, what is the solution and why it is important to act - and a common understanding of all of these elements. It should be pointed out that more research is needed in order to make any secure conclusions on the trends.

5.1 Units, data and method

5.1.1 Units

The far-right groups and the selection of them were already chosen by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017), and this study used the same groups as this is a comparative study. The selection criteria for the groups introduced by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) were: ideology, organization, presence and openness. The groups, according to ideology, had to belong to the far right, and Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) concluded with the groups needing to be defined by practicing an exclusionary nationalism as the most important criteria. They also mention conspiracy theories, xenophobia and anti-democratic sentiments as other examples, but point out that for their analysis, the most important criteria was exclusionary nationalism. All the groups used in their study were placed right of the Progressive Party in Norway (FrP), which Jupskås argued to be a right-wing populist party (Jupskås 2015). All the groups included are groups where membership

outside of the virtual world is possible, and some of them are political parties, while some exist completely outside of the Parliamentary arena. Groups that practice an exclusionary nationalistic ideology solely online were not included in the analysis conducted by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017), and will therefore not be included in this comparative study either.

Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) included only the groups that were active and present online between 2015 and 2016, and groups that were established after the initial data collection in 2015 were excluded. For the purpose of conducting a comparative analysis, this study only focused on the groups presented in the previous study conducted by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017), and did not include newly established groups or groups that came to life after 2015. However, after conducting research on all the prominent far-right groups in Norway today, the ones that were the most present, were included in this study. The study only focused on groups that had a Facebook page which was accessible to everyone. As argued by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) in their study, the goal is to research the narrative the different groups were presenting to the world rather than infiltrating closed groups. At the time of the first data collection conducted by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) in 2015, seven of the far-right groups had an open and official Facebook page, and were included in their study. In this thesis, only five of the seven included in Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) study were included due to the fact that two of them were no longer active on Facebook in August 2023 (Norwegian Defence League and Norwegian Freedom Party). The five far-right groups to be analyzed in this thesis are: the Norway Democrats, People’s Movement Against Immigration, Norsk Folkeparti, Pegida Norge, and Stop Islamization of Norway (SIAN).

5.1.2 Table summarizing accounts / units of analysis

Far-right group	Ideology	Openness: Link to Facebook-page	Present August 2023
Norgesdemokraterne	Conservative, nationalistic,	https://www.facebook.com/Norgesdem	Yes Updated more

<i>(Political party)</i>	opposes globalization, against immigration and Islam	okratene	than 3 times daily
SIAN	Stop, work against, and reverse the “Islamization” of Norway	https://www.facebook.com/groups/261373247374619	Yes More than 10 updates/day
Pegida Norge	Anti-Islam: movement against immigration from Muslim countries, against Islam and its values	https://www.facebook.com/pegidanorge	Yes Minimal activity
Norsk Folkeparti (NF) <i>(Political party)</i>	Nationalistic and conservative party, keep Norway “Norwegian” both ethnically, religiously, and culturally	https://www.facebook.com/norskfolkeparti	Yes Minimal activity
Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring (FMI)	State should be based on the Norwegian and Christian cultural inheritance, strict and controlled immigration	https://www.facebook.com/FolkebevegelsenMotInnvandring	Yes Updated every second day

Table 5.1.2: summary of accounts and links to the Facebook-pages.

5.2 Data

According to Statistics Norway, the percentage of Norwegians who were using social media between the age of 16 and 79 in 2022 was 88%, compared to 57% in 2011 (Statistics Norway 2023). Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) argued that the presence on social media is much higher than the presence on websites and online newspapers where most of the previous analysis on far-right activity had been conducted. The fact that 88% of Norwegians were using social media in 2022 shows that the presence online is still growing (Statistics Norway 2023). While social media has a lot of definitions,

functions, and abilities, the most important part relevant to this study is its ability for mass communication which can go both ways. This separates it from traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television, where the communication can only go one-way (Aalen 2013). In 2013, Facebook was considered the most popular and developed social media platform in Norway which was used as part of the rationale by Jupskås & Haanshuss (2017) in selecting Facebook as their platform of analysis (Enjolras et al. 2013; Aalen 2013).

According to numbers published in May 2023 by Ipsos¹², Facebook was still the most used platform in the social media use by Norwegians. Facebook was the platform where most Norwegians report having a profile, and 82%¹³ of the population over the age of 18 state that they use Facebook. Snapchat was in second place, where 65%¹⁴ of the population over the age of 18 reported having a profile. TikTok could be found in the top 5, with over 1,3 million¹⁵ users in Norway, and was also pointed out as the fastest growing social media platform with an aggressive growth in only a few years. Over 66%¹⁶ of the population over the age of 18 reported using Facebook every day, while Snapchat also here was in second place, with a percentage of 49¹⁷ reporting using the platform daily. Within the age group of 18-29, Snapchat was the most used social media platform in Norway, with a percentage of 70%¹⁸ of people who use it every day. These numbers strongly indicate that Facebook is still a prominent platform also today, and the analysis using that platform is therefore appropriate.

The analysis used content from the open and official Facebook-pages of the far-right groups in Norway during the month of August 2023 (from 01/08/2023 to 31/08/2023). Due to privacy concerns and regulations, no personal information was used during the collection of the data as only the text itself and the quantitative data was collected. There was no information collected on gender, name, or region of the people who

¹²Ipsos. (n.d.). Internet users' trust in the internet has dropped ... - ipsos.

<https://www.ipsos.com/en/trust-in-the-internet-2022>

¹³ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). Hvilke Sosiale medier er mest populære i Norge Akkurat NÅ? - omnione as. Ipsos Some Tracker. <https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

¹⁴ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). "Hvilke Sosiale..."- omnione as. Ipsos Some Tracker.

<https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

¹⁵ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). "Hvilke Sosiale..."- omnione as. Ipsos Some Tracker.

<https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

¹⁶ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). "Hvilke Sosiale..."- omnione as. Ipsos Some Tracker.

<https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

¹⁷ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). "Hvilke Sosiale..."- omnione as. Ipsos Some Tracker.

<https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

¹⁸ Ipsos. (2023, May 15). "Hvilke Sosiale..."- omnione as. Ipsos Some Tracker.

<https://omnione.no/2023/05/05/hvilke-sosiale-medier-er-mest-populaere-akkurat-na/>

posted, liked, commented, or shared content from the Facebook-pages. The news feed constitutes the largest part of the Facebook-pages, and are posts containing text, images, links, news articles or other content published by an administrator (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017.) If a person “likes” a Facebook page, the content of the page will appear in the personal news feed, and the person is given 3 options to communicate and respond to the content: either by liking the post, by commentating, or by sharing the post with their friends and acquaintances. Empirical material was collected from the Facebook pages in the shape of: 1) quantitative data in the form of measuring levels of activity, and 2) qualitative data mostly in the form of text, which can say something about the collective action frame and about the dominant narrative (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017). The material in this analysis consisted of the study conducted by Jupskås & Haanshuus from 2016, and the data collected from August 2023 for the purpose of writing this thesis. One challenge that arose in the data collection completed in August 2023 was the fact that one of the groups, (SIAN), has changed the mode of communication and the nature of the Facebook-page since 2016. It was, in 2016, a page moderated by administrators, and the posts published were under the group name, while private people only could comment, like, and/or share. In August 2023, anyone could post on the Facebook-page, and no posts were published under the official group name. Therefore, a drastic increase in posts was observed, however, this statistics could not be included in the overall statistics as the format of the Facebook-page changed. Nevertheless, the content and the number of followers was still included. The time elapsed between the studies in years allowed this comparative study to research whether the groups have grown, shrunk, or stayed stable in the wake of several crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, and the more recent terrorist attacks which are presented in the history of far-right movements in Norway below this section.

5.3 Method

“Likes” of the Facebook pages/groups

The analysis consisted of a combination of descriptive statistics and analysis of the content of the posts. According to the method of Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017), the first

step was to map which groups had an open access and official Facebook page, and how many followers the pages had. The number of “likes” the Facebook page had was considered as the number of followers, and although one cannot be 100% certain that a “like” amounts to being a follower, a “like” does imply support or an open wish to show the rest of the world that a person is supporting a cause/group or similar (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017). It was pointed out by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) that it is not possible to look into who these people are or what their motives are for pressing “like”, however, they also argue that research conducted on Facebook as an arena for political engagement established that the number of “likes” that different Facebook pages get is the best way to say something about the number of followers (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017). The people who click “like” on a far-right group on Facebook can however not be completely thought of as followers, because a part of the “likes” can also be people who are merely interested and curious about the groups and what they are posting, such as opponents or journalists. Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) therefore warn against interpreting the data with absolute certainty, and call for caution in interpreting the data.

Posts, likes, comments and shares

The number of posts and the likes, comments, and shares of the posts were also registered. The activity level of the groups can be measured in the amount of posts published, and the activity level of the followers can be measured in the number of comments, likes and shares (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017). Researching whether the Facebook pages are means of information, communication or spread of information can also be measured through the different response from the followers in the comments, likes or/and shares. Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) state that a high amount of likes on posts can indicate that the page is a channel of information, and that the communication is one-way. If the post gets more comments, it indicates that the Facebook page functions as a means of communication, where the followers and moderators can communicate with each other (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017). Indications that the Facebook-page functions also as a place for spreading information can be seen through the number of shares, where a high number of shares indicate that ideals and ideas from the Facebook-page are spread further to people who did not actively choose to receive this kind of content or information.

5.4 Analysis

In the analytical part of the study, all the posts and links shared on the Facebook pages in the time period (August 2023, 01/08/2023-31/08/2023) were studied and analyzed in order to say something about the collective action frame in August 2023 compared to the findings by Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) in January 2016. Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) specifically looked into whether the posts or links referenced something along the lines of: “a) what is problematic with the society and who/what is to blame, b) what is the solution(s) to the problem, and c) why is it important to act” (Jupskås & Haanshuus 2017). Jupskås & Haanshuus (2017) pointed this out as one of the difficult parts of the study, as the posts often had little or limited content and were accompanied by a link to a news article posted by e.g. Aftenposten or VG, which are prominent and traditional news channels in Norway. They pointed out that this can be a potential erroneous source of information in their study, and stated that this could help explain why, in their conclusion, they found evidence of more descriptions of the problems rather than solutions (not a strong collective action frame).

5.5 The five far-right groups

This section will introduce the far-right groups that will be studied in this analysis, including their ideology and most important characteristics and features more in depth than the summary provided in the previous chapter. The information about the far-right groups and their ideologies is derived from their own websites (citations can be found in the footnotes). The five far-right groups are: Norgesdemokratene, FMI, Pegida Norge, SIAN and Norsk folkeparti. The two groups which are no longer active on Facebook are: Norges Frihetsparti and Norwegian Defence League, which are not included in the comparative analysis.

5.5.1 Norgesdemokratene/The Norway Democrats

At the time of Jupskås & Haanshuus’ study, they were named Demokratene, but later changed their name to Norgesdemokratene. Norgesdemokratene is, according to their

own website¹⁹, a party that opposes globalization and the party is conservative and nationalistic. The party argues that the globalization and the “globalists” have given away labor, safety, culture, energy, money, and the sovereignty to “China, the UN, EU”, and further argues that the party has now assumed a role as the party with “the best” from all the other parties, claiming that they are on the side of “the people, the freedom, and the democracy” (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.). In the program for the 2021 elections, the party wrote that its ideology is based on “common sense, what is best for Norway and Norwegians, no matter what people have voted for before”, and they call for the “frustrated voters” for other parties, people who have “had enough” of globalization, the EU, the hysterical green transition and “climate crisis”, and people who have not voted for a while because they have lost faith in politics and politicians, to vote for them (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.). In fact, they claim to have started this party only for them. The party claims to be anchored in the idea that Norway should be a nation with deep roots and an old culture, with a right to rule itself and to exist as a nation. This should be preserved at all costs. The catch-phrase on their website is “Norway First”, and they further state to be a party that fights for a country run by and for Norwegian citizens (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.). It is a political party that was established in 2022, and during the national elections in 2021, the party received 34 000 votes and became the largest party without representation in the government (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.). On their website, their 12 main political fights are listed, including “real democracy”, which states that a direct democracy is of the utmost urgency, and it also states that the religion of Islam is not compatible with democracy (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.). The next item regards Norwegian self-control, where the party states that Norway should not be a member of any extra-territorial agreement (EU, UN, WHO, Schengen, the green shift etc.) They also state that Norwegian law, values and cultures must be at the center of immigration policies, stating that refugees should only be granted temporary protection, and that immigrants must have a “compatible” set of values, language demands, not be dependent on economic help or assistance from the Norwegian state, in order to be granted a permanent stay (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.). Geir Ugland Jacobsen is the leader of the party as of 2023 (Program Norgesdemokratene, n.d.).

¹⁹ *Program Norgesdemokratene*. Norgesdemokratene. (2023, August 25). <https://demokratene.org/program/>

5.5.2 Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring (FMI)/People's Movement Against Immigration

Similar to the Norway Democrats, FMI has a similar catch phrase of “keep Norway Norwegian” on their website²⁰, and the website further states that the main goal of FMI is to keep Norway a national state based on the Norwegian and Christian cultural inheritance and the community (Røyset, n.d). The main goal of FMI is to stop the “foreign cultural mass-immigration to Norway”, and FMI claims to aim to do this through being a cross-political information organization(Røyset, n.d). Due to the claim that FMI is cross-political, they do not belong to any political party, but they state that they urge the Norwegians to vote for parties with a restrictive and strict policy on immigration during the political elections (Røyset, n.d). FMI urges the political parties and politicians to highlight the consequences of immigration for the Norwegian people, the culture, and the public religion (Røyset, n.d). FMI claims that 1987 was the year of national treason as this was the year that the Norwegian government completely opened the door to immigrants (Røyset, n.d). FMI relies on the idea that multiculturalism is a source of division in the society, and is further a threat to the Norwegian race, culture and religion (Røyset, n.d). They claim, on their website, that ethnic multiculturalism will lead to conflict and less cohesion (Røyset, n.d).

5.5.3 Pegida Norge/Pegida Norway

Pegida is an anti-Islam, populist political movement which was the most active in Germany (Dell et al., n.d.). It was established in Dresden in 2014, but got several branches around Europe in the following time, including in Norway (Dell et al., n.d.). The most prominent political fight that Pegida prioritizes is the movement against Muslim immigrants and the influence of the religion of Islam (Dell et al., n.d.). They are known to critique immigration and immigration policies across Europe, and the movement found fertile ground especially during the so-called refugee crisis when anti-Islam right-wing protests took place in 2015 (Dell et al., n.d). The organization relies on two main narratives: opposition against Islam, the religion of Islam and its

²⁰ Bjørnar Røyset, Kristiansund. (n.d.). *Hva Er Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring*. header. <https://www.fmi.no/om-fmi/hva-er-fmi.html>

values, immigration from Muslim countries, and resistance and opposition towards the established political elite (Dell et al., n.d.). The organization fronts the idea that the external threat is Islam and Muslims, and the internal threat is the established political elite (Dell et al., n.d.). Pegida claims to be the “voice of the people”, and the group is a part of a larger movement that are vocal about their opposition to Islam, including SIAN (Dell et al., n.d.).

5.5.4 Stopp islamiseringen av Norge/Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN)

SIAN is the organization with the most developed website²¹ of the far-right groups included in this analysis. The stated purpose of SIAN is to stop, work against and reverse the “Islamization” of Norway according to their website (Styret, n.d.). They also state that the goal is attempted to be achieved through spreading information on Islam and what the consequences of the “Islamization” is (Styret, n.d.). The reason for this is stated to be that Islam poses a threat to the peace and freedom in Norway, but also beyond (Styret, n.d.). The website states that Islam is a political way to run a country dressed in the suit of a religion (Styret, n.d.). SIAN also states to be an independent organization and points out that it is not tied to any political party (Styret, n.d.). However, it is pointed out that it belongs to the political landscape of SV (the Socialist Left Party) to Frp (Progress Party Norway) (Styret, n.d.). The leader of SIAN is Lars Thorsen (Styret, n.d.). The organization states that Islam is in opposition to the values of democracy and human values, and also states that it is against racism and it further argues that Islam is not a race (Styret, n.d.). It states that SIAN is not opposed to Muslims as humans, but rather against Islam as a religious-political ideology, and they believe that Muslims are the first victims of Islam (Styret, n.d.).

5.5.5 Norsk Folkeparti (NF)

The party was established in 2000 by Oddbjørn Jonstad, and is, according to their own website²², a political party “on the side of the people” (Norsk folkeparti, n.d.) They have participated in both governmental and communal elections. According to their official

²¹ *Styret*. Hjem. (n.d.). <https://www.sian.no/om-sian>

²² Norsk folkeparti. (n.d.). OM OSS. norskfolkeparti.no. <https://norskfolkeparti.no/omoss.html>

website, they define themselves as a nationalistic and conservative party with a main goal of keeping Norway “real” Norwegian, both ethnically, religiously and culturally (Norsk folkeparti, n.d.) They further state on their website to be a party that works for the perseverance of Norway, and one of their most important arguments is centered around keeping Norway Norwegian (Norsk folkeparti, n.d.) They also argue for the perseverance of the Christian culture and inheritance, and want to build the Norwegian society on the pillars of the Christian culture and inheritance. They also argue for Norwegian resources to be used only on “ethnically Norwegian inhabitants” (Norsk folkeparti, n.d.)

6. Facebook as a “tool” for the spread of information and communication

This chapter will present and discuss the findings of my own quantitative data collection. It will present and discuss the quantitative data collected on the presence, content, and communication when it comes to the selected far-right groups on Facebook. This will be presented in the form of graphs as well as descriptive statistics. The chapter will be divided into sections presenting the findings on: presence, content, and communication.

6.1. Presence

This section will discuss the number of followers as well as the number of posts published by the Facebook-pages of the different far-right groups.

6.1.1. Followers

According to Facebook, the act of liking or following a Facebook-page means that the person (who pressed like or follow) supports the page, and the person furthermore wants to see the content that the Facebook-page posts (Facebook help center, “Differences between profiles...”). The posts published by the Facebook-page of the far-right group will automatically appear in the person’s own Feed (Facebook help center, “Differences between profiles...”). The Feed is a continuous flow of updates, stories, status updates, pictures, videos, links, activity and likes from people, pages, and groups that the person follows on Facebook (Facebook help center, “How feed works...”). It is worth mentioning that since 2016, the Facebook-pages have gone through changes and updates, and the format is different today. The liked or followed Facebook-page will also appear in the “About” section on the person’s private profile. It is also important to note that if a person likes or follows a Facebook-page, they will automatically follow the page, however, they can also at any time stop following it, and additionally stop receiving information or updates from the page. It is furthermore possible to follow a Facebook-page without liking it. The name of the person and/or the

profile picture of the person can be found on the Facebook-page or in advertisements used by the Facebook-page.

All of the selected far-right groups had an open and accessible Facebook-page, however, as previously mentioned, SIAN used a different kind of format than the other four groups. Due to the fact that anyone could publish posts on the Facebook-page of SIAN, the number of posts were substantially higher than in the other groups, and the data collected from the SIAN-page could not be included in the data comparison. In addition, the SIAN Facebook-page was public, meaning that whoever wanted to read, post, comment, and share, could do so without being a member of the group. However, the Facebook-page of SIAN did not have a “like” or “follow” function, instead it had a “become a member” function, which means that the administrators of the group have the power to accept or remove people from the group. However, the content was still analyzed in the same way that the other groups were. FMI, Norgesdemokratene, Pegida Norge, and Norsk Folkeparti all used the “follow” function, and the posts on the Facebook-pages of these groups were only be published by an administrator under the name of the group itself, and not by private persons. However, anyone could like posts, comment on them, and share them with their private profile. It was also possible to like, comment, and share different posts, without following the Facebook-page.

In August 2023, the groups had 56134 followers in total. This indicates an average yearly increase of 9355,6 followers overall. The number of followers differentiates substantially between the different groups (see table 1). Four of the groups’ following base has increased since 2016 (ND, FMI, NF, SIAN), while Pegida Norge remains the only far-right group that has lost followers since 2016 (5075 in 2016, and 4100 in 2023). However, even though Norsk Folkeparti (NF) has increased its number of followers since 2016, the number remains low, and the party only had a yearly increase of 24,6 followers in the last six years. Norgesdemokratene on the other hand, had a yearly increase of 3908 followers, being a number that is substantially higher than Norsk Folkeparti. Norgesdemokratene was the far-right group of which saw the biggest increase in their following base in the last six year landing at over 26000 in August 2023. Also FMI saw a substantial increase in their following base with 14000 in August 2023, indicating a yearly increase of 1310 since January 2016. SIAN also saw an increase in followers in 11872 in August 2023. These numbers cannot, of course, be

seen in isolation, as there can be different factors weighing in as explanations to why the number of followers has increased or decreased. The reason behind the decrease of followers for Pegida Norge can have something to do with the fact that in 2015, the group split in two, and it faced a lot of public criticism in Norwegian newspapers and media. One of the main figures in the group, Max Hermansen, used to work as a part-time teacher in two different schools in Norway, but after he publicly and openly promoted anti-Islamic sentiments, he was fired from both of the jobs following several reports and complains being filed on him by students (Babic, Martinsen, Solhaug & Mon, “Norsk Pegida...”, 2015). Additionally, as we will see in the next sections, Pegida Norge had little to no activity on their Facebook-page in August 2023. It might be that the far-right group has stepped back their activity overall, or changed the main arena for distribution of content and communication away from Facebook.

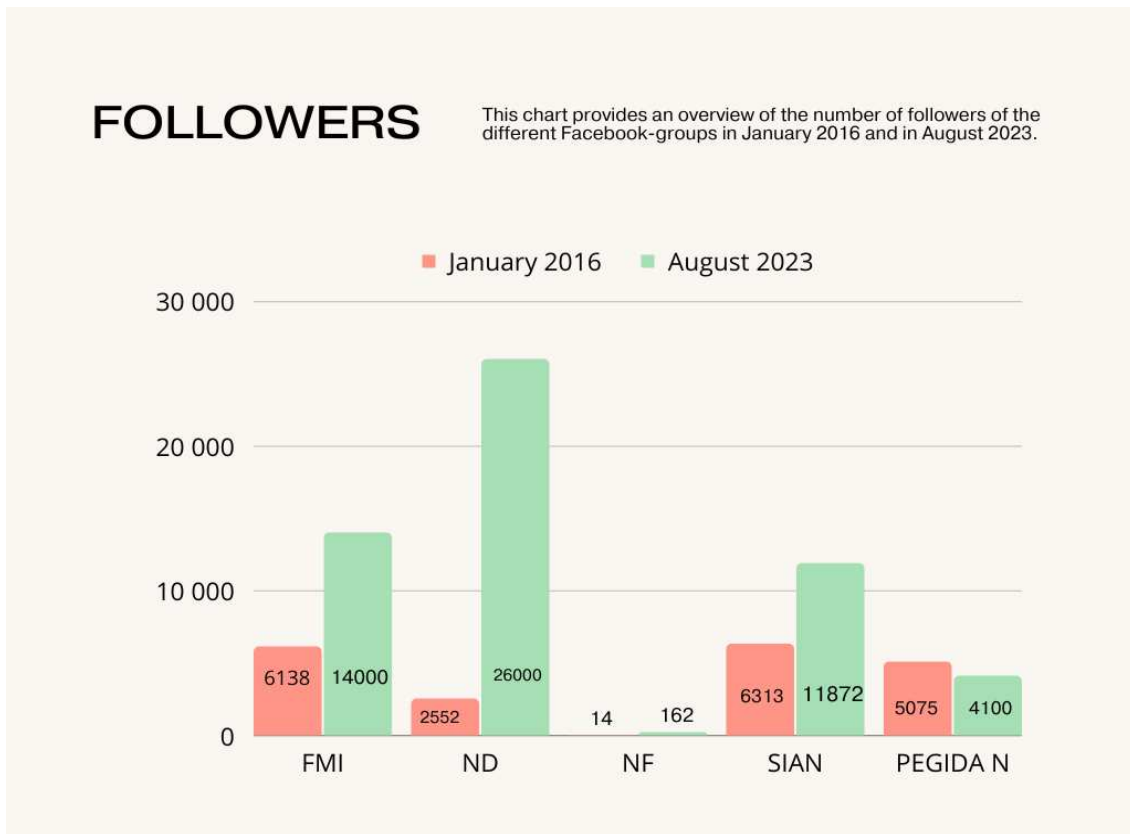


Figure 6.1.1: The number of followers of the far-right groups on Facebook in January 2016 and August 2023.

6.1.2. Posts

Facebook posts are used to keep a continuous presence and relationship with an audience, and potentially attract new followers. Facebook Posts are defined as “public messages posted to a Facebook user’s entire audience or on a specific person’s profile page” (Bigcommerce (n.d.) “What is a Facebook Post?”). Furthermore, Facebook posts are the first “step to facilitating engagement”, and it is the first step in trying to establish a connection with the audience or the followers (Bigcommerce (n.d.) “What is a Facebook Post?”). The posts will therefore be one of the main units of analysis in this project, as it can say both something about the level of activity in how often the far-right groups post on their Facebook-pages, as well as portraying the type of content that the groups post and care about. The posts will be the main unit of analysis when analyzing the collective action frame in the next part of the thesis. It is also possible to schedule a post, which allows for some flexibility and planning. The level of activity can therefore also be more structured as well as reactions to events or happenings that are getting attention in the media and are connected to the political program of the far-right groups in the moment, garnering a more spontaneous response.

The number of posts that are published on the far-right Facebook pages can say something about the level of activity, and due to this criteria, a number of far-right groups used in the study conducted in 2016 were excluded due to lacking level of activity through zero posts being published. The results of the empirical research conducted for this project revealed that the activity level on the Facebook-pages of far-right groups in Norway decreased overall since January 2016. Norgesdemokratene published 92 in August 2023, and although it is a noticeable decrease, social media presence and activity can vary from month to month, and analyzing solely the month of January 2016 and August 2023 is of course a weakness of this study, as it is impossible to say something about the broader trend of the activity. However, it is clear that Norgesdemokratene is both present and active on Facebook also in 2023. More clear is the decrease in posts published by FMI, which had a total number of posts of 15. This is a clear decrease since January 2016, however, it can also be established that FMI is present and active on Facebook also in August 2023. Pegida Norge stayed on the same number of posts in January 2016 and August 2023, with the number of 3 posts. Due to the low number, the presence and activity of Pegida Norge can therefore be said to be quite limited, however, it is still posting despite already low levels of activity six years ago, indicating that there is still some type of movement in the far-right group, albeit

limited. Norsk Folkeparti published 5 posts in August 2023 remaining without a huge difference in the level of activity. Haanshuus & Jupskås wrote that the party seemed to be a “failed one-person party” founded by Oddbjørn Jonstad, however, although with a very limited presence and activity six years later, the far-right group’s Facebook-page is still present and posting with a slight increase in the number of posts as well (Haanshuus & Jupskås 2016). In the next sections, we will see whether these posts were getting any response from the audience.

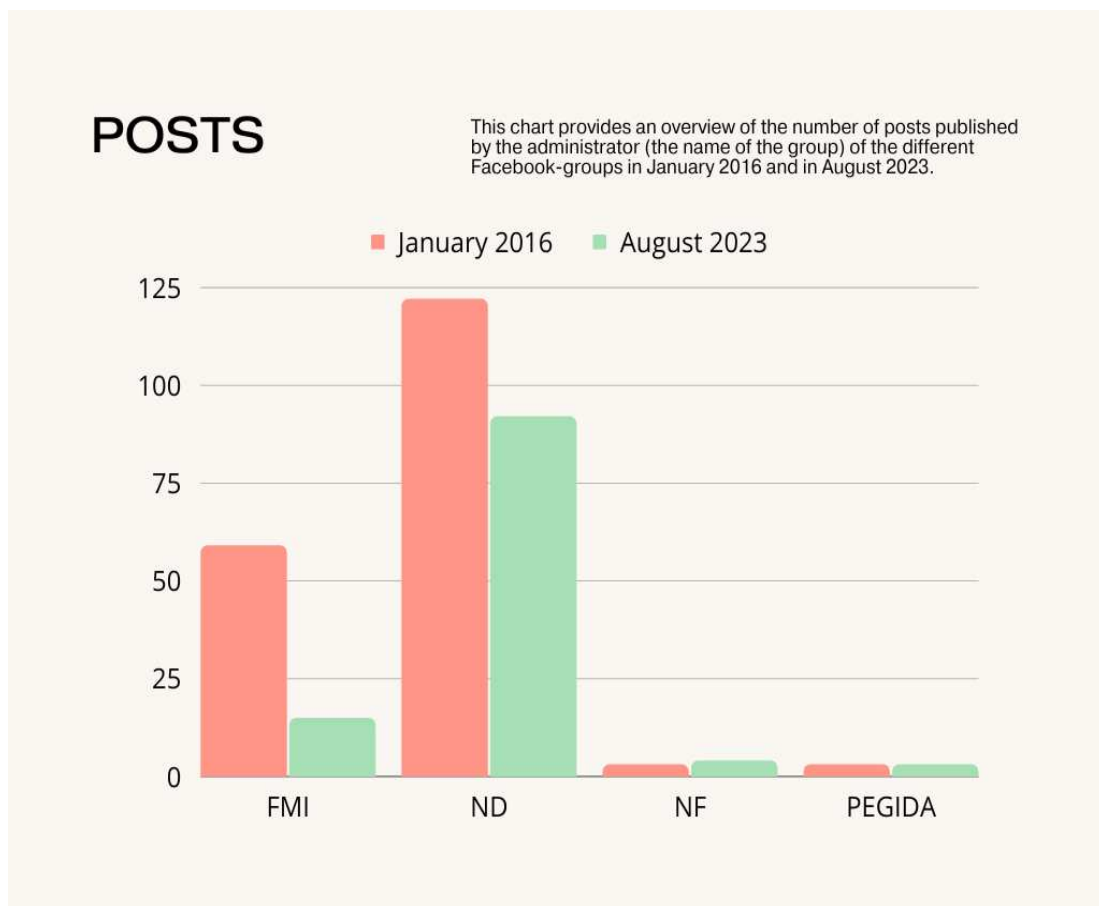


Figure 6.1.2. The number of posts published by the administrators (under the name of the far-right group) during the month of January in 2016, and the month of August in 2023.

6.2. Communication

6.2.1 Likes - Facebook as a channel for information

This section will discuss and analyze the posts published on the far-right Facebook-pages by looking at one of the perspectives of the communication and

responses from the followers by looking at the number of “likes”. According to the Facebook help center, “liking” something on Facebook means that you “like” (meaning approve, enjoy, love) something, usually a post, without commenting or adding any additional information (Facebook help center, “Like and react...”). Everyone who can see the post, can also see the people who have pressed the famous thumbs up, the “like”, button. Facebook help center uses the example of liking the video of a friend, pointing out that whoever is able to see the video, can also see whoever has liked the video. Additionally, the publisher of the video will get a notification that a specific person has liked the video (Facebook help center, “Like and react...”). An important aspect to this is the emergence of the use of cookies and algorithms, which allows Facebook to provide you with similar content to the posts you like. Although this might not be a focus for everyone, some people are still aware of this, and consciously press “like” on the type of content that they want to pop up and stay in their feed. Facebook also added the features of different types of reactions, including like, laugh, heart, wow, sad, and angry as possible reactions to posts in 2016. The spectrum of possible reactions widened, and people could now show their engagement in different ways. The example of “liking” a post of someone’s death was used, where a “thumbs up” might not be the best response (but used to be the only option), and stating that people could finally react in more nuanced ways (Facebook help center, “Like and react...”). In 2017, these functions were also added to the comments, enabling people to react in a happy, loving, approving, sad, or angry manner also to comments. According to the Facebook help center, Facebook also uses these to decide what kind of content they will provide the user with. For example, if a person uses the “angry” function on certain content, or if a post gets a lot of “angry” responses, Facebook will rearrange the Feed in order to “reduce the negative experiences” (Facebook help center, “Like and react...”). Facebook help center also points out that any post can be hidden, avoided, reported, or with the option of not following the type of pages that provide that type of content anymore (Facebook help center, “Like and react...”).

Adding a “like” to a post is widely considered to be the easiest form of activity on Facebook. It does not require a lot of work, thought processes or emotional involvement. It is simple, easy to do, and it is common, meaning that a lot of people do it (Eranti & Lonkila 2015). It is also commonly held that the “like” button is a source of valuation for Facebook-pages (Eranti & Lonkila 2015). Due to the fact that SIAN uses a

different format today than they did in 2016, the data collected from their Facebook-page is not included in any of the following statistics. The following presentation and analysis of the number of likes therefore only include FMI, Norgesdemokratene, Norsk folkeparti, and Pegida Norge. The average number of likes per post in total was 35 in August 2023. In August 2023, the posts by Norgesdemokratene received an average of 40 likes. Comparing the two months, with six years in between, it seems the changes in likes have not been huge, but it is not possible to make a conclusion on this using only two different months. FMI had an average of 26 likes per post in August 2023, and this indicates a major drop in likes in comparison to January 2016. Pegida Norge's number of likes per post has also decreased in August 2023, going from 36 to 14. Norsk Folkeparti stayed consistent with a number of zero likes in January 2016 as well as in August 2023.

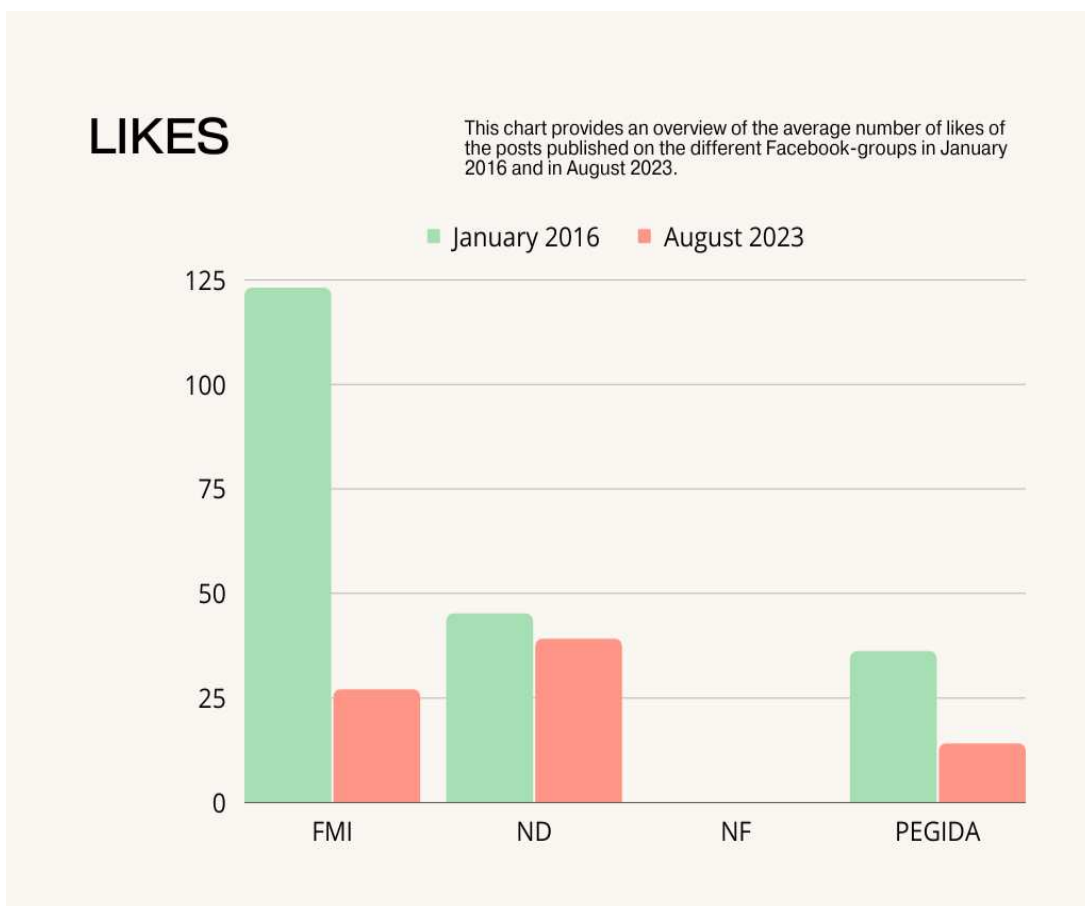


Figure 6.2.2. The average number of likes per post published on the different Facebook-pages in January 2016 and August 2023 with the exclusion of SIAN.

6.2.3. Comments - Facebook as a channel for communication

This section will evaluate and look into another communicative aspect of the presence of far-right groups on Facebook by looking at the comments. The number of comments can say something about how active the followers or members of the groups are, and if the number of comments are high, it can indicate that the Facebook-page can be used as a channel for communication, where the communication between the administrators and the audience is frequent, indicating that the Facebook-page is used as something more than solely a channel for the spread of information (Haanshuus & Jupskås 2016). The nature of the comment-option on Facebook does not let people be anonymous when commenting, however, if the desire to stay anonymous is strong enough, some people create profiles without a real name and image. In “The Why of Commenting”²³ written by Molra Burke, one main finding was the fact that commenting on a post with a personal message was “more satisfying to receivers” than simply the “like” function, which is a one-click communication style²⁴. Burke also held that the loneliness-aspect kicked in also here, where personalized and composed messages meant more to the receiver than a simple like due to the fact that you can have a back-and-forth communication in this way²⁵. In the interest of keeping with privacy regulations, none of the comments were analyzed in this project, and the authors of posts published under private names on the SIAN Facebook-page were anonymized, using solely the content of the posts and not name, gender, age, ethnicity, or any other personal information.

The data collection conducted revealed that the average number of comments per post has decreased since January 2016, but also revealed that the different groups diverge a lot on the number of comments, and therefore also in the nature of the communication. Norgesdemokratene’s number of comments increased in August 2023 as they actually had an average of 14, indicating a slight increase in the number of comments, and indicating that the Facebook-page was to a larger degree a channel for communication in August 2023 than it was in January 2016. FMI had a substantial decrease in comments in August 2023 with the average of 8 comments per post. Norsk Folkeparti stayed consistent with a total of 0 comments in August 2023, indicating that the

²³ Marche, S. (2020, January 21). *Is Facebook making us lonely?*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/>

²⁴ Marche, S. (2020, January 21). *Is Facebook making us lonely?*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/>

²⁵ Marche, S. (2020, January 21). *Is Facebook making us lonely?*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/>

Facebook-page was more of a channel for the spread of information and not for communicating with the audience and followers. Pegida Norge also stayed consistent with the average number of comments per post being 5 in August 2023. These results indicate that although overall, there has been a decrease in comments per post for FMI, Norgesdemokratene had more response and communication in terms of comments during the month of August 2023 compared to January 2016. Pegida Norge stayed consistent in the average number of comments per post despite a reduction of followers as well, which is an interesting aspect.

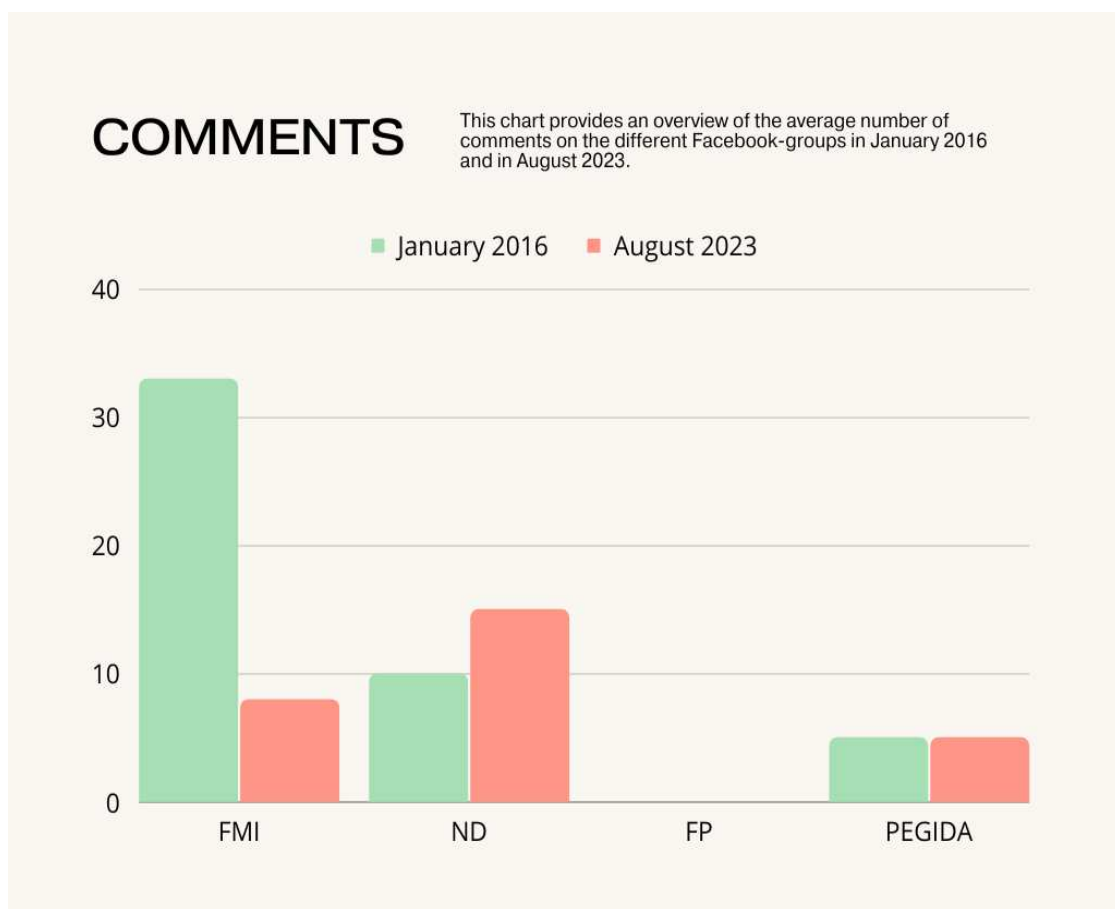


Figure 6.2.3: Average number of comments per post which the different far-right groups received during January 2016 and in August 2023.

6.2.4. Shares - Facebook as a channel for spread of information

This section will evaluate and look into another communicative aspect of the presence of far-right groups on Facebook by looking at the shares. Sharing a post is, according to Facebook help center, “a simple way of letting people bring content from your website

or mobile app to Facebook”, or “when you click the share button to share a piece of content on Facebook” (“Sharing on Facebook” (n.d.)). The option of sharing something is not limited to what is posted on Facebook, as it is also possible to share independent websites or other content through using URLs. It is also possible to comment, reshare, and like the shared posts. According to a poll²⁶ conducted by Ipsos, there are many different reasons as to why people use the share function on Facebook. According to their data²⁷, 61% share interesting things, 43% share “important things”, and 37% share in order to let people “know what they believe in and who they really are²⁸”. Additionally, 29% of the people who share posts on Facebook report the reasoning behind to be to “add their support to a cause, an organization or a belief²⁹”. Additionally, a study³⁰ conducted by the New York Times revealed that self-fulfillment was an important factor to why people share on Facebook. According to their study, a percentage of 69 said that they chose to press “share” on Facebook because it makes them feel “more involved in the world” (Simmonds, 2023). A percentage of 78 of the respondents also reported that they chose to press share to show other people what they care about and who they are (Simmonds, 2023). A striking percentage of 83 furthermore reported that they chose to share posts because it “is a good way to support causes or issues they care about” (Clicked Studios, 2019; Simmonds, 2023). Lastly, a certain percentage of 49% also report that the reason for sharing posts on Facebook is because they want to change opinions or encourage action. Sharing posts on Facebook can therefore be said to be a more conscious act than for example that of a “like”, and it also allows for the content of the Facebook-pages to be spread in places where other people did not actively choose to be subjected to this kind of content.

The average number of shares per post differs significantly between the different far-right groups on Facebook. Norgesdemokratene *increased* the number of shares to 45 average shares per post in August 2023, meaning that the Facebook-page of

²⁶ Ipsos. (n.d.). Internet users' trust in the internet has dropped ... - ipsos.
<https://www.ipsos.com/en/trust-in-the-internet-2022>

²⁷ Ipsos. (n.d.). Internet users' trust in the internet has dropped ... - ipsos.
<https://www.ipsos.com/en/trust-in-the-internet-2022>

²⁸ Ipsos. (n.d.). Internet users' trust in the internet has dropped ... - ipsos.
<https://www.ipsos.com/en/trust-in-the-internet-2022>

²⁹ Ipsos. (n.d.). Internet users' trust in the internet has dropped ... - ipsos.
<https://www.ipsos.com/en/trust-in-the-internet-2022>

³⁰ Simmonds, R. (2023, September 1). The psychology of content sharing online in 2023 [research]. Foundation Marketing.
<https://foundationinc.co/lab/psychology-sharing-content-online/>

Norgesdemokratene was, to a larger degree than in January 2016, a channel for the spread of information to people who did not choose to be subjected to this type of content. Additionally, Pegida Norge increased its number of shares per post to 1 in August 2023. Norsk Folkeparti remained a non-communicative Facebook-page as the posts had 0 shares in August 2023. Looking to FMI, the number decreased by a lot, landing at an average of 6 shares per post. It is worth noting that the Facebook-page of the far-right group entitled Norgesdemokratene had a substantial increase in the average number of shares per post, indicating a high level of activity, engagement, and followers willing to share content they identify with and support. It also indicates that this Facebook-page was a channel for the spread of information to a larger degree in August 2023 than it was in January 2016.

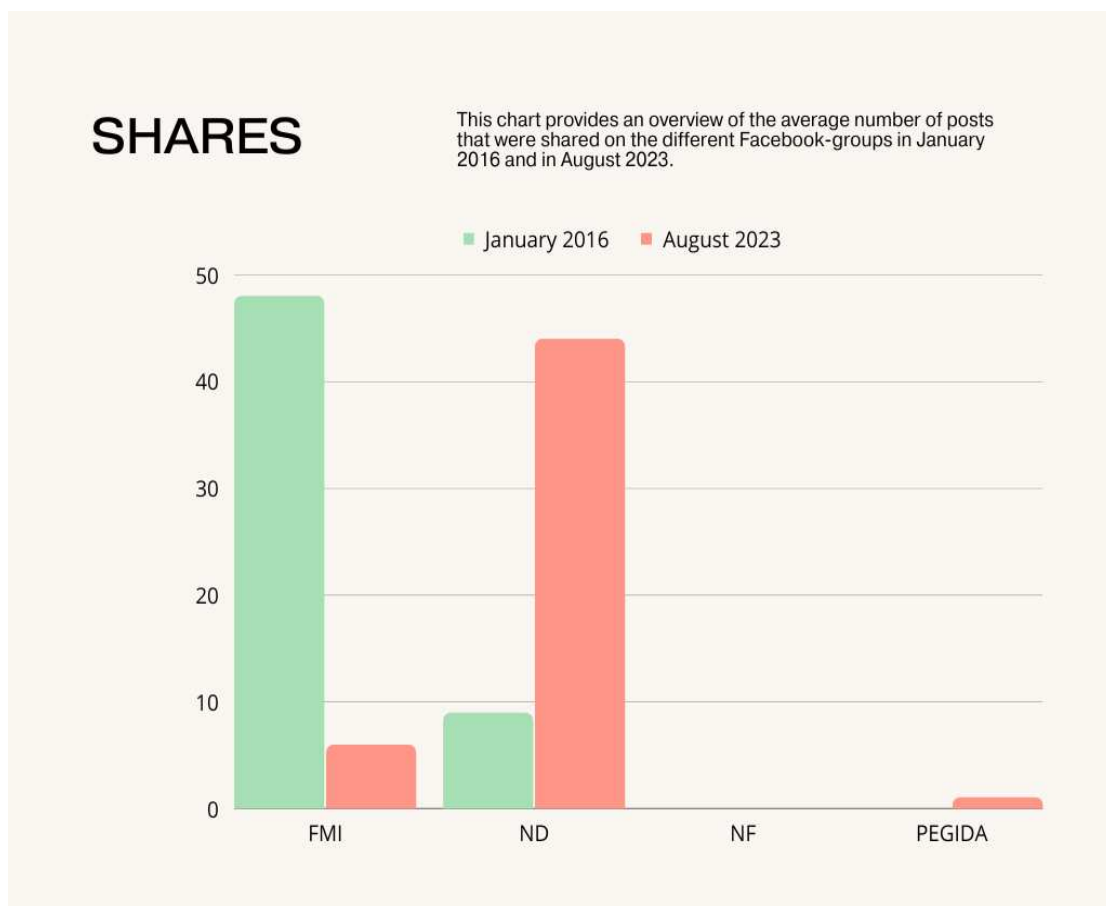


Figure 6.2.4: An overview of the average number of posts that were shared on the different Facebook-pages in January 2016 and in August 2023.

6.3. Findings: SIAN

Finally, the data collection conducted regarding SIAN's activity, presence and communication on Facebook will be presented in this part of the thesis. As previously mentioned, the group used a different format on Facebook than the four other groups included in this research project. This means that SIAN could not be included in the comparative part of this thesis as the number of posts increased drastically due to the fact that anyone could publish as often as they want, and the type of content they prefer. The Facebook-page did have administrators, including Lars Thorsen, who is the current leader of SIAN. However, in January 2016, it was only the administrators, under the name of SIAN, who could post on the Facebook-page. Additionally, SIAN did not have the option of "liking" or "following" the Facebook-page. It was only possible to "become a member" of the group, and one of the administrators then had to accept the request. Despite not being able to compare the results from January 2016 with the data from August 2023, it was still possible to say something about the presence, activity and communication present on the Facebook-page in August 2023. As an overall conclusion, the Facebook-page of SIAN was the most active page of all the five groups included in this thesis, and it was clear that the main means of communication and the spread of information was done through the group's Facebook-page.

6.3.1 Members and likes

SIAN had a total of 11872 members on their Facebook-page in August 2023, making them the third biggest group, after Norgesdemokratene and FMI. The group had an extremely high number of posts during the month of August 2023, with a total of 1172. However, all of the posts were included, also the ones with minimal responses and content. It was noted that the same person posted several posts every day, gaining little response on any of them. The total number of likes amounted to 14968, but a clear divide must be made between the posts that could gain around 200 likes, compared to the more "empty" posts which got little to no response, perhaps seeming more like "spam" than actual content. The inclusion of these posts forced the average number of likes per post to decrease. Nonetheless, the average number of likes per post published by someone who was not an administrator was 13. The number of posts published by an administrator of the group (albeit under their own private name, and not under the name of the group), was 14 posts. The number of likes was 902, meaning that each post published by an administrator got an average of 64 likes per post. Here, it should also be

pointed out that many of the posts got over 100 likes, which nearly none of the posts published by people who were not administrators got. It is therefore clear that the posts published by an administrator garnered more likes than the posts published by someone who was not. All in all, the SIAN was very much active and present on Facebook also in August 2023, with more than 10 posts per day published, however, with each post getting less likes on average compared to January 2016, which undoubtedly is closely connected with the change of the format. One post published per day is more likely to gain more responses than 10 of them, as each post can easily “disappear” in the feed.

6.3.2 Comments and shares

The average number of comments per post published by an administrator was 8, while the average number of shares per post published by an administrator was 6. Looking at the posts published by people who were not administrators, the response was lower. The number of posts was of course much higher (1172), and the average number of comments per post ended at 3. The average number of shares per post published by someone who was not an administrator was 2. These numbers show that the administrators of the group, although publishing fewer posts, seemed to get much more response than the others. This could also be due to the fact that many of the posts published by non-administrators got little to no attention, however, when still included in the total number of posts, the average was pushed down. However, it is a point that the posts published by an administrator often could get more than 100 likes, which almost none of the non-administrator-posts got. All in all, if looking solely at the quantitative data, it seemed like the SIAN Facebook-page saw a decrease in the number of likes (111 in January 2016 versus 13 in August 2023), shares (18 in January 2016 and 3 in August 2023), and comments (18 in January 2016 versus 2 in August 2023). However, the numbers cannot be seen in isolation as the change of the format of the Facebook-page was a lot of the reason why these numbers decreased. The Facebook-page had the most activity of all of the five groups included in this thesis, and the communication and spread of information were still high in August 2023.

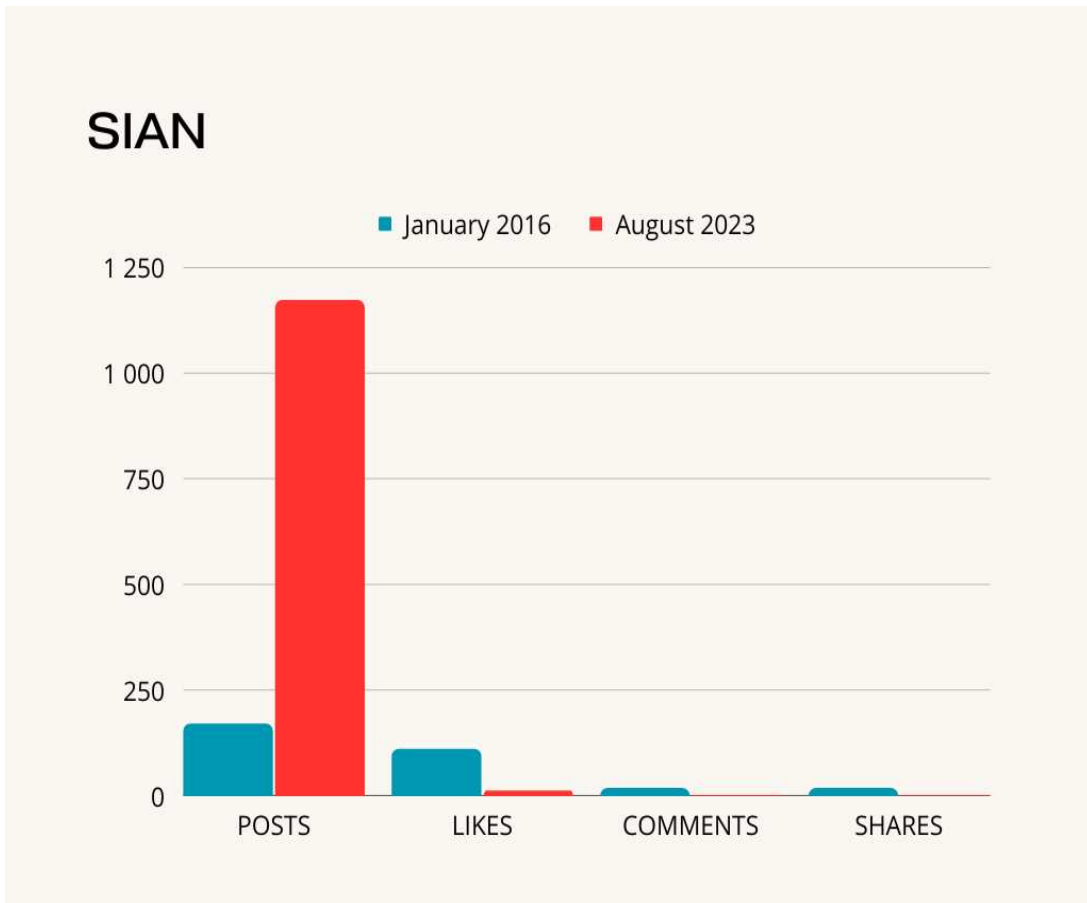


Figure 6.3.3: The average number of likes, comments and shares per post in August 2023, as well as the total number of posts published by non-administrators on the SIAN Facebook-page.

7. Descriptions of “the problem(s)”, why it is urgent, and the solution

Findings (qualitative)

This chapter of the thesis will analyze the nature of the content of the posts published on the different Facebook-pages of the different far-right groups. The main aim of this analysis is to evaluate the collective action frame of the far-right groups’ by analyzing the content of the posts. The aim is to reveal whether the understanding of which parts of the society are seen as problematic, how to rectify the situation, and why it is important to act now, are interpreted as more or less the same, meaning that there is a common understanding of these aspects present in the far-right groups’ Facebook-pages.

7.1. Pegida Norge

Pegida Norge had a total number of 3 posts in August 2023, and all of them were focused on the perception that the level of violence is increasing in Norway, and especially in the schools. The first post included a picture of a grocery store which held a sale on beers on the occasion that the schools were starting again after the summer vacation. The text said that “teachers and others need to drown their sorrows” due to all the violence that occurs in the schools these days, with the picture of beers on sale attached in the post. This post received 2 likes: one “laughing” response and one like. The next post included only text stating that both the violence and the population of Muslims are increasing rapidly in Norway, and questions whether there is a connection between the two. The post got 14 comments, where the majority agreed with the statement, responding that there is a clear connection, and one stating that “we should not have Muslims in Europe”. This comment received one “love” and two likes. There was also one comment that asked for statistical proof or data that could prove this connection, where one responded with a link from FMI (one of the other far-right groups included in this project) to an article entitled “If there is anyone who is in doubt: Europe is being Islamized and churches are made into mosques”. Another responded to the question of proof or evidence by posting an edited photo which was cut, making it impossible to see where the person found the photo or the information. Nonetheless, the photo contained text stating that according to Statistics Norway, Norwegian-born men in

the age group of 15-35 with Somali family background have 4,6 times higher rate of committing violent acts, Iranian background 4 times as high, Moroccan 3,2 times as high, Turkish 2,8 as high and Pakistani 2,4 times as high. Another comment contained a link to a news story about not recommending the use of private taxis or riding with strangers.

The third and last post contained only text saying that in Kristiansand last year, 742 incidents of violent attacks against teachers and other employees in elementary schools were reported. They question why “we” are not told who committed these violent attacks, and point out that Norway has changed. It also said that the society is not the same as it was a couple of decades ago, and that the number of Muslims has increased by a lot, and not to mention in Kristiansand. It then said that:

“in general, Muslims have little respect for women, and in the teaching profession, most of them are women. Will the established parties discuss the crazy development in Norway, in the Arendal week? Unfortunately not. It is a tragedy for Norway”.

The Arendal week (Arendalsuka) is a democratic meeting place for everyone who is engaged in the society, and includes the participation of a lot of political parties and politicians. This political week took place during the month of August in 2023, naturally also influencing the focus and the content of the posts published on Facebook during this month.

According to the content of the posts published on the Facebook-page of Pegida Norge, there seems to be a general consensus regarding the perception of “the problem” in the society being the increase of violence and violent episodes especially in the schools, and the root of this problem is the Muslims. The part of the society that is seen as problematic therefore centers around the increase of the Muslim population in Norway resulting in increased violence especially against women. One of the posts also indicates lack of trust in the politicians of the Norwegian government, stating that no one is willing to address these problems during the political week in August, “Arendalsuka”. The post also indicates that information on who carried out the 742 violent incidents against teachers and employees in the schools is purposely hidden from the public in order to protect the Muslim population and hide the truth. There are no suggestions on

how this “problem” should be fixed, except the notion that “Muslims do not belong in Europe” as suggested by one of the comments. However, no structured, clear and organized answer to the “problem” is present on the Facebook-page. The question of why it is important to act now seems to be centered around the notion and the idea that the violence is increasing, and that the women and the violence in the schools need to be dealt with. However, also on this point, there is no clear plan for action. All in all, the descriptions and perceptions of “the problem” seems to be the main priority rather than suggesting concrete resolutions to this. It is clear that the authors of these posts nonetheless find the increase of violence as the main reason why it is important to act now, however, also this is slightly scattered, as one comment also included a link to an article stating that “churches are made into mosques” and that “Europe is being Islamized”, indicating that not only does “the problem” revolve around violence, but also a perceived threat of the religion of Islam “taking over” the role of Christianity. Although the perception of “the problem” therefore can be said to be both the increase of violence and the threat of Islam taking over the role of Christianity, both of them have to do with the presence of Muslims and the religion of Islam. The posts were not concerned with immigration, multiculturalism or globalization in general, but specifically focused on Islam and Muslims and the perceived connection between Islam and Muslims, violence and the replacement of Christianity (churches) with Islam (mosques). In this sense, it seems that the content of Pegida Norge is more Islamophobic than expressions of ultra-nationalistic.

7.2 Norsk Folkeparti

Norsk Folkeparti had a total of 5 posts during the month of August 2023. The first post is entitled “The new Norway” and is centered around a critique of the politicians in the Norwegian government. It is critical of international organizations and corporations such as the European Union and the United Nations, stating that Norwegians are paying taxes only to see the politicians “waste” this money on international projects such as those. The post furthermore critiques the result of this new society inspired by internationalism, arguing that most Norwegians are not used to this, and furthermore, not aware of it. It states that the politicians are “enthusiasts of globalization”, and that they are working hard towards a new society that most Norwegians are not aware of or

used to. It furthermore argues that most Norwegians are not aware of the consequences of this line of politics, critiques the national news media, and states that they are more or less forced to accept this new form of society. The post ends with questioning exactly which country he/she really is living in. The post also has an image attached, and it is of the Norwegian Iranian Council.

Post number 2 contains the same image as the previous post. This post was entitled “The cause of terrorism - and motives”, and this is mainly a critique of the parliamentary president named Gharakhani. In the wake of the terrorist attack that took place 25.06.2022, the author of this post claims that the parliamentary president attempted to isolate hate without addressing the causes of hate. The post stated that this is the most “stultifying that has exited a mouth of a high standing representative for the so-called democracy”, claiming that it is naive. The post further stated that the origin of the hate and the reason why this hate can live as free as it desires, is due to “a religious superstition” called “Allahu Akbar”. The post further argued that this expression of war belongs to one religious ideology, and that this expression has been yelled across Western-Europe throughout this century, inclusive also of the recent terrorist attack in Norway. The post went on to critique Gharakhani’s response to this due to the conception that “we have gotten an Iranian with completely different habits to commit taqyya against the Norwegian democracy by wearing the cloak of democracy”, and stated that someone has to question the “foreign powers” that the “parliamentary president serves”.

Post number 3 was entitled “Treason - in proper Norwegian”. This post contained critiques around immigration policies, and mentioned that in 1952, Norway signed a Convention for Asylum that requires migrants and asylum seekers to return to their home countries when the circumstances allow it, and in 1975, Norway implemented a complete stop to migration. It further argues that any work that is related to migration, is to be stapled as treason against the country and the people, and further argued that it goes against the Norwegian Constitution which states that the values of Norway “should remain our Christian and humanist heritage”, and furthermore pointed to Ch. 17 of the Norwegian Constitution, regarding the “Protection of Norway’s independence and other fundamental national interests”. The post further stated that the reason for the continued allowance of immigration is due to the fact that many political, academical and private

persons promote immigration. The post argued that this will lead to the exchange of the ethical Norwegian population over time. It then went into politicians, stapling them as traitors of their country, the media as actors who have no idea what freedom of speech is (critiquing especially NRK, which is the governmentally-owned news channel, accusing them of “only hiring people of color”), collaborators as people who live because of immigration, and the political parties, requiring an overhaul of the current parties to ensure that those who have a seat in the parliament today, perhaps should not continue to do so in the near future.

Post number 4 carried the title of “What is the deal?”, and regarded the particular situation of one commune in Norway and its challenges. It stated that kindergartens, communal offers, and nursing homes are being shut down, while immigration, which the post argues to be the real problem, remains untouched. The economical challenges of this commune is argued to be due to the high percentage of immigrants and Norwegian-born people with immigrant background who are not integrated, do not speak Norwegian, or is able to find a job. This results in a higher rates for poverty, more pressure on the welfare system, and millions of NOK spent on integration (without success). It is also pointed out that a strong increase in gangs and violence in the youth environments has emerged, and questions why none of the measures implemented do not address these problems. The post ended with questioning what type of society the politicians want their children and grandchildren to grow up in. An image of three people wearing the hijab (from behind, the faces are not visible) was attached to the post.

The 5th and final post was entitled “The Left - the party of immigration?”, critiquing the fact that the left (Venstre) party of Nordre Follo (commune in Norway) put an immigrant as their second place on the election sheet. It should be mentioned that September 9 was the communal and regional election date in Norway. The candidate in second place had made a list of the political goals of the left in Nordre Follo, where “welcoming more refugees to Nordre Follo” was one of them. The post critiques this, stating that the commune already has more than enough refugees, and moreover, it already has over 25 people employed full-time to facilitate the integration. It claims that the shopping mall “is full” of immigrants. To end the post, it states that “in a historical perspective, this is no different than treason” and writes that “NORWEGIANS WILL GOVERN NORWEGIANS”.

It is clear that the perception of “the problem” is centered around immigration, asylum seekers, and refugees in general, and only one post references, albeit indirectly, the religion of Islam. The rest of the posts only discuss immigration and immigrants in general, not mentioning specific countries or religions as threats. One of the posts also references the democracy, and indicates that a person of Iranian background cannot preserve the Norwegian democracy, and rather accuses the Parliamentary President of committing “taqyya”, meaning to “conceal one’s belief and foregoing ordinary religious duties when under threat or injury” (Stefon, 2022) against the Norwegian democracy. Furthermore, the politicians, the media, collaborators and the political parties seem to be a part of “the problem”. The solution to the problem, although not specifically expressed, seems to be centered around a strong opposition to immigration in general. One of the posts stated that any work related to immigration should be regarded as treason, which gives a clear indication of the solution to “the problem” being a complete halt to the immigration. When faced with a candidate for the left in Nordre Follo who stated that welcoming more refugees should be a priority for the political party (although not immigrants, but it seems the far-right group does not distinguish between the terms), this was heavily criticized as the streets and the shopping malls are already “full”. In regards to the understanding of why it is important to act now, it seems there are several reasons for this, one of them being a threat against the “Norwegian democracy”. Other reasons seem to be the preservation of Norway’s Christian and humanistic heritage, as well as protecting independence and fundamental national interests of Norway. However, there is no specific or coordinated effort to solve “the problem” to be found present in the posts on the Facebook-page, mostly expressions and explanations of “the problem”. Based on this, this group seems to express more ultra-nationalistic sentiments rather than Islamophobic ones, focusing more broadly on immigration rather than zeroing in on Muslims or Islam only.

7.3. Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring (People’s movement against immigration) FMI

In the month of August 2023, the Facebook-page of FMI had a total of 15 posts, making it the third most active group of the five included groups in this project. Also the

Facebook-page of FMI allowed for private people to publish posts under their private name, however, the page also included a lot of posts published by the administrator(s), under the official name of Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring. The posts included in this research were only the ones published by the administrator(s) under the official name of the far-right group, as this was what was done in 2016. However, it should be noted that if this project was to include also the posts published by private people, the level of activity would spike. This is an important point to note as it shows a high level of engagement from the followers of this group also in August 2023, despite the fact that the number of posts (published by the administrator(s)) has decreased since January 2016.

One of the posts published in August featured a picture of a man who was killed by a colleague who identified as a Muslim. The post included a quote by the man who killed his colleague, and he was quoted in saying that he killed him “because he was Christian” and that the murderer “hates Christians”. This post received a lot of responses from the followers of the group, with 106 likes, 39 comments and 30 shares, indicating a lot of engagement around this post. Another post was about a completely different topic, as it discussed and criticized the fact that pharmaceutical companies (in this post, especially Pfizer) are making a lot of money on the “abnormal and insane trans-hysteria”. The post indicated that the “clients” of pharmaceutical companies are a “dream”, as they run to pharmaceutical companies for medicines that they will have to take for the rest of their lives, when “they really should have been under heavily surveilled psychological treatment” instead. There was a photo of Pfizer supporting a performance by the transgender community in France. The post describes the performance as “disgusting”, and as a summary, the post ended with stating that the transgender community is no more than a “business” for the pharmaceutical companies and clinics.

Another post was related to the upcoming communal and regional elections which were held on 11 of September 2023. The post questioned who the people should vote for, indicating that there were few options. There was a picture of a representative for FMI attached in the post. There was also a post entitled “If there is any doubt: Europe is being islamized and churches are made into mosques”, which was the post previously discussed on Norsk Folkeparti’s Facebook-page, as it was shared also to that page. It

addressed the idea that not just Norway, but Europe, is being “conquered” by Islam, and used an example from Trinity Church in Sheffield, England, which is now closed and made into a mosque. The post quoted a man stating that “as everywhere else in Great Britain, we took over. Islam is here to stay”. There was also an image attached in the post which displayed the inside of a mosque, where people were praying. The post ended with stating that the “invasion of Europe is a fact!”, and that Norway and the European continent will lose “its unique identity”. It stated that Islam is receiving help from the European states and “their naive” people who keep importing millions and millions of Muslims. It then stated that “Before it is too late: FORTRESS EUROPE! NOW!”. This post also received a noticeable number of likes, with 95, as well as 16 comments and 22 likes, indicating a lot of engagement around this content.

Another post was entitled “South-Africa: Tens of thousands require massmurder of whites!”. The post claimed that the leader of South-Africa’s third largest political party had encouraged “slaughtering” the white population in South-Africa by saying “Kill the farmers, kill the peasants!”. It further argued that the socialist government of South-Africa has taken the once successful country into a failed one, and further claimed that the politicians in the leading communist party, ANC, has encouraged violence and hatred against the “white race” for decades to try to distance themselves from “its own incompetence”. There was also an image attached to this post with the text: “White people are portrayed as scapegoats for the mistakes of incompetent black and corrupt politicians.” This post received 17 likes, 11 comments and 12 shares, also indicating a higher level of engagement around this content. Another post had the title “Does Oslo need a chief of police who lies?”. This post also got a substantial amount of likes, ending at 71, with 24 comments and 11 shares. The post claimed that the chief of police “lied” about the youth criminality in Oslo because she stated that “ethnicity is of limited significance” in relation to the criminality among youths in Oslo which is “out of control”. It further claimed that these youths are “encouraged to hate us Norwegians at home”, and that it does not matter anymore if the youths who take part in criminal activity are Norwegian or Pakistani, but that “the culture of encouraging hate against Norwegians” is the real problem. A screenshot of the chief of police stating that ethnicity was an irrelevant factor was attached to the post.

Another post argued that the World Economic Forum (WEF) keep posting data on how many people respected the rules during lockdown, despite “overwhelming proof” of the restrictions implemented during the Covid pandemic had “damaging consequences” for the society. The post quoted the daughter of the founder of WEF, Nicole Schwab, who argued that the restrictions implemented proved to be a “big opportunity” to see how the population would react to authoritarian restrictions which can be used to launch WEF’s “Great Reset”-agenda, “either they want to or not”. There is a picture attached in the post featuring Klaus Schwab (founder of WEF) and Nicole Schwab (daughter of the founder). There was also a post with different “merchandise” that FMI offers to sell to their followers, including a pin that states “keep Norway Norwegian” a sticker that says “NO to multiculturalism”, another one that says “Media lies! Do not believe a word!”, and another one stating “NO to islamization of Europe! Norway for Norwegians!”. There was also one sticker that said “Integration costs millions: a return flight-ticket only 1000NOK. Before it is too late: Stop promoting races and social tourists”.

There were different aspects here to unpack in order to be able to say something about the collective action frame of FMI. It seems that the understanding of “the problem” is more scattered in the Facebook-posts published on their Facebook-page than the previous two groups, however, the posts were mostly under the wider category of opposing immigration. However, an additional factor can be added in, in the shape of more racist comments, especially regarding the post about South-Africa, stating that the white population is blamed for the mistakes of “black and incompetent” politicians. Additionally, there are examples of transphobia and criticism of the governments’ reactions to the Covid-19 pandemic, which are different and additional elements moving a little outside of the theme of immigration. The understanding of “the problem” therefore seems to be multifaceted in this group, including also a sharp critique of the police and the prominent political parties. When it comes to solutions to the problem or ways to rectify the problem, it is clear that the group is firmly against immigration, multiculturalism, people of color, transgender communities, and believes that all of these threaten Norway’s ability to stay “Norwegian”. In the end, it seems that “keeping Norway Norwegian” is the main priority, and the perceived threats that could stand in the way of that, should be eliminated. There are no clear indications of why it is extremely important to act in this moment, however, it is indicated that time is of the essence in one of the first posts, where a man was killed “because he was Christian”.

All in all, there were no posts encouraging action or specific ways to rectify what they interpret and see as “the problem”, nor a clear and concise description of why it is paramount to act on this in the near future.

7.4. Norgesdemokratene (ND)

International aid

According to the data collection conducted previously in this project, Norgesdemokratene had a total of 94 posts during the month of August 2023. Due to the high number of posts, not every single post and its content will be included in this analysis, but rather a collection of different posts, some more in depth than others. First off is a post published on Norway’s aid politics. This post criticized the almost 40 billion NOK which is Norad’s aid budget annually. The post argued that most of the time, this money is not used in an efficient manner, and further stated that no country has combated poverty successfully by receiving aid money. It further stated that ND is skeptical about aid due to its potential of creating corruption and practicing a form of economic colonialism as it is difficult to give aid without intervening in the receiving country’s power relations. As a solution, increased funding for disaster relief was suggested, in addition to requiring the receiving countries to cooperate when it comes to the return of their citizens from Norway. The main argument was that no aid should be given without clear goals or follow-up, and the post also mentioned population growth and plastic emissions into the sea as areas that must be addressed in order to receive funds.

Norwegian resources/protecting Norway/electricity/agriculture

Another post also discussed the difficult economic situation, and blamed the current politicians and the established political parties for this. A comparison to the situation in 1988 was made, stating that today’s situation will be even worse. The post argued that while people are at the end of their rope, facing foreclosures on houses, cars, bringing calculators to the store, the politicians are doing nothing and not paying attention. Another post regarded the farmers, stating that continued subsidization and protection of Norwegian agriculture is one of the main points of Norgesdemokratene’s political campaign. The post addressed the fact that food is becoming more and more expensive

in Norway, while the farmers are getting less and less money, causing serious ramifications for the farmers and the disadvantaged, causing more “border shopping” (a term used for Norwegians who travel to Sweden to buy food because it is more economical). This would result in a weakening of the labor market in Norway. One of the main solutions suggested was to ensure stable inhabitation in the coastal and northern areas in Norway. The main argument centered around the idea that Norway’s resources were what allowed Norway to become a nation, and that these resources (oil, gas, coal, water energy) belong to the people, and not to private businesses or the European Union. Another post regarded the same topic of prioritizing Norway’s ability to feed itself, which at this point is only at 30%. The post urges increased focus on strengthening the farmers and the agriculture in Norway, because being at only 30% will prove to be “catastrophic” when the countries that provide Norway with products prioritize feeding their own people over export. This post got 83 likes and 70 shares. Another post that got substantial attention (94 likes, 15 shares) in relation to Norwegian resources was about the price of the electricity, stating that ND is in favor of cheap electricity by limiting the export of it and by reversing the electrification of the continental shelf, and not by building wind turbines. The party also opposes the use of electric cars, and one post argues that they in many cases have led to fires on ferries and in electric cars in general. The post references an article that stated that the transition to electric cars is “doomed”, and the post got 237 likes and 160 shares, proving a very high engagement around this topic. Energy, oil, gas, coal and water power seem to be topics of high interest, as another post also received 317 likes and 127 shares regarding this. This one also promoted pulling out of the Paris Agreement and implementing a national energy policy only. One of the “main points” of ND’s political campaign was also fronted in another post, regarding environmental policies “that work”. The post states that animal welfare and protecting nature should be strengthened, the protection of mountains and fjords should be better, pollution should be stopped, environmental fees removed, the ocean should be emptied of plastic and trash, and no wind turbines or electrification defended by climate change. This post also got 94 likes and 37 shares, indicating a substantial engagement for this policy.

Another post which got substantial attention regards the Government Pension Fund of Norway (also known as the Oil Fund), receiving 255 likes and 74 shares. The post linked to an article with the title “Horror scenario for the Oil Fund: Can lose 6000

milliard NOK”. The post argues that even though the money is rolling in for the Norwegian state, the government is still increasing the taxes and fees. It claims that the Norwegian government uses the national wealth to compete in the international money market rather than “securing Norwegian citizens”, noting that the people have added 389 milliard NOK to the Oil Fund, but still 115.000 people have to stand in line to receive food. Another post discussed the importance of Norwegian laws being the main laws in Norway, criticizing the fact that no laws can be implemented without harmonizing with with the rules of the EU, including areas of trade, labor, pension, punishments, and asylum. The post argues that no “supranational organizations or agreements” should supersede the Norwegian law. This post got 311 likes and 160 shares, proving to be a very important topic for the followers of Norgesdemokratene. On the topic of the Norwegian membership of the EEC, one post also states that this is only one example of agreements that weaken the independence of Norway and has contributed to pushing Norway into an economic recession. The post mentions the EEC, the Paris Agreement, UN 2030 and ACER as deals that have been signed by the favored, and that these are in discord with the Norwegian laws. This post received 128 likes and 147 shares.

Another main point of their political campaign centered around the strengthening of active soldiers and of the National Guard by allowing them to keep weapons with ammunition at home if they have the accepted means to store it. The post points out that although we have witnessed 70 years of peace, the recent crises have also proved that the world is an unstable place, and argues that it is important that Norway is ready and equipped to deal with an “international crisis”. This post got 144 likes and 53 shares. Another post (93 likes and 37 shares) also addresses this, arguing that police, the National Guard and the Norwegian defense should be strengthened substantially. It also mentions that the media should be forced to take responsibility, and not spread fear, censorship and disinformation.

Health, Covid-19, nursing home politics

A post addresses that all vaccines should be voluntary in Norway, and that no one should be forced to take a vaccine. It also says that no one should be pressured to take any vaccines. The post received 98 likes and 30 shares, indicating that a lot of people are interested, engaged and involved in this topic. Another post addressed the

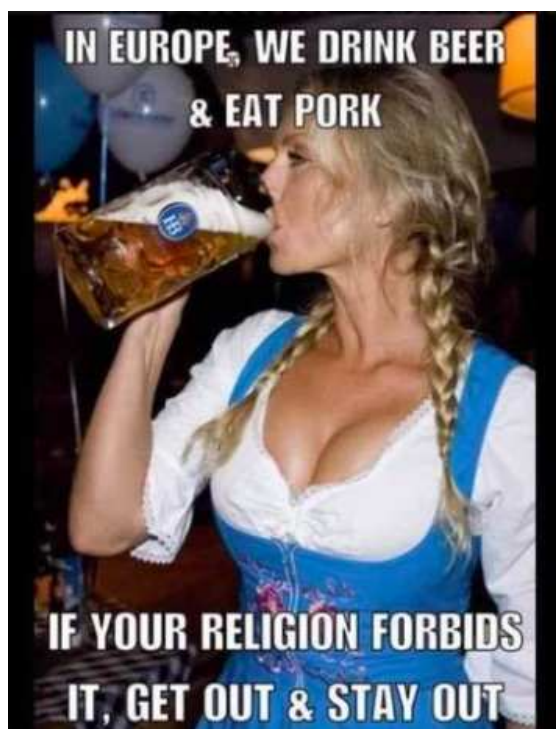
Covid-vaccine, where a prominent figure of ND was hospitalized in a mental facility due to having expressed correlations between mortality rates and the Covid-vaccine. The post claimed that the forces that had hospitalized this individual for presenting both his own and others' research on the correlation between the Covid-vaccine and mortality rates are examples of the "totalitarian forces" ND is fighting against. Another post discusses the politics Norway is currently pursuing when it comes to nursing homes and taking care of the elders, where it stated that while Norway is sending millions to other countries, it still does not have enough resources to ensure that the elders have a place to live. It further stated that this is a betrayal against the people who have paid taxes and fees believing that when the time came, the state would take care of them. Another post on the same topic, with an image stating that "nursing homes should get their own kitchen. Elders and sick people have the right to good food" received 573 likes, 26 comments, and 76 shares, indicating a lot of engagement on this type of content. Also another post addressed that the policies for caretaking of elders should be revamped, and that the pension for elders should be increased so that elders can get older with dignity. This post received 181 likes and 66 shares.

Race and racism

One post that got substantial attention with 247 likes and 31 shares, was one that addressed the topic of race and racism, which, according to the post, are topics that are only addressed when the Left side of the political spectrum in Norway are speaking. The post stated that the Left side seems "sickly" obsessed with the topic that "very few others" care about, and finished with stating that for ND, race and the color of people's skin are not topics at all. Another post discusses the religion of Islam and the practice of Muslims as a reaction to a news article where the leader of Muslimsk Dialognettverk (Muslim Dialogue Network) stated there exists a wish to eradicate a whole religion, and that the alarm bells should ring due to this. The post declares the position of Norgesdemokratene, which is that the islamization must be worked against, due to the fact that Islam is a "competing social system with their own laws, economical system, politics, school system, rules for living and culture", according to the words of the post. The post further claims that religions that preach fundamentals that are not compatible with the values of a secular, democratic society with freedom of speech, should not receive any funds from the Norwegian government. The post received 296 likes, 27 comments and 69 shares.

Christian culture and values

One post was entitled “We are living in a strange world”, where the preservation of Christian values is of importance. The post states that the burning of the Quran is getting a lot of attention, but asks why there is no attention towards the persecution of Christians. It states that last year, over 21 churches were burnt down in Pakistan and Christians were chased out of their homes, abused and murdered. The post asks why only the Christian newspapers are writing about this. An image of a church going up in flames is attached to the post, and the post received a total of 649 likes, indicating a lot of engagement around this kind of content. It also received 192 shares, and 63 comments, indicating more than solely information going out, but a more nuanced and communicative response from the followers. One post contained only an image (inserted here), and the post got 476 likes, 55 comments and 41 shares, which means that this type of content is of importance to this group. This is a clear message about the religion of Islam, where it is known that for some Muslims, drinking alcohol and eating pig are acts of which are not recommended by the religion, depending on the individuals’ interpretation of the Quran.



Core point number one of Norgesdemokratene was also presented in a post. It is centered around the idea that practicing a religion must happen within the rules and the regulations set by the state and by “our Nordic values”. It also argues for a more direct democracy where the freedom of speech is absolute. It ends with stating that the religion of Islam is not compatible with democracy. This post received 310 likes and 111 shares.

Another post that got substantial response from the followers with 656 likes, 60 comments, and 176 shares, was a post related to Norwegian traditions. The post states that Norwegian should not “be made into strangers in their own streets”, and that the streets should not be decorated for Ramadan, but for Christmas and for the 17th of May (Norway’s national day). The post included the picture next to this text, saying:



“Yes to Norwegian traditions. While the Right go into their election campaigning for decorating the streets of Oslo for Ramadan, we campaign on decorating them for Christmas.”

Encouraging events/meetings/action/election campaigns

There were also some examples of encouraging meet-ups and events arranged by ND. One of them was entitled “Islamic oppression of women in Norway: see ex-Muslim (name) burn a hijab”. This post received 191 likes and 61 shares, also indicating substantial engagement. Another post regarding gatherings or events, was a post with pictures from when the party attended Arendalsuka. This post also got a lot of responses, with 328 likes and 41 shares. During the month of August leading up to the communal and regional elections in September, ND had stickers they put on public buses, which stated “Make Oslo safe”, which was called a “fascist” act by the leader for the Red party in Norway, and that these kind of opinions are hurtful to Muslims and should be abandoned. One bus driver had removed the sticker from his bus, and the post comments that it is disgraceful to conduct vandalism on public property by ripping of the sticker, and compares the state of the society to that of Sweden. The post then goes on to say that the forces of globalism are trying with all their might to disturb the election campaign for the “only party that puts Norway first”. The post got 242 likes and 152 shares, indicating a lot of engagement. There was also another post regarding

the same incident, which got 40 likes and 44 shares. Another post related to the election campaigns stated that “if you want change, you have to vote for change”, getting a total of 226 likes. Another post showed that some representatives of Norgesdemokratene were present at Arendalsuka, and this post received 238 likes.

Another post in relation to the elections and to Arendalsuka received 363 likes and 49 shares, and the title was “The leadership in Norway is a disaster!”. The post states that elections will have consequences, and that the country needs leaders who have relevant knowledge and not people who are “hopeless mannequins” who will do anything to integrate themselves with multinational globalist organizations such as the EU, UN, and WHO. A picture of the stand that Norgesdemokratene held at Arendalsuka was also published in a post, where it was written that someone had vandalized their materials. This post also received 271 likes.

Immigration and multiculturalism

Another topic addressed was the topic of immigration. One post was simply a photo with a quote saying that uncontrolled immigration without integration and assimilation would lead to increased criminality and a higher percentage of homeless people. The return-policy was also discussed in another post, where the argument of a “parallel” society forming in many different European countries due to immigration. The post states that Norgesdemokratene sees the return of the groups that contribute to forming these societies as a goal. This post also got 276 likes, which is a substantial amount, proving that also immigration is high up on the list of topics that the followers of Norgesdemokratene care about. Another post regarding immigration policy received 109 likes and 21 shares, and was about the launch of a new brochure that stated the party’s new immigration policy. The brochure encourages people to look to Hungary and Israel for their immigration policy and abortion policy. The party also launched the idea of “voluntary returns” and ways to encourage this, e.g. by giving the family economic help to make it easier for the family or person to establish a new life in their home country again. It also states that criminal immigrants must always be returned to their home country. One post launches the theory of “The Great Replacement”, arguing that the current immigration policy will contribute to the extinction of the European people and culture as we know it today. The post received 114 likes and 13 comments and shares, and had an image of refugees on a boat attached to the post. One post that

got a lot of attention as well was a post that contained a lot of examples of cases where Norwegian youth had been raped by people of immigrant background or asylum seekers. The post states that “Europe has become the dumping ground for the male birth rate surplus” and that these men have “primal instincts and low impulse control”. This post got 118 likes and 147 shares.

One post shared that two 15 year old Norwegian boys were stabbed with a knife in a city in Norway, and that six young immigrants were charged with attempted murder. The post states that all of the six people charged for the crime have “non-Norwegian names”, and that five of them are from “normal Muslim countries in Africa or the Middle East”, while the remaining one is from a Spanish-speaking country. The post then urges people to vote for Norgesdemokratene in order to keep Norwegian youth away from being “served on the multicultural offering table”. This post received 273 likes, 67 comments, and 186 shares.

Climate

The topic of climate change also caught the attention of a few posts, and this one states that “just because the weather is bad, it does not mean that we are in a climate crisis”. It argues that the media spreads fear about the climate without proper scientific evidence, and questions how researchers and scientists can know that the extreme weather is due to human-induced climate change. The post questions the credibility of the media and the political agenda of the media. It got



491 likes, 44 comments, and 97 shares. Another post describes the rain and bad weather as completely normal, whereas this year, this was described as “extreme”. The post calls

out the media and the prominent political figures as actors that “brainwash” and control the population, while claiming that those who “are able to think independently”, are called conspiracy theorists. It also points out that Pfizer, Moderna and other companies earned a lot of money on a vaccine that killed more people than it saved. It also states that we are in the middle of a “climate fanatic” period that runs the risk of ruining the economy of the West. This post also got 126 likes, 14 comments, and 62 shares. Another post states that Norgesdemokratene wants to remove all the measures taken against climate change, and this post uses the city bikes in Oslo as the example. The party argues for less taxes, road blockades, and spiking prices for parking, in order to “revive” Oslo again, claiming that measures like these have led to a decrease in the turnover for the economy in the capital. This post got 194 likes and 109 shares. One post also included a picture that says “Yes to cheaper gasoline”, and this post received 234 likes and 59 shares. This post also mentions “climate hysteria”, and the Co2 fee and the road fees are mentioned as measures to combat the climate crisis that Norgesdemokratene want removed. The post also states that the “climate crisis” is used as a way to control the people: what they eat, own, and where they can travel. The post discusses this as abuse of power.

As Norgesdemokratene is a political party, the common perception of “the problem” is multifaceted, and in order to appeal to a diverse pool of voters, the party has to encompass different political battles. There is therefore a very scattered perception of “the problem”, however, in all of the “problems” presented on the Facebook-page of the group, there is an underlying emphasis on “keeping Norway Norwegian”. In the topic of climate change, the party accuses prominent politicians and mainstream media of “brainwashing” and questions their credibility, arguing instead for spending the money used to combat climate change on matters that would instead “reclaim” Oslo. When immigration is discussed, it is always done so in the name of “protecting” Norway, and the rise in criminality rates is often associated with the rise in the numbers of immigrants coming to Norway. Limiting immigration is promoted in the name of keeping Norway safe, and keeping Norway Norwegian. A post that got substantial attention also launched the idea of the “Great Replacement”, broadcasting a theory of immigration leading to an exchange of populations. Although the party criticizes immigration at large, it has a clear emphasis on the Muslim population in Norway, where posts regarding the diminishing role of the Churches versus the Mosques are

getting some of the most attention, with likes reaching the 600s. Posts regarding the preservation of Christian and Norwegian values also got a lot of attention, showing that the preservation of Norwegian and Christian values as well as protecting Norway, are the most pressing issues according to Norgesdemokratene. It seems, perhaps due to the fact that it is a political party, that the solutions to “the problem(s)”, although multifaceted, are in part well explained and clear. For example, when it comes to the perceived issue of immigration, the party has launched its own brochure which offers “solutions” to this “problem”. It states that “voluntary returns” should be encouraged, and by providing e.g. money to families to help them reestablish their lives in their home countries, this could be a more tempting idea for the immigrants. However, in general, there are a lot of descriptions of “problems” or violent situations, e.g. arguing that the Norwegian government, political figures and the media are using the “climate crisis” to brainwash people and control them, and urges the people to vote for Norgesdemokratene to combat “the abuse of power”. Other descriptions include using violent episodes, such as sharing episodes where people have been stabbed by immigrants, urging the people to vote for the party in order to avoid Norway being “served on the multicultural offering table”. Another post also quoted a violent incident where young Norwegians had been raped by people of immigrant background, urging people to vote for the party so limiting immigration will become a priority in the government, claiming that immigrant men have “primal instincts” and limited “impulse control”. The threat of multiculturalism is a recurring topic, also when it comes to international organizations such as the EU, UN, and WHO, claiming that the current prominent political figures are simply “hopeless mannequins”.

Why it is important to act now is also a bit divided. For one, the regional and communal elections that were held on September 11 was an important factor to why, in almost every post, the author ended it with urging people to “vote for change”, or “vote to keep Norway safe”, or “vote to keep Norway Norwegian”. The descriptions of violent episodes, both in Norway with immigrants committing crimes against Norwegians, but also in other countries with describing the burning of Churches and chasing Christians from their homes, instills the readers of a sense of urgency, as their message is to protect and preserve. In summary, when it comes to the Facebook-page of Norgesdemokratene, the collective action frame is dispersed, however, a common and underlying understanding and importance in protecting “what is Norwegian” can be traced

throughout the posts. The perception of “the problem” is therefore more ultra-nationalist than Islamophobia, but there are also expressions of anti-Islamic sentiments, with several examples of posts claiming that Islam threatens the democracy, and claiming that Islam is not compatible with the Norwegian and Nordic customs and values. Core point number one of Norgesdemokratene’s political campaign was fighting for a “real democracy”, and arguing that Islam is not compatible with that, as a “real democracy” must ensure that the freedom of speech is absolute, that the religion and its demands must comply with the regulations set by the Norwegian state and by the “Nordic values”, which Islam does not, according to the post. Although the political party touches upon both, it is more focused on the ultra-nationalistic agenda, and almost all the arguments are anchored in the “protection” of Norway and its interests.

7.5. Stopp islamiseringen av Norge (SIAN)

Due to the extremely high number of posts published on the SIAN Facebook-page daily (more than 20 posts per day) and many of them are posted by the same people and get minimal responses, a selection criteria for the posts included in this section had to be introduced. Therefore, only posts that got more than 50 likes are included in the analysis of the posts published by SIAN. This inclusion criteria had to be introduced due to the high volume of posts, but also in order to filter out which posts got attention and feedback, and which were merely a part of the feed, categorized as more “spam” than content.

Immigration, Islam

One post refers to an article entitled “We have to start daring to say who the criminals are”, and the post argues that someone needs to acknowledge and dear to say that Norway has increasing problems with immigration from Muslim countries, and these growing problems are related to the differences in culture and religion. This post received 106 likes, 15 comments, and 18 shares. Another post that got 200 likes, 11 shares and 14 comments was simply just a photo with the text “Mosques do not belong in Norway!”, while another post featured the text “Islam is a project for ethnic, religious cleansing in Norway and Europe”. One post references the leader of the Swedish

far-right party named Sverigedemokraterna (the Swedish Democrats) who stated that Muslims who practice their religion literally, are not Swedes. He stated that it is impossible to be a Muslim who interprets the Quran literally, and also be a fully integrated Swede. This post got 86 likes and 8 comments, and the text in the post asked: “Are there really other nuances (than literally interpreting the Quran) in the ideology of Islam?”. One post references the discussion of prohibiting the act of burning the Quran, and states that this would not help with anything. The post states that it is enough to “write a book”, “write a political satire” or teach Islam in school. An article with the title “Wants to implement Sharia in Norway” got 50 likes and 36 comments, and stated that Norway should have “Norwegian” laws, and not Sharia. A post that discusses the burning of the Quran in Sweden received 164 likes, 33 comments and 14 shares, indicating that there is engagement around this topic. The post referenced an article that discussed the fact that two brothers in Sweden (of Iranian descent who are Christians) had applied for allowance to burn the Quran 12 times. The reason why was stated to be due to the Swedish Government’s high acceptance rate of Muslims into the country, arguing that this “has ruined Sweden”.

One post that received 324 likes, 38 comments, and 23 shares also regarded the burning of the Quran. The post states that “to burn the Quran is not to create hate. Islam should not be protected”, and then ends with two hearts and the Norwegian flag. Another post referenced an incident in the Netherlands, where the parents of school children had demanded that the pork served in the school canteen was pulled back. The response from the mayor in the area was that the Muslims “need to adjust to the traditions and way of life” in the Netherlands, as this was the country they had chosen to migrate to. The post stated that the Muslims who complained had to understand that they were the ones who had to adjust, and not the Netherlands. The post also argues that “we” accept a lot of immigrants who are Muslims, whereas Muslim countries do not accept non-Muslim immigrants. It further states that the Muslims must understand that the Netherlands, with “its Jewish-Christian roots, Christmas trees, Churches and religious parties” needs to preserve its culture. It also says that for anyone who “disagree” with the culture in the Netherlands, there are 57 “beautiful Muslim countries around the world” that are “underpopulated” and ready to accept anyone, “according to Sharia”. The post ends with asking: “ask yourself: why is it better in the Netherlands than where I am from?”. The post received 213 likes, 35 comments and 73 shares. Another post

claims that the politicians are importing “anti-female, violent, and killers”, and as a thank you, the people respond with voting for the established political parties that are “guilty” of this. The post claims that the Norwegian people must enjoy being “silenced” as “we” are now robbed of safety, equality, and money due to the immigration policies. One post, with the picture (attached) of a Barbie who has a bruised face, stating that the Barbie comes with “Jihab, bruises and Quran” also got a lot of attention with 100 likes and 31 shares, with the text of the post



stating “The religion of peace”. The picture attached in the post is the one to the right of this text. A post with a prominent politician stating that the “Hijab should be prohibited in kindergartens and elementary schools” received 95 likes, 26 comments and 2 shares. A similar message received 66 likes in another post, stating that Norway must always come first, and that small children should not have to cover up with a hijab during kindergarten and elementary school. Another post included only text, and stated that “we cannot accept bad behavior from Muslims in the name of tolerance”, and this post also received substantial attention with 102 likes, 19 comments, and 9 shares.

Other posts reference the established politicians in Norway, and claim that they welcome Muslims to Norway with open arms. One of them stated that one of the prominent politicians had stated that Norwegians are not more entitled to live in Norway than Muslims are, and another one stated that one prominent politician runs the political line of welcoming Muslims without any resistance. One post, which received 155 likes, 23 comments and 21 shares, included only text. It stated that “when we were young”, there was no large houses with a lot of space, families did not have a lot of money, however, “we did not punch people, and we did not use machetes”. The post goes on to question “what makes immigrants handle cramped quarters and poverty” much worse than Norwegians? Another post asks “Why are Western countries blind and deaf?”, claiming that 21 Churches in Pakistan were lit on fire, and that 378 homes of Christian people were destroyed by radical Muslims. The post claims that the Muslims want to build mosques and destroy churches, and questions what kind of moral these people have, stating that they clearly have no freedom or tolerance for other religions.

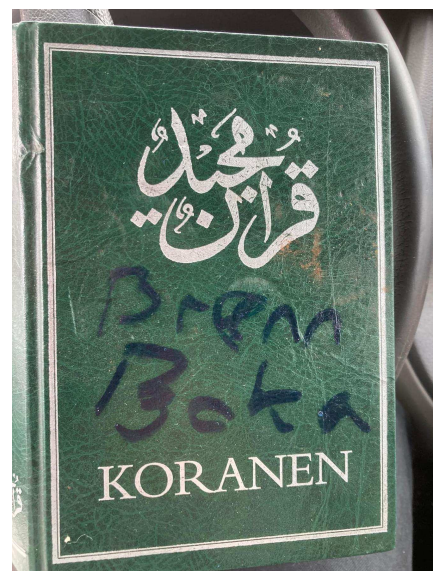
This post received 60 likes. One post included an article to a Swedish newspaper that quoted a Swedish politician saying that “we risk dying due to SD’s hate against Islam”, and this post got 77 likes and 23 comments. A post entitled “Criminality - and ethnicity” discussed the same topic as mentioned previously, that the media and police seem to fail to mention the ethnicity of the youth who are part of violent and criminal groups.



The post critiques the statement by a police officer who said that there is no connection between the crime rate in Oslo and the ethnicity of the perpetrators. The post further states that both the police and the media are a “disgrace”, and the post got 80 likes and 14 shares, indicating that also this is a topic of importance to this group. Another post includes just text, with the question: “When will we establish the first gay mosque in Norway?” (picture to the right), surrounded by many laughing emojis. This post received 74 likes and 18 comments. One post was published regarding a trial that one of the members of the group has to be a part of. The person states that the other person in the case as been on vacation in “Muslimabad”, so the case was postponed 2 years, and the author of the post writes that he is going to make a mess, and ends the post with writing “Fuck Islam!”. This post received 131 likes, 33 comments, and 4 shares.

Another post that received 110 likes and 21 comments regards the situation in Sweden, and a warning for Norway in terms of the increasing violence. The title: “Sweden did not just wake up one day with Swedish conditions”, warning Norway to take the “wave of violence” seriously. Another post states that: “When the Muslims burn our flags in front of our embassies, we burn the Quran in front of theirs”, with two hearts and a Norwegian flag in the middle. This post got 57 likes. A post that received 114 likes and 31 shares included an image with text, saying that “the Imam said to the bold: don’t burn the Quran, you should read it instead”, and the other person answered: “I have read it, and that is why I am burning it”. A post which received 290 likes and 27 comments was about a woman who was convicted of terrorism who was evicted from Norway. Another post received 73 likes, and it talked about the importance of running a

“confrontational” dialogue, as the author of this post saw this as the only solution to bring the debate of Islam to the light. The author of the post also stated that it is important to discuss also the content of the Quran, examples that were given were hate, encouraging crime and murder, and the view of women. A post that received 387 likes, 89 comments, and 42 shares, included pictures of a person burning the Quran. The post stated that this act was carried out to “show resistance towards this fascist-Islamic book”. Another post discussed the importance of not prohibiting the burning of the Quran, as this would ensure that “the West” lost the “fight for values” against Islam. This post got 62 likes and 14 comments. Another post regarding the burning of the Quran addressed a slight majority for allowing the burning of the Quran in Norway. This post received 193 likes, 30 comments and 19 shares. Furthermore, a post which received 141 likes, 16 comments and 21 shares claims that the burning of the Quran is necessary because if Norway is to survive, “Islam must be combated with every means available and legal”. The post states that the act is not done with a racist motive. Another post, receiving 208 likes, features a video of a person who is shredding the Quran in front of the Iranian embassy in Denmark. Along the same line, a post featuring the leader of SIAN burning the Quran in front of the governmental building in Norway. This post got 416 likes, 132 comments, and 20 shares. The post states that the “freedom of speech” is “not for sale” for the “benevolence from Islam”. On the same topic, the leader of SIAN published a post announcing that the videos of the burning of the Quran and of the speeches held outside of the government in Norway during an event in July was available. This post got 107 likes. Receiving 183 likes and 57 comments, a post was published on Muslims threatening to leave Sweden due to the fact that a lot of people were burning the Quran. The author of the post encourages the continuation of the burning of the Quran, because it will ensure “that they will leave”. Another post linked to an article featuring a previous Muslim woman who is now participating in the burning of the Quran. The woman stated that “all religions should be eliminated”, and this post received 157 likes and 21 shares. In a post that received 69 likes and 19 shares, the argument centers around Islam being a “threat to our freedom”.



One post addresses a critique that SIAN received. The critique centered around statements being made on SIAN being “Islamophobic”, which the author of this post claims that they are not, they are against the silence of “their own” who let “the evilness and culture for killing present in Islam” fester in the Norwegian culture. The post claims that being silent means compliance, and claims that the act of being silence aids in supporting the values of Islam, which, according to this post, are: hanging gay people, burning, murder, honor killing, women being stoned to death. This post received 119 likes, 17 comments and 7 shares. A similar post, which received 100 likes, also addressed the critique the group has gotten for burning the Quran. The picture to the right features the Quran, and the text “burn the book” written on it with a sharpie. The person responds by stating that while some do not appreciate the burning of the Quran, the author of the post does not appreciate the “burning of people while they are alive, the stoning of women, or throwing gay people off roofs”. One post that received 156 likes and 42 comments includes a video of an immigrant stating that this person was wondering about leaving Sweden due to the harsh conditions in the country. Another post that received 91 likes and 17

shares includes only an image with the text “The last Muslim on earth”(picture above this text on page 99), where a person is fighting himself with one sword in one hand, and one sword in his legs, fighting each other. One post also asks people



Den siste muslimen på jorden

to mention a country where “Islam functions in relation to democracy and equality”, which got 66 likes and 25 comments. One post stated that the Pakistani attacked the Swedish embassy for the burning of the Quran, and then stated that SIAN must continue to burn the Quran, and that this expression of violence against the Swedish embassy makes the continuation of the burning of the Quran even more important. This post got 78 likes.

Race

One post that got substantial attention was a post that linked to a news article with the title “9 year old Swedish girl was brain damaged by an African, gets no help from the government”. The post claims that the attacker got close to “no punishment”, as he was

a 15 year old immigrant. The girl and her parents, on the other side, get no help, according to the post. The post also claims that the girl was raped and injured for life. Another post referenced a girl who was raped by several men for six hours, and critiques the fact that the media will not reveal where the rapists are from. This post got 61 likes, 20 comments and 12 shares. There were several other posts published on the same topic during the month of August 2023, where the media was criticized for not addressing where the youth who are involved in violent episodes are from. The article that is referenced in the post claims that “vulnerable youth” has become a new “code word” for youth of immigrant background. This post got 78 likes, 18 shares and 18 comments. One comment regards a sale of a shower, where the publisher of the post describes a person who wanted to come look at the shower, and then refused to pay the full price as proposed by the seller. The author of the post complains that someone gave the buyer a score of 3.5 out of 10 on the Buy and Sell website, instead of just giving the buyer 0. The post then ends with asking “should I even have anything to do with this con artist?”, and then writes the name of the person, which is clearly interpreted as a Muslim or foreign name. The post received 60 likes and 21 comments, one of them writing “No selling to immigrants!”. One post, which received 118 likes and 24 comments, was about a Norwegian woman who was raped by four men from North-Africa. The post states that they were sentenced to 42 years in prison, and points out that the convicted were staying in Spain illegally.

Christianity, Norwegian values

Getting 67 likes and 19 comments, a post was shared regarding a priest who converted from Islam to Christianity, stating that the Quran filled him with fear, while he was filled with love when he read the Bible. One post also stated that the ideology of Islam is “anti-democratic”, meaning that it runs contrary to “our” lifestyle and culture, and questions why this would be so difficult to forbid. One post describes the situation in Switzerland in order to obtain a citizenship and a passport, and urges Norway to look to how Switzerland is doing it. The country requires a person to have lived in the country for 11 years without committing any crimes, pass language and other tests, and a job which allows the person to provide for the family. The post ends with: “Norway. HELLOOOO”. This post

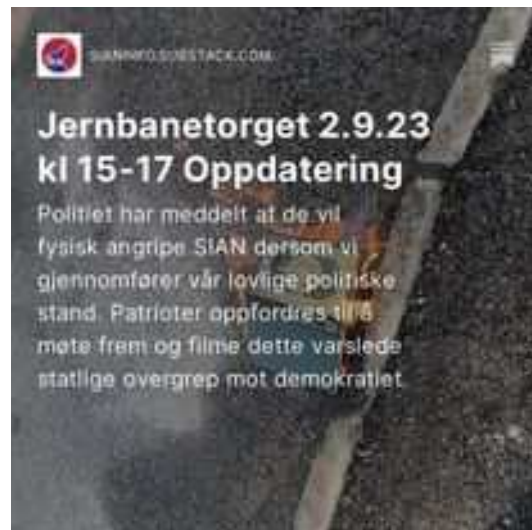


received 73 likes and 20 shares. One post was also published with the title: “The Media calls me a right-wing extremist” (picture published in the post attached to the right), and then states that if loving your own country, people, and culture, and wanting to protect the country from migrants who will make ethnic Norwegians a minority in the country after a while being extreme, well, then this person is proud to be a right-wing extremist. This post received 196 likes and 29 shares. One post that received 108 likes and 34 shares stated that “When foreign cultures do not like ours, they feel violated”, and “when we don’t like their culture, we are intolerant”.

Gatherings/meetings/action

One post published by the leader of SIAN discusses the upcoming planned meeting of the group, with the text “The governmental powers war against the democracy intensifies”, with a picture attached. The

picture includes a text with an update on the upcoming event that was planned on 02/09/2023, and states that the police has told the group that if they start burning the Quran, the police will “physically attack SIAN” (written on the picture published in a post to the right). Another post that invited people to gather to demonstrate against immigration got 69 likes, 26 comments and 5 shares, and included a picture of a sign



saying: “Go back to where you came from” signed by SIAN below. Another post shared a link to the same event on the 02/09, and the title of the event was “Discussion of the problem of Islam”. This post received 178 likes, 21 comments and 10 shares. One post wrote that the person who posted the post was on the way to burn the Quran in Sweden. This post got 277 likes, 23 comments and 10 shares. Another post features an event held to gather people and burn the Quran, and the leader said: “burn to Quran to protect the freedom of Norway”. This post got 207 likes, 18 comments and 35 shares. Another post from a gathering where the Quran was burned by the far-right group also got 131 likes.

It is indicated in the name of this far-right group: Stop the Islamization of Norway, that the group is inherently against the arrival of Muslims to Norway. This was also made clear during the content analysis of the posts published on this Facebook-page. The collective action frame is quite clear in this group. The “problem” is clearly the Muslim population, and this is “proved” through almost all of the posts arguing that Islam is a religion of “evil” with a “culture for killing”, and cites other reasons such as Islam being homophobic, violent (burning and murdering), honor murders and the stoning of women to death. The burning of the Quran is a major topic, and a high percentage of all the posts which received substantial feedback and responses, were posts regarding this topic. The burning of the Quran was also defended using language along the lines of the reasons for opposing Islam above, stating that the Quran is a book that encourages “crime and murder” and “hate”, mentioning also the view of the women as problematic. Burning the Quran is defended using arguments such as “Islam should not be protected”, and arguing that the act is not committed “to create hate”. A post argues that Islam is “a project for ethnic, religious cleansing”, and many of the posts accuse the media and politicians for not wanting to be truthful on “who the criminals are” behind the violence in Norway. Several posts claim that the media and the police do not want to acknowledge that the “growing problems” are due to “increasing problems with immigration from Muslim countries”. The opposition to the current immigration policies and the politicians in Norway is clear also in this group, stating that they are allowing the Norwegian people to be “robbed of safety, equality, and money” due to the immigration policies. It is inherently clear that this group does not see immigration as a whole as a problem, but rather immigration “from Muslim countries” as the root of the “problems”. However, in contrast to e.g. Norgesdemokratene, there is no clear solution to the “problem”, except for the obvious, which is completely prohibiting any Muslim immigrants to Norway. However, there are no clear descriptions on how this should be done, or what the way forward should look like. There is an overwhelming majority of posts only describing the “problem”. The urgency is expressed in terms of “protecting” the people, as the presence of Muslim immigrants is the root of all the “problems” present in the Norwegian society. All in all, the perception of the “problem” is completely clear in the case of SIAN, and the group expresses an overwhelming amount of anti-Islam sentiments. The solutions are not clearly articulated except for the strong opposition to immigration from Muslim countries, and the urgency of why it is important to act now relies on the descriptions of the violence present in the religion of

Islam as described by the authors of the posts. This groups shows, to some degree, a willingness to act and to arrange events and gatherings where they burn the Quran and “educate” people on the “evils of Islam”.

8. What matters the most to the Norwegian far-right?

Discussion of the qualitative findings and comparison with the findings from January 2016

This chapter will consist of a discussion of the qualitative findings as well as of a comparative analysis of the results in January 2016 and August 2023. This chapter will discuss the collective action frame of the five far-right groups included in this thesis. The chapter will also discuss the findings in relation to the revelations found in the literature review.

8.1 The perception of “the problem” in the society in the eyes the far-right groups

The first part of the collective action frame regards whether there is a common understanding of “the problem” in the society. This section evaluates the content of the far-right groups activity on Facebook. The next section will discuss whether there is a common perception of “the problem” in August 2023, and compare this with the findings from January 2016. In this way, it is possible to reflect around whether or not the perception of “the problem” as the main cause and reason behind the downward spiral of the society, is the same as it was in January 2016.

8.1.1 “Immigrants” as the culprit of all evil

The data collection from August 2023 revealed that some similar aspects to the findings from January 2016 with regards to the understanding of “the problem” can be found. It is clear that immigration is the big topic that almost all of the Facebook-pages of the far-right groups were concerned with, also in August 2023. Norsk Folkeparti saw immigration as a threat against the “Norwegian democracy” and against Norway’s Christian and humanistic heritage, but also mentions reasons such as economic pressure, poverty, gangs, and violence among youth environments as reasons why immigration is problematic and needs to be tackled. Norsk Folkeparti argued that any work that had to do with immigration should be considered “treason”, and argued that immigration runs

contrary to the laws in the Norwegian Constitution, as it states that the values in Norway should align with “our Christian and humanist heritage”. The group does not, in contrast to FMI, talk about and discuss Islam or Muslims in the discussion of the problems of immigration. Also in this group, “keeping Norway Norwegian” is seen as the most important argument for opposing immigration in addition to arguments regarding increased violence, hatred, and the killing of people only because “they are Christian”. However, in this group there is evidence of high attention towards Muslims and Islam, e.g. with claiming that “Europe is being islamized and churches are made into mosques”, and arguing that Europe is being “conquered” and “invaded” by Islam. Furthermore, these arguments are put forward in the name of preserving the “unique” identity of Norway and Europe, and an emphasis is also put on hatred and violence against the “white race”, using instances in South-Africa as arguments.

Similar to FMI, Norgesdemokratene has a wide array of descriptions of different “problems”, however, preserving what is “Norwegian” seemed to be the biggest focus of this group. The political party encompasses a lot of different topics, which are all revolved around the central idea and notion that at the heart of all policies is “keeping Norway Norwegian”. It does also discuss Islam and Muslims, specifically by stating that the religion of Islam is “incompatible with democracy”, and that the practice of a religion can only happen within the rules and regulations set by the Norwegian state. The group also argued that uncontrolled immigration without assimilation or integration would lead to increased criminality and a higher percentage of homeless people. The party argued that if immigration is not controlled, an exchange of populations will happen, stating that the European people and culture would become extinct. It also posted about Norwegian youths being raped by immigrants and asylum seekers, claiming that Europe has effectively become the “dumping ground for the male birth rate surplus”, claiming that this is problematic due to the “primal instincts and low impulse control” of some of these men. Other “problem” descriptions include climate policies, health policies and nursing home politics, and Norwegian resources (e.g. electricity, oil, agriculture), which are all anchored in the perception of immigration being a threat to handling these “problems” effectively. E.g. the nursing homes' politics and policies are argued to be neglected and not appropriately dealt with because immigration is taking all the money and attention. The party also argued for abandoning any climate change mitigation policies because climate change is not real, and the topic

of climate change is simply used to “brainwash” the population. They also argued that the climate taxes, road blockades and price increases of gasoline and parking spot prices contribute to decreasing tourism and the economy of big cities such as Oslo, which inherently hurts Norway and its economy. This argument is aligned with the central argument of protecting Norwegian interests first, and that policies such as climate change mitigation hurt this and are only put in place to “control” and “brainwash” the population, foregoing Norwegian interests for a larger power of globalization and internationalization.

In the case of SIAN, almost all of the posts include the mention of Islam or Muslims as descriptions of the “problem” and as reasons for the negative direction the society is heading in. The posts describe the religion of Islam as violent, with a “culture for killing”, criticizes its treatment of women, and argues that it is a project for “ethnic, religious cleansing”. The treatment of women that SIAN perceives the religion to practice is perhaps best showcased by the statements of Muslims “stoning women to death” or by the image of the bruised Barbie doll, claiming that the “Sharia Barbie” comes with “Hijab, bruises & Quran”, with the text stating that “stoning accessories” are available for “additional purchase”. It is also interesting that the religion of Islam is accused of being “homophobic” which is another argument used to describe why Islam is problematic by SIAN, however, some of the posts published by SIAN itself are also clearly homophobic, e.g. exemplified by the post with the text: “when will we get Norway’s first gay mosque?” with laughing emojis.

There is also an overwhelming percentage of the posts that concern the act of burning the Quran, which is defended by using arguments such as the Quran being a book which encourages “hate, crime, and murder” and that it is a “Fascist-Islamic book”. Furthermore, when addressing criticism for burning the Quran, the act is defended by claiming that the religion of Islam “should not be protected”, and that the horrible aspects of the religion should not be protected in the name of tolerance. Posts against prohibiting the burning of the Quran argue that if a prohibition is put in place, then “the West” is facing a loss against the “fight for values” against Islam. SIAN is fully and completely concerned with immigration from “Muslim countries”, and not immigration in general. Immigrants from Muslim countries are portrayed as threats against the “safety, equality, and money” of the Norwegian people. In cohesion with SIAN, Pegida Norge also has an overwhelming and complete focus on the root of the “problems” in

the Norwegian society being due to Muslims. Especially episodes of violence against women and increasing violence in schools are featured as the main concerns, and the notion that “Muslims do not belong in Europe” seems to be among the main arguments of the group. There is also a perceived threat of Islam “taking over” the role of Christianity, which seems to be similar to the line of arguments presented by the other far-right groups. Making “churches into mosques” was a threat posed by the increase of Muslims in Norway, and this was also an argument put forward by Norgesdemokratene. Also SIAN is concerned with the role of Christianity, claiming that the persecution of Christians gets no attention, while the burning of the Quran is getting plenty. The image of a church going up in flames was one of the posts that got the most attention of all the posts published by SIAN during August 2023 (649 likes and 192 shares), indicating that the perceived threat towards the church and the Christian values is of importance also to SIAN. Pegida Norge, similar to SIAN, is not at all concerned with immigration in general, but rather with the specific threat of the religion of Islam.

In conclusion, three of the groups were solely concerned with immigration from Muslim countries when describing the root of the problem (SIAN, FMI, Pegida Norge), while two of them were concerned with immigration in general (Norgesdemokratene and Norsk Folkeparti), however, all of them had their concerns anchored in the name of protecting Norway and its people. Therefore, the description of “the problem” in August 2023 was similar to the findings from the study conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) from January 2016 in the revelation that the groups found common ground in opposing immigration, however, in August 2023, no extra attention was given to refugees or asylum seekers. Rather, there was little differentiation between the terms, and a clear finding was that “immigration” as a whole was the biggest threat to society, with very few mentioning refugees or asylum seekers more specifically. The only group that did differentiate between an asylum seeker, a refugee and a migrant was Norgesdemokratene. In the case of e.g. Norsk Folkeparti, it seems the terms are used interchangeably, as e.g. the argument of the commune of Nordre Follo already having “more than enough refugees” because the shopping mall is “full of immigrants” could point in the direction of a lack of understanding the difference between the terms. None of the other groups mention refugees explicitly. This could be partly due to the research by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) being carried out in the midst of the “refugee crisis”, and partly due to a generalization of all people coming to Norway being put in the same

box, and the lack of a nuanced understanding and approach when it comes to differentiating between asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants. This is furthermore a concern, to be further developed in the next section of the discussion, as putting all the people coming to Norway in the same box is both harmful, but also not conducive to finding constructive solutions to the challenges of immigration.

8.1.2 Pronounced hostility and mistrust in the police, politicians, and media

One finding that stood out during the content analysis of the posts published during the month of August 2023, was the presence of the perception of an enemy “from within”, which stood out as a big part of “the problem”. In January 2016, Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) found evidence of this as well, but it was not very prominent. In August 2023, this feeling of a perceived enemy “from within” was of very high importance to all of the groups included in this study. In fact, for groups such as SIAN and Norgesdemokratene, which were undoubtedly the most active of the groups and which held the largest number of supporters and followers, this seemed to be the root of the “problem” and the inherent cause of the increase of immigration and of the increased presence of the religion of Islam/Muslims, which will lead (and has led) to increased violence, economic pressure on the welfare state, and the neglecting of “our own” in order to help “the others”. For example, Norgesdemokratene published content on “the leadership in Norway ”being a “disaster”, claiming that the leaders of the country are merely “hopeless mannequins” that give in to the forces of internationalization and globalization. The group also accused prominent politicians and the media of “brainwashing” the population, and furthermore claimed that the media and the politicians label the people who “are able to think independently”, meaning people who oppose the policies of the government and the established politicians, as conspiracy theorists. There are several posts accusing the media of spreading fear within the population by e.g. discussing weather as “extreme” when it is, in fact, “completely normal” (Norgesdemokratene). Many of the posts that received the most attention were about the “climate crisis” being fake, and contained arguments such as “a bit of rain” not being proof of an ongoing “climate crisis”. The party also accused the government of Norway of making Norwegians “strangers in their own streets” by decorating the streets for Ramadan, and a particular post on this topic got as many as 656 likes. The

party also accused the politicians of “doing nothing” when it came to the difficult situation that many Norwegians find themselves in due to the economic recession. SIAN also published many posts featuring strong criticism of the prominent politicians in Norway, claiming at one point that politicians are importing immigrants who are “anti-female, violent, and killers”, and that no one wants to “say who the criminals are”. There were other posts arguing that the politicians are welcoming Muslims “with open arms” and “without any resistance”. The group also criticized the media for not writing about the persecution of Christians by Muslims, arguing that 21 churches were set on fire in Pakistan, and 378 homes of Christians were destroyed. They also accuse the media and the police of not mentioning the ethnicity of the violent and criminal groups, critiquing at several points the Chief of Police in Oslo, stating that both the police and the media are a “disgrace”.

Also FMI had several posts that questioned and criticized the police and politicians in Norway. The posts accused the Chief of Police in Oslo for lying when she stated that “ethnicity is of limited significance” when she discussed the rise of youth violence in the capital. Critiques directed towards the government’s response to Covid-19 were also present in both the posts of Norgesdemokratene and FMI, where it was argued that the restrictions had “damaging consequences” for the people, and were a “big opportunity” to see how the population would react to “authoritarian restrictions” (FMI). Norgesdemokratene voiced many concerns that were similar to this, arguing that a person who opposed the vaccine ended up being hospitalized in a mental hospital. The forces that put a man in a mental facility for expressing a correlation between the Covid-19 vaccine and mortality was expressed as an example of the “totalitarian forces” that Norgesdemokratene is fighting against. There were furthermore many posts regarding the media, and overall, the message is that the media must take more “responsibility” instead of spreading “fear, censorship and disinformation”. Along the same lines, Norsk Folkeparti had content regarding the politicians and the media in Norway, claiming that they are also part of the “problem”. Another post questioned the competence of the politicians, claiming that nothing is being done to combat the higher rates for poverty, pressure on the welfare systems, and the nursing homes that are being shut down. The post asks what kind of society the politicians want their grandchildren to grow up in. The group also branded the politicians as “traitors of their country”, and the media as “clueless” about what freedom of speech actually means. The criticism was

specifically angled towards NRK, which is a government-owned news channel in Norway, claiming that they “only hire people of color”. The presence of an enemy “from within” is therefore present in all of the five groups present in this analysis, with a magnitude of posts published by all of the groups regarding a lack of trust in the media and in the politicians in Norway being a prominent part of “the problem” across all of the groups. It is clear that the far-right groups were all expressing strong sentiments regarding the lack of belief in the established institutions’ ability to adequately protect its people, feeding into the narrative of a mistrust in the democracy.

Mistrust and a perceived conception that the media, politicians, and the police have an agenda of hiding news from the people was also mentioned in the literature review conducted in the beginning of this thesis. As mentioned in the literature review, “a clear link” was found between the sympathizers of the far-right and in the lack of trust in the established media, politicians, and the police. Especially the perception that the media, politicians and the police were hiding the “reality” and the negative consequences of immigration and Muslims were highlighted in the literature review as well as in the findings of the research conducted for this thesis (e.g. Dølving & Emberland 2018; Knutsen 2019). The different far-right groups tended to argue that the lack of transparency by governmental figures (e.g. politicians and the police) as well as the media when it comes to stating clearly that immigration and the religion of Islam/Muslims are “the problem” is the cause of the spread of fear in the population. The media was accused of contributing to “fear, censorship and disinformation” (Norgesdemokratene), and overall, all of the groups accused both the media, the police, and the politicians of “not doing enough” when it came to tackling the negative direction of the society. It became abundantly clear that the five far-right groups included in this study do not trust the government, the politicians, the police, or the media when it comes to sufficiently protecting its “Norwegian” citizens, and that this constitutes a vital part of their narrative.

The lack of trust in the established institutions, e.g. the police and the politicians in the Norwegian parliament, as well as in the media, were highlighted as one of the main factors that lead to increased support for the far-right. Corb (2014) held that in the process of radicalization, a general lack of trust and disappointment in the society are often deciding factors. This does not mean that someone who asks questions or is

critical about the way the institutions conduct themselves is in danger of becoming radicalized, but it means that sentiments like these in vulnerable adults or teenagers could potentially leave certain people more vulnerable to online radicalization by seeking out echo chambers online which reinforce these beliefs (Corb 2014; Koehler 2014.) The fact that the internet, and this type of narrative, is extremely easily accessible in the society today, can feed into this cycle. The accusation of the media and of governmental institutions “hiding” the reality and crucial information from the public is a serious one, and the accusation of spreading “fear” among the population is an interesting one that is worth looking into a bit deeper.

However, one can also argue that the content posted on their Facebook-pages can aid in doing the same thing. Although difference in opinions is healthy, and more importantly, it is a pillar of our democracy, it is perhaps the generalization and the lack of nuances in the language of the far-right groups that are the most concerning when we are discussing the harmful effects of spreading fear within the population. There is no evidence of differentiation between radical Muslims and Muslims in general, for example, and this can incite a fear within the population, equating Muslims in general with violence, terror, and hate. Overall, the religion of Islam is made out to be a religion that is “evil” with a “culture for killing” (SIAN), as a “threat to the real democracy” and to the “Nordic values” (Norgesdemokratene), a threat to the ability to “stay Norwegian” (FMI), as a source of violence that will eventually lead to the replacement of Christianity (Pegida Norge), and filling our streets and shopping malls (Norsk Folkeparti). If the people who stumble upon or seek out these types of environments without looking at the content with a critical and open eye, it is of course content that “anyone” could agree with. When, for example, the presence of the religion of Islam and Muslims is painted as equal to the “overturning” of the Christian Church and its values, most “Norwegians” would “choose” the Christian church. When the presence of the religion of Islam and Muslims is equated to a complete erosion of the Nordic values and of the “real democracy”, then yes, most people would “choose” the “Nordic values”. When the presence of Islam and Muslims is equated to the increase of violence with its “culture for killing”, the “stoning of women to death”, “throwing gay people off the roof” and “youth violence”, of course, an opposition to people of this background arriving in Norway would form. The problem with these “extreme” narratives is that it forces the people to feel that they have to choose one or the other, however, they are

given one option that is clearly better than the other, and that is not an accurate representation of reality. It is not being critical towards immigration that is the problem, it is the generalization of “all” Muslims being evil, of the being Quran fully evil and as a threat to the Norwegian democracy, equality, and peace, and it is the fact that immigration, and in some cases the religion of Islam and the Muslims, is to blame for all the societal and economical problems in, that are the problems of this type of narrative. Not only because it heavily discriminates a whole category within the population and creates a divide between “us” and “them”, but also because it is not conducive to creating solutions to the challenges of immigration, of economical issues, of removing some of the pressure on the welfare system, or to tackling challenges to the democracy.

The “internal” threat is therefore closely accompanied by the “external” threat also in August 2023. Several of the groups (e.g. SIAN, FMI, and Norgesdemokratene) argued that immigration, and in some cases Islam and Muslims, is aligned with the theory of “The Great Replacement”, which claims that the Western societies and culture are under threat from immigration. In the literature review, Ekam’s research (2022) found that this theory hinges on “the capability to foment fear within the citizenry”, and he also argued that this theory is inching closer to the “normal” line of politics. He claims, through his research, that although the theory of “The Great Replacement” is extreme, it can be, through the help of the media, made into something that seems reasonable to people (Ekam, 2022). Ekam (2022) argues that this is done through depicting immigrants as existential and symbolic threats against the population. When Ekam (2022) did research on the public attitudes in Norway towards this theory, he found that there was support for this theory because it relied on depicting the population as “victims whose ethnicity is under existential threat” (Ekam, 2022). This depiction can cause a justification of different means to combat these “threats” (Ekam 2022).

During the content analysis of the Facebook-posts on five of the most prominent far-right groups in Norway, evidence of the belief in this theory was daunting. The very core of the theory of “The Great Replacement” was present in almost all of the posts. There was a clear perception that the Norwegian, Nordic, European, and the Western culture and population are under threat by immigration and by Islam, and this was underlying in all the lines of arguments found across all of the content in the Facebook

posts. This means that similar to the findings by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) in January 2016, the perception of “the problem” has underlying ultra-nationalistic sentiments across all of the groups, and these arguments are used to justify more violent acts, such as the burning of the Quran for example. This act was justified because it is symbolic of protecting Norway, and the prohibition of burning the Quran was compared to “the West” losing the “fight for values” against Islam (SIAN). The preservation of what is Norwegian is overall the biggest priority, and the main threat against this is immigration as a whole. The line of arguments did not rely on simply creating a better society, but rather on inducing fear by telling people that if nothing is done to combat immigration and the presence of Islam, then eventually (and already) the economic pressure will increase because the politicians keep spending money on immigrants instead of “on their own”, the violence will increase, a bad outlook on women will fester, and eventually, the Western culture and people will be replaced by Islam. By posting news articles on Norwegian females being raped and by arguing that Muslims have little respect for women (Pegida Norge, SIAN, FMI), by arguing that the government spends too much money and resources on immigration at the expense of “their own” (Norsk Folkeparti, SIAN, FMI, Norgesdemokratene), and by equating Islam with violence (Norsk Folkeparti, SIAN, FMI, Norgesdemokratene, Pegida Norge), a clear divide between “us” and “them” is formed, making it possible to justify increasingly brutal and violent measures to stop the perceived threat of immigration.

8.3. Does the Norwegian far-right constitute a threat to the democracy?

Another point that stood out during the content analysis, was the perception of a lack of trust in the democracy. This point was not elaborated on by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017), however, Knutsen (2019), who also did an analysis of the content of the Facebook posts of far-right groups on Facebook in Norway, found that although there were expressions of mistrust in the democracy, there were also clear expressions of respect and understanding for the fundamentals of the democracy. In August 2023, the conception that immigration and Islam threaten the “real” or “Nordic” democracy were quite pronounced across all of the five groups. Norsk Folkeparti called it the “so-called democracy” and claimed that a politician of Iranian origin was committing “taqqya against the Norwegian democracy”. Norgesdemokratene claimed that the values of Islam are not compatible with a “secular, democratic society with the freedom of

speech” and that Islam cannot be practiced in Norway because it does not respect the regulations set by the state and because it does not adhere to the “Nordic values”. SIAN asked its followers to please come forward with a country where “Islam functions in relation to democracy and equality”, also indicating a belief that the practice of Islam is not compatible with democracy. Furthermore, in one of the posts inviting the followers of SIAN to a gathering to burn the Quran, the author, which is also the leader of SIAN, wrote that it is of the utmost importance that people show up, because the “governmental power war against the democracy intensifies”, indicating both a lack of trust in the government and their ability to protect the democracy. It is clear that SIAN believes that burning the Quran is necessary in order to protect the democracy as another post published by the leader of SIAN stated that people should come together to “burn the Quran to protect the freedom of Norway”.

Navigating the discussion of what constitutes a democracy, and whether or not sentiments of the far-right can pose a threat against it, is a quite intricate matter. First of all, it is not clear what a democracy should look like in the eyes of the different far-right groups. Should a democracy be inclusive enough to encompass also the far-right and some of its more extreme sentiments? Can this be a show of strength for the democracy, encompassing all of the differences in opinions, and striking a balance between them? Or, can extreme sentiments from the far-right (in this discussion) pose as threats to the democracy? These were questions that emerged during the content analysis of the posts published by the far-right groups. Europe today is often described as finding itself in a far-right “wave”³¹, with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Finland’s far-right party becoming a part of the governing coalition, Germany’s far-right party AfD taking steps on the polls and winning its first district council election, Marine Le Pen and her National Rally asserting itself as the second largest party in France for many years in a row, Sweden’s second largest party being the Sweden Democrats, also a far-right party, and far-right and nativist parties winning parliamentary seats in the recent elections in Greece. Since all of these countries are widely considered to be democratic, the differences lie in the nuances, and in the same way that the far-right groups’ were criticized for lacking the ability to differentiate

³¹ Henley, J. (2023, June 30). *How Europe’s far right is marching steadily into the mainstream*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/30/far-right-on-the-march-europe-growing-taste-for-control-and-order>

between radical Muslims and Muslims for example, it is crucial to also investigate the nuances of what it means to have far-right parties present in the governing coalition of liberal democracies across the globe. When discussing the democracy and the presence of the extreme right in politics, it should be noted that the expression and spread of hate is not something that enriches a democracy.

In the work published by Muddle (2019), he explains that the phenomenon of the far-right has changed dramatically during the last decades. He argues that it has gone from being “a phenomenon of the political margins” and to being “closely connected to the mainstream” in our society today (Muddle 2019). The examples above can help underpin this argument (which was made in 2019). Do we accept democratic backsliding in the name of protecting “our own” today? Muddle argues that the 21st century encompasses the fourth wave of the far-right, which entails that the radical right parties “have become mainstreamed and increasingly normalized” all over the world in addition to in Europe (Muddle 2019). He also argues that during the so-called “refugee crisis”, national governments, by choosing to use the word “crisis”, the politicians and the media gave ammunition to “the already mobilized far right” (Muddle 2019). Muddle (2019) argues that although the “refugee crisis” cannot take all the blame for the mainstreaming of the far right, he does consider it as “a catalyst” for the emergence of “anti-immigration demonstrations”, for violence against the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and refugees (Muddle 2019). The question then arises of how we can label politicians who pursue divisive policies and politics as fighters for democracy?

In Lydia Khalil’s paper entitled “Rise of the Extreme Right”, she argues that the arguments of the far-right, which are often centered around topics such as migration, an elite that uses immigration to “undermine traditional society” as well as critiques of Covid-19 restrictions, can attract supporters from a rich well of people, however, the “disparity” of the ideas often fronted by the far-right also make it hard for the leaders to “orient the movement toward any particular goal” (Khalil 2022). Khalil argues that while it is evident that the far-right movement is capable of violence, murder, and of impacting politics, it is inherently unclear how their extreme goals will be achieved. Khalil also touches upon the internet and the social media, which plays a bigger role in creating “influencers” and not leaders, and the movement furthermore lacks training camps or state sponsors in order to improve its ability to act (Khalil 2022). Khalil

furthermore argues that due to right-wing extremists being “public but poorly trained”, the individuals participating in extreme and violent episodes are easily identified and arrested (Khalil 2022). Although the violent potential of right-wing extremists should not be underestimated, Khalil argues that the main challenge of right-wing extremism is not “with guns or bombs but with ballots” (Khalil 2022). She points out that far-right candidates have done well in recent years, and that this cannot be battled using counter-terrorist techniques, but that it requires a “broader social rejection of hateful ideas and people who foster them” (Khalil 2022).

In the discussion of whether the extreme far-right can pose a threat to the democracy, it is important to mention the two key principles of a democracy: individual autonomy and equality³². The presence of the far-right and difference in opinion is inherently not a threat to the democracy, and the far-right has always been present in the society, but the notion that the political elite or that the government care more about “the others” than their own, can sow the seeds of anti-democratic sentiments, not because of the critique of the established governmental institutions, but because it underpins a notion that an “us” exists, and this means that a “them” or the “others” must also exist. A core concept of extreme nationalistic sentiments is the notion that the ethnic population, in this case the Norwegians, should have the rights to participate in the society, whereas the “others” should not, and additionally, the “others” should not have the right or ability to influence the Norwegian culture and traditions (Knutsen 2019). As presented in the literature review, both Knutsen (2019) and Døving & Emberland (2018) argued that the national identity, the Norwegian traditions, values and symbols, as well as conserving “what it means to be Norwegian” seem to be at the forefront of the far-right groups in Norway, and the findings of this study underpin this, making it clear that a political overtaking is less important than the perceived cultural overtaking. Because of the stated link between immigrants and the religion of Islam, and the threat they pose against the ability to preserve “what is Norwegian”, a divide between “us” and “them” has been created, and the findings of this study underpin the argument of Døving & Emberland (2018) who argued that the category of “them” threaten and hurt “us” as a pivotal argument in the far-right narrative. This poses a possible threat against the liberal democracy, because it can, as argued by Muddle (2019), cause a democratic backlash due to a “clash” between the two different directions of the society. This is also

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aligned with the argument of Khalil (2022), because it proves that the narrative and political campaign of the far-right is more damaging and pressing than the potential for violence.

At the core of the main critique of the narrative of the far-right lies not only the danger of extreme generalization, but also in the lack of providing any sustainable solutions to the pressing “problems” that the groups describe. This underpins the fact that the findings of this study reveals that there is a wish to create fear, hate and divides more than a wish to create a better society. This finding is also aligned with the argument of Khalil (2022) who argues that the far-right movements today require more than “just a technical solution to violence”, because the “hateful ideas” propagated by the extreme far-right can be just as damaging to the society (Khalil 2022). It seems, to a certain degree, that expressing racist, xenophobic, and ultra-nationalistic sentiments are more important not because of a belief that these narratives will cause an eventual change to the societal situation, but because they ignite a sense of fear and divide. This argument can be made because of the obvious lack in presenting any kind of solution that is sustainable and realistic. This is also supported by Khalil (2022) who argued that the extreme far-right lack the ability to orient “the movement toward any particular goal”, and it should be noted that most of the lethal attacks that have been carried out by far-right extremists have been solo attacks (Khalil 2022). Immigration, both in the shape of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants, is the reality, and in order to create a sustainable, peaceful, and equal society, this must be acknowledged. Even if a complete halt to immigration could be put in place in this moment, this does not combat the totality of “the problem” as it is expressed by the far-right groups. A generalization of all immigrants as threats to the peace, equality, economy and culture, is extremely harmful, and in the end, that is the main concern regarding the content of the posts published by the far-right. A sweeping generalization and lack of nuances when it comes to Muslims, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, lie at the core of the problem of an “extreme” narrative, because it can do more to create divides (an “us” and “them”) and incite fear within the population which reinforces this divide, rather than come up with sustainable and concrete solutions which can benefit everyone. This point was made increasingly clear during the content analysis, as the findings are similar to January 2016 when it comes to the complete lack in providing solutions for “the problem”. A central finding revealed by this analysis is therefore the fact that the

far-right movements and groups analyzed in this study relies more on divisiveness in expressions of hate by using xenophobic, racist, and ultra-nationalistic sentiments and narratives, rather than campaigning on their solutions to the “problem”. This underpins the danger of solely describing “the problem”, creating both fears and divides by generalization and correlations, without providing any suggestions for solutions.

9. Conclusions

This final chapter will present the conclusions to this research project, which has been based on a mixed approach using qualitative and quantitative research methods with an aim of researching the presence, content, communication, and collective action frame of far-right groups in Norway on Facebook in August 2023, and conduct a comparative analysis with the findings of a study conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) using the same methodology as in January 2016. The purpose of doing a comparative study was to see whether there has been any changes between the month of January 2016 and August 2023. The main findings of this study were presented in the previous section, divided into findings regarding the understanding of “the problem” and whether there was cohesion among the groups on this understanding, one section regarding the solution, and reflections around findings regarding the democracy and anti-democratic sentiments. In the next section of this paper, the answers and conclusions to the research questions will be presented.

The first research question was:

- *Is the far-right more/less present on Facebook in August 2023 compared to January 2016?*

This question finds its answer in the quantitative data which was collected at the very beginning of this project. In the category of presence, the number of followers and the number of posts published in the month of August 2023, were the data material that was collected in order to answer this question. In summary, the empirical research revealed that the five groups had a total of 23500 followers in January 2016, while in August 2023, they had 56134 followers in total. This indicates an average yearly increase of 9355,6 followers overall. The change in the number of followers indicates that Norgesdemokratene was the fastest growing far-right Facebook-page in Norway, and the one of two Facebook-pages that kept growing at a faster speed per year between January 2016 and August 2023 than between March 2015 and January 2016. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of followers grew with 2001 in almost a year. In the six years between 2016 and 2023, the average number of followers gained per year was 3908. Additionally, Norsk Folkeparti grew faster per year after 2016 than they did between 2015 and 2016. From 2015 to 2016, the party grew with only 4 followers to

their Facebook-page. Between January 2016 and August 2023, the Facebook-page of the party grew with an average number of 24 new followers per year. The Facebook-page of FMI grew with 4244 followers between March 2015 and January 2016, while the page grew with an average of 1310 per year since 2016. The SIAN Facebook-page also experienced slower growth on average between 2016 and 2023 than they did between 2015 and 2016. Between March 2015 and January 2016, the Facebook-page grew with 5163 new members, while between 2016 and 2023, the Facebook-page grew on average with 926 new members. Pegida Norge was the only Facebook-page that lost followers, losing over 1000 followers in the span of 6 years. Although the Facebook-pages seem to have gained less followers on average per year than they did between March 2015 and January 2016, they have still gained a larger following base since 2016, with the exception of Pegida Norge, which proves, especially in the case of Norgesdemokratene, FMI, and SIAN, that there is indeed a strong presence of these far-right groups on Facebook also in August 2023. The rapid growth between March 2015 and January 2016 must also be seen in context with the onset of the so-called “refugee crisis” when a lot of the far-right group capitalized on the fear of refugees streaming to the country as evidenced by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017).

The number of posts published by an administrator (the name of the far-right group in this case), is another indicator of how active and present the far-right groups were on Facebook through their Facebook-pages. All in all, this activity decreased across all of the groups between January 2016 and August 2023. The Facebook-pages that saw the smallest decrease were Pegida Norge and Norsk Folkeparti, however, these pages have minimal activity with only 3-5 posts per month, both in January 2016 and in August 2023. Norgesdemokratene had a decrease of 30 posts, which is an amount that is worth noting, however not a drastic decrease, and 92 posts published in a month is still a substantial amount, establishing the Facebook-page of Norgesdemokratene as one of the most active and prominent ones. 92 posts in the month of August is still almost 3 posts per day, which undoubtedly proves that the far-right group was present and active on their Facebook-page. The decrease for FMI was much more substantial, going from 122 to 15, which amounts to less than one post per day. However, if one counted the posts published on the FMI page by non-administrators, the Facebook-page would arrive at a higher number of posts in August 2023 compared to January 2016. SIAN, which was

undoubtedly the most active group, had a total of over 11 000 posts, leaving no doubt about whether or not it was still active and present in August 2023. Overall, the conclusion on the presence of the Facebook-pages of the five far-right groups is that they were still active during the month of August 2023.

The second research question:

- *Has the type of activity/nature of the content changed since January 2016? (as a channel for information, communication, and/or distribution)*

When it comes to the communicative aspects of the activity on the Facebook-pages of the far-right groups, it is interesting to note that Norgesdemokratene's posts received more comments and shares in August 2023 than in January 2016, while the likes stayed quite consistent, only 5 less on average in August 2023 compared to January 2016. The posts of Norgesdemokratene interestingly received more shares (45) than likes (40), and this indicates that the Facebook-page of Norgesdemokratene was, to a larger degree than in January 2016, a channel for both communication and the spread of information in August 2023. The communication, response and engagement was more nuanced and carefully conducted in August 2023 than it was in January 2016 in the case of Norgesdemokratene. It takes more effort and time to leave a comment or share a post rather than simply pressing the "thumbs up" button on a post. This could indicate that the audience and the followers were more engaged and willing to spend more time on their communication and responses than they were in January 2016. The Facebook-page of Norgesdemokratene was therefore more of a channel for communication and spread of information as the comments and shares were higher, and content from the far-right Facebook-page was frequently shared to people who did not ask to be subjected to this kind of content.

In the other substantial Facebook-page, FMI, the communicative aspect decreased between January 2016 and August 2023. FMI received the most likes (26), indicating that the Facebook-page perhaps was more of a channel for information. The posts, on average, received 8 comments in August 2023, which is substantially less than the 33 it received on average in January 2016. It also received substantially less shares, 48 in January 2016 compared to 6 in August 2023. This could indicate that the audience became less engaged and nuanced in their feedback, communication, and engagement

since January 2016. Norsk Folkeparti and Pegida Norge remained Facebook-pages with very minimal activity and communication.

In the case of SIAN, The Facebook-page could also be established as more than only a channel for information, as the number of comments and shares were high, especially on posts published by an administrator. The levels of activity were undoubtedly high in August 2023, with a very engaged audience, also proved by the high number of posts published by members, and not by administrators. This could also cause the number of comments to decrease in August 2023 compared to January 2016, as the people who would perhaps leave a comment in 2016 could instead write an independent post in August 2023. This also proves a high level of engagement and willingness to spend time writing and composing posts, which all indicates an increased level of nuanced and specific engagement compared to 2016. This group also arranged a number of events to burn the Quran and spread information about Islam, which suggests that the Facebook-page was used for communicative purposes and to spread information in August 2023.

In conclusion, the research conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) concluded that the Facebook-pages were mostly used as a channel for information based on the fact that the Facebook-posts received the most likes in terms of engagement. In August 2023, the result was divided. While some groups had little to no communicative aspect (Pegida Norge and Norsk Folkeparti), Norgesdemokratene had more nuanced and carefully constructed engagement from their followers in the sense that they had an increase of comments and shares compared to January 2016, and they also had a higher number of shares and comments than the number of likes, indicating that this group's Facebook-page was to a larger degree a channel for communication and for the spread of information than in January 2016. SIAN similarly showed traits that point towards the group's increased movement towards being a channel for communication and the spread of information with its increased focus on arranging events to burn the Quran and to hold "educative" events featuring the "evils of Islam". FMI remained a channel for information in August 2023.

And finally, the last research question:

- *Is the collective action frame in August 2023 strengthened/weakened compared to January 2016? (common understanding of: which parts of the society that are seen as problematic, how to rectify the situation, and why it is important to act now)*

In January 2016, the far-right groups were divided into two different directions: groups that could be labeled as Islamophobic, and groups that could be labeled as ultra-nationalistic. A central finding was the understanding of “the problem” being especially asylum seekers and refugees threatening the security in Norway (Haanshuus & Jupskås 2017). The main understanding of “the problem” was immigration in general, however, they could still find Islamophobic sentiments in Norges Frihetsparti, SIAN, and FMI in January 2016. The “external” enemy (the immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker) received the most attention in January 2016 (Haanshuus & Jupskås 2017).

In August 2023, three of the groups were solely concerned with immigration from Muslim countries when describing the root of the problem (SIAN, FMI, Pegida Norge), while two of them were concerned with immigration in general (Norgesdemokratene and Norsk Folkeparti), however, all had their concerns anchored in the name of protecting Norway and its people. Therefore, the description of “the problem” in August 2023 was similar to the findings from the study conducted by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) from January 2016 in finding that the groups found common ground in opposing immigration. However, in August 2023, no extra attention was given to refugees or asylum seekers. Rather, there was little differentiation between the terms, and a clear finding was that “immigration” as a whole was the biggest threat to society, with very few mentioning refugees or asylum seekers more specifically. Another conclusion that differentiates from the results from January 2016 was that the groups seemed more concerned with an enemy from “within” in August 2023 than they did in January 2016. All of the groups had content questioning and criticizing the established police, politicians, and the media, claiming that none of the instances were doing enough to adequately protect the Norwegian society and the population. In August 2023, there were therefore *three* evident directions the groups could be divided in: Lack of trust/hostility towards politicians, the media, and the police, Islamophobic sentiments, and ultra-nationalistic groups. Divergence between the three directions were also

evident in August 2023, as all of the groups portrayed lack of trust and hostility towards the media, politicians, and the police, and all of the groups were labeled as ultra-nationalistic.

This brings this thesis to the second and third conclusions regarding the collective action frame of the far-right groups on Facebook in Norway. The solutions, and why it is important to act in this moment, are the remaining factors included in the collective action frame. In 2016, Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) found that the groups were more concerned with describing the problem than coming up with solutions. In August 2023, this is quite similar, and it is abundantly clear that the groups were mostly concerned with describing the problems, which has already been described in great length in the sections above, and the urgency in why it is important to act was closely connected with the descriptions of the problem. The urgency was connected to the perception of “Islam is taking over” the Western culture and traditions, in equating immigration with increased violence, in the “culture of killing” and female oppression present in Islam, and in the foregoing of Norwegian culture and violence that the presence of Islam and immigrants bring with them. However, when it came to suggesting concrete and sustainable solutions, few articulated answers was found. Norsk Folkeparti argued that any work that has to do with immigration should be considered as “treason”, which indicated that the group fights for an absolute stop to any and all immigration. For Pegida Norge, a clear expression of the notion that “Muslims do not belong in Europe” was put forward, but there were no other articulations of any clear solutions to this problem. FMI is undoubtedly against immigration, multiculturalism, people of color, and transgender communities, and believe that all of these constitute a threat against Norway’s ability to stay Norwegian. However, also here, an emphasis was put on the danger and threat of these people, but no solutions were suggested. In the case of Norgesdemokratene, some specific solutions were suggested. For example, an emphasis was placed on “helping them where they are”, and of granting aid to help families re-establish their lives when they are returned to their homeland, encouraging “voluntary returns”. They also suggested that criminal immigrants should immediately be returned to their homeland, and otherwise to look to countries such as Australia and Hungary when it comes to immigration policies. Lastly, SIAN, similar to the findings in January 2016, emphasized that Norway have to fight against the influence of Sharia laws and of the Quran, but despite the more than 11 000 posts published in the month of

August 2023, there were no clear formulations on how this should be done or what this looks like.

While it is clear that putting a stop to immigration as a whole is a priority, it is also clear that the Norwegian society is already hurting and struggling from the presence of immigrants should one believe the content and narrative fronted by all of the far-right groups on their Facebook-pages, however, there are no suggestions on what should be or could be done in order to tackle these challenges. In conclusion, the findings from January 2016 fits with those of August 2023 in finding that the groups, with the slight exception of Norgesdemokratene, were overwhelmingly focused on describing the problem of immigration and Islam, as well as the lack of trust in the police, politicians and the media, but not on providing solutions to these pressing “problems”. There was some increase in the willingness to resort to more violent responses, such as the sharp increase and focus on the burning of the Quran as a way to revolt and ensure that the Western culture is not “overturned” by Islam (SIAN), which was not mentioned by Haanshuus & Jupskås (2017) as a focus in the content of the posts published by the group in January 2016. There was some evidence of translating violent statements into action, but only in the case of the followers of SIAN, although Norgesdemokratene also encouraged political action, however in a more peaceful manner. Although the willingness to translate sentiments into action was overall low across the groups also in August 2023, there was some evidence of willingness to extort to violence in order to achieve their “goal” of hindering an “overtaking” of the Western and Norwegian culture in the case of SIAN, which seemed to be a contrast to the findings of Haanshuus & Jupskås in January 2016.

10. Implications and further research

10.1 Implications

First of all, a clear implication of this study, is the fact that only two separate months were analyzed. In order to say something about wider trends, it is clear that the different variables and the content must have been analyzed over an extended period of time. Another implication is that the month included from 2023 was the month of August, while in 2016, the month of January was included. The reason for this was the fact that the data collection of this project did not start until August 2023, and there is no way to know how many followers/members the different Facebook-pages had at another point in time (e.g. on the last day of January in 2016). In order to analyze more posts and content, more resources and time would have been necessary, as this study already included the analysis of over 12 000 posts which took a substantial amount of time. The other implication, as mentioned in the methodology, was that the format of one of the Facebook-pages had changed since 2016. This is a part of the reality of social media and social platforms where they are constantly evolving and changing, making it nearly impossible to copy the same methodology that was used in January 2016. It also made it impossible to compare the quantitative data between all of the groups, and also made it hard to make any clear conclusions regarding the comparison between 2016 and 2023. However, the same methodology was used in four out of five groups, and the fifth group was analyzed using caution and without comparing the quantitative data. Still, valuable insight and information was extracted from the data analysis and content analysis of the fifth group. It was also not possible to use the exact same methodology as e.g. the date of the data collection from the January 2016 study was not known. Although all the data on the posts, likes, comments, and shares were made on the last day of August 2023, it is not possible to know which exact day was used in January 2016, and furthermore, it is not possible to know at which day the number of followers was recorded in January 2016. In August 2023, all of the quantitative data was collected on the last day of August (31.08.2023). The content of the posts was analyzed later over time as this content cannot change over time. Another possible implication is the difficulty in knowing which format or social media platform the different groups are the most active on. When making conclusions on how active these groups are on Facebook, it should be underlined that it is only on *Facebook*, since some of the groups could have shifted their

platform or have other means to communicate. For example, some of the groups included in the analysis in January 2016 were excluded from the analysis from August 2023 due to the fact that they were no longer active on Facebook. This does not mean that they are no longer present or active at all, but it means that they no longer are active as a public and open *Facebook-page*. However, they may still be active on different social media platforms or using other means of communication. This would also be a further insightful angle for further research. Finally, human error should also be mentioned and considered when discussing the possible implications of this thesis. Although the quantitative data was collected a total of 3 times in order to ensure that the data collected was correct, it cannot be ruled out that some mistakes have been made in the collection of the quantitative data. Therefore, caution should always be taken in ensuring that the numbers and findings are not considered final “answers”, but rather as contributions to the discussion.

10.2 Further research

When it comes to further research, there is a lot that could be mentioned. First of all, in order to develop this research further and make it possible to say something about the evolution and of the trends, more content and data should be analyzed. As this project only included two separate months (August 2023 and January 2016), it would be beneficial to look at longer periods of time and perhaps over several years and months in order to make more secure conclusions. It is in the very nature of social media that the content and activity varies greatly from month to month, so analyzing the different variables over a longer period of time would take the research a step further both in terms of quality, but also in terms of being able to say something about the larger trends. Another option for further research would be to include several social media platforms and not limit it only to Facebook-posts. For example, including X (Twitter) and/or Instagram would add another layer to the research. Looking to other countries and including them in a comparative analysis would also be very interesting, however, it would require the different groups to use the same format and to have open and accessible Facebook-pages. However, it could enrich the discussion as e.g. Pegida (the Norway branch of this group was included in this study), is known to have a much larger audience and following base in Germany, which is a reason why it would be interesting to widen the scope to include other countries as well.

Further research on extreme far-right narratives and the possible impact on democracy using this study as a starting point could also be very interesting. The question of whether the democracy should be inclusive enough to include the extremes, or whether it poses a threat to the ability to live in a peaceful, equal and inclusive country, is very interesting, and it was something that I flagged during the process of writing this thesis, as the concept of democracy got substantial attention in the narrative of almost all of the far-right groups included in this study. Perhaps our definitions of democracy are changing as well, and it is clear that it means something different to every single person. The topic was touched upon during the discussion part of this thesis, but this is a less developed topic where any clear conclusions are yet to be drawn, also because no definition of democracy was provided by any of the groups, making it difficult to make any clear reflections and conclusions around the topic. Researching whether the narratives of the far-right, perhaps using the Facebook-posts as the main means of communication, have a role in the process of the “mainstreaming” of the far-right could also be interesting. There is no doubt that the information and opinions of the far-right is more visible and easily accessible than perhaps ever before, and the real impacts of this would be very interesting to research further.

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