Managing the unmanageable?
-The society’s adaptation to the threat from the “New Terrorism”

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Introduction
Many terrorist researchers argue that we are facing a new type of terrorism. The perpetrators of the new terrorism act transnational, they operate in loosely organized networks, they are inspired by religion and they intend to physically attack as many people as possible, also by means of weapons of mass destruction. Their victims are not carefully selected but their targeting is indiscriminate (Laqueur, 2003; Tucker, 2001). The terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, and the following terrorist attacks in Spain and England are by many recognized as the evidence for the emerging of a “new terrorism” (Duyvesteyn, 2004).

Most western countries regard terrorism as the largest security challenge today. Different measures have been introduced by several authorities to reduce the risk of terrorism after 9/11. Examples are “the war on terrorism”, imprisonment, new legislation, increased surveillance, homeland security-regime, security measures and freezing assets and bank accounts. All these measures are part of the authorities' risk management strategies. However, how to reduce the overall risk of terrorism is a question without an obvious answer. This PhD-project questions how the risk of terrorism could be understood and managed. General risk management approaches are based on the assumption that it is possible to reduce risk through rational planning processes (Aven, 2003). The project will also investigate characteristics of the risk management of terrorism, and whether the risk management is based on other agendas and arguments than traditional normative premises provided by risk management. As a starting point the project will identify and analyze societal developments referred to as consequences of prevention of terrorism threat that has been taken place in the Norwegian society. Major issues are:

- What are the arguments behind the societal changes?
- How are the terrorism prevention measures legitimized?
- Is the fear of terrorism a threat to the societal safety and essential values in the society?

The major goal with the project is to study relations between terrorism, risk assessment and risk reducing measures. The project will examine whether there have been changes in the attitudes amongst stakeholders in the society towards terrorism and security. The fear of terrorism is not only created by the terrorists, but also the media and other public participants play major roles.

The structure of the PhD-project
The contents of terrorist attacks and threats are not objective facts, but have to be interpreted in their contexts. It was not given that the 9/11 terrorist attacks should have resulted in wars against terrorism and other also less dramatic measures implemented in the aftermath (Jackson, 2004).

The methodological approach is mainly qualitative encompassing discourse analysis of public communications and arguments of societal changes, case studies of specific sectors (for example aviation and the oil and gas industry). Maarten Hajer will provide a main methodological reference because he is concerned with how some political actors have power
to shape the political discourses more than others (Hajer, 1995). He also connects discourse analysis to how the political debates are shaped in crisis situations (Hajer & Uitermark, 2007). Rosenthal, Boin and Comfort (2001) claim that a society experiences a crisis when those with power define the situation as a crisis. How to deal with the situation is also a matter of who have the power to frame and construct the reality.

There exist a number of different theoretical perspectives on the concepts of terrorism, societal security, risk management and performance of terrorism prevention. The project will identify and explore the different theories to obtain a framework for analyzing and understanding the societies’ responses to terrorist threats.

The work will encompass five articles, all covering different topics of the major issues. The empirical foundations of the articles will be collected from public documents, research publications, media statements and interviews with representatives from the authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the society. The five planned articles are presented as follows:

1. **The terrorism research 1996-2006: Paradigms and attitudes towards security.**

   According to the Norwegian authorities research is an important contributor to the selection of appropriate security measures (NoU, 2006). The article was first presented on the ESREL-conference 2007. It reviews and analyses the Norwegian research literature on terrorism published the last ten years (Jore, 2007). The theoretical approach has been a deduction of Thomas Kuhn’s concept of paradigm (Kuhn, 1970). Three paradigms have been identified in the Norwegian terrorism research; the majority of the publications are found within the “Islamic terrorism”-paradigm. The research within this paradigm is dealing with understanding and explaining international and religious motivated terrorism. The “Civil protection”-paradigm focuses on terrorism as a threat to critical infrastructure, and the “State characteristics”-paradigm examines whether different characteristics with the state can contribute to terrorism. The number of research publications on terrorism has increased after September 11, 2001, and furthermore the number of researchers and disciplines involved has also increased. The research is to a large extent applied research, and it reflects the political interests in terrorism as a threat to society. Even though most of the research assesses the risk of terrorism in Norway as being low, the majority of the literature has a positive attitude towards implementing security measures in the Norwegian society. We plan an extension of the article to incorporate the Norwegian results into international research trends.

2. **Theoretical perspectives on terrorism and risk: Challenges with risk management and terrorism.**

   Risk management is introduced by the American authorities as a key tool to plan and execute terrorism mitigation: ”Risk management, a strategy for helping policymakers make decisions about assessing risks, allocating resources, and taking actions under conditions of uncertainty, has been endorsed by Congress and the President as a way to strengthen the nation against possible terrorist attacks.”(GAO, 2005). Others claim that terrorism is a stark reminder of the limit of risk management; it brings home the potential ungovernedability of modern societies, and how those with little power can work cheaply and effectively to destroy (Ericson, 2006). This article will discuss foundation of risk, risk management and societal safety in the light of terrorism and threat of terrorist attacks. One of the core questions are: would different types of terrorism lead to different types of risk management strategies? The article aims to outline how the relation between terrorism, risk assessments and security measures could be consistently scientifically understood. We refer to (Adams, 1995;
3. Changes in the Norwegian authority’s interpretation and behavior regarding the terrorist threat.
In Norway, a commission appointed by the Norwegian authorities in 1993, claimed that terrorism should not be met with specific legislation, but regarded as an ordinary crime. The commission claimed that the phenomena of terrorism hardly could be defined, and that Norway probably not would be a terrorist target because terrorists will not gain support in the Norwegian society. Besides Norway was seen to have a long tradition with using dialog with extreme political groups (Nordenhaug, 2006). After 2001, Norway has passed legislation that treats terrorism as a specific category of crime. Terrorism is defined in the legislation. The purpose with the article is to examine the terrorism concept and the attitude towards the phenomena in a historical context. The empirical foundations of the article will be documents made by or on behalf of the authorities. The paper will conclude on the development of the different discourses on terrorism and how the official authority perception of terrorism is communicated, and finally how the authority claims that the terrorism risk best can be reduced.

4. An analysis of changes in the society caused by the terrorism risk.
The purpose with the article is to examine whether different actors in the society find risk management as an appropriate method for dealing with terrorism risk and subsequently if terrorism is seen as a risk that can be mitigated for? Have there been changes in the ways of understanding the risk of terrorism? Are there specific events that have shaped our understanding of this risk? What are the arguments behind the implementations of security measures and other changes in the society after 9/11? For decades there have been a debate going on between those who claim that accidents in organizations can be prevented and those that claim that accidents eventually will happen (Sagan, 1993). Is the debate about risk management and terrorism really the same old discussion between normal accident theory and high reliability theory in new wrapping?
The article will examine the arguments behind the societal changes caused by the terrorism threat, and to see if these changes are in accordance with the assessment of the terrorism threat, based on mass media, interviews with key persons (stakeholders) and physical/structural changes to the Norwegian society.

5. Empirical analysis of security measures in different sectors in the society.
After 9/11 different sectors of the society have implemented security measures to prevent terrorism attacks. This article aims to discuss these changes in the society by focusing on an empirical analysis collected from different sectors. The article will focus on aviation where there have been implemented security checks on the airports, and the petroleum industry which has been appointed as a critical terrorist target by researchers and the authorities in Norway. Major issues are: Are the implementations of security measures based on risk analysis or are they based on other arguments. Are there different opinions on the implementation of security measures within or between the different sectors?

References


