

Distant Yet Linked: Norway and the Syrian Civil War

Gray M. Barrett
International Studies
The University of North Carolina at Asheville
One University Heights
Asheville, North Carolina 28804 USA

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Agya Boakye-Boaten

Abstract

Though Syria and Norway are not usually mentioned in the same sentence, the two countries are inextricably linked. One country is embroiled in a years-long civil war, with factions fighting proxy wars within its borders and other sects trying to dissolve its borders altogether. The other represents a bastion of social democracy, consistently ranked as one of the best countries in which to live. Those fleeing from war-torn Syria want to maximize their chances of not only surviving but also thriving by starting a new life. For many refugees, Norway represents an ideal haven — one with a large social welfare state to accept them and a thriving market economy in which they can apply their skills and fashion a new livelihood. However, the reality may not be so ideal. As this conflict drags on, Norway will have to deal with ghosts from its past, Islamophobia, and the potential threat of ISIS and its foreign fighters as it seeks to provide relief for the thousands of Syrian refugees seeking a better future and to uphold its strong commitment to human rights.

Keywords: Norway, Syria, Islamophobia

1. Introduction

Current sources of worry – from terrorism to refugee influx to Islamophobia – all have a basis in the current civil conflict in Syria. A humanitarian crisis that has forced 4,000,000 people to seek asylum from vicious battles between pro- and anti-government forces or from the brutal regime of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, ISIL, IS, or Daesh), this mass migration of citizens has brought about anxiety, fear, and doubt about the place of those displaced and the values that they carry with them.¹ Islamophobia, once a minor issue for those in Europe and the Americas, is now being used to stoke fear among the people in these countries as politicians exploit uncertainty, sometimes-unsupported suspicion, and fear in order to accomplish their own goals. Still more is the threat of so-called “foreign fighters” – those who travel to Iraq and Syria in order to train under the leadership of the Islamic State and return to their country of origin and wage holy war or jihad there.

This complicated issue has put European leaders in a bind. Some, like Chancellor Angela Merkel, state that Europe has a moral obligation to help those displaced by the fighting. As a result, Germany will take in over 800,000 refugees next year alone.² On the other end of the spectrum are those leaders, like that of Hungary, who decry the “baggage” that these refugees bring – namely, their religion and culture, which are largely foreign to contemporary Europe and represent a marked change from so-called “Western values.”³ The economic and cultural burdens that these refugees represent stoke fear that European cultures will be undermined, their welfare states paralyzed, and their countries Islamized.

Where do the Scandinavian countries stand on these issues? Widely known as strong proponents of human rights and humanitarian values, have these countries stepped up to these challenges, or are leaders within these countries

afraid of subjecting their welfare states and homogenous cultures to a new influx of refugees and those who come from a different background? More specifically, how is Norway dealing with the effects of the Syrian civil war — from the Islamic State to refugees to Islamophobia?

Since Norway is not a member of the European Union, which stipulates that each member nation must take a specific number of refugees based on the nation's population, do Norway's humanitarian values and strong commitment to human rights outweigh the possible detrimental outcomes of assisting these asylum-seekers? Furthermore, can Norway, a state with a very homogenous population, reconcile the differences that these refugees bring with a liberal, nonreligious set of values without resorting to acrimonious and fear-mongering rhetoric and "other-ing?" How can these refugees and migrants adapt into a society that is markedly different from that of their home nation? Finally, how does the threat of the Islamic State play into this puzzle? Do Norwegians join this group and return as foreign fighters to wreak havoc on their peaceful homeland? What tactics, if any, does ISIS use to recruit in Norway, and how successful have they been in doing so? What aspects of Norwegian society do jihadists revile and wish to remove?

These questions are at the heart of this research paper. The key theme that this paper will strive to uncover is how states that ostensibly protect human rights perform in crisis situations. Do these values stand up to pressure, or do politicians and policy-makers close their doors, threaten the privacy of their citizens, or refuse to recognize the rights of those different from them? Through an analysis of key concepts via a literature review and an examination of case studies, this paper will seek to understand how the Syrian civil war has brought about change in the lives of the average Norwegian citizen. In turn, this may shed light on issues faced by other highly developed states, as they strive to uphold human rights while simultaneously protecting the rights and values of their own citizens.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Key Concepts:

2.1.1. *islamophobia*

The term "Islamophobia" was first developed in 1997 in a report written by a British race relations NGO entitled, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All."⁴ Since entering common parlance, this term has become known around the world, particularly in the 9/11 era. At its core, this concept means hatred and fear of the differences that Islam and Muslims present, coupled with discrimination as a result of these fears.

Todd H. Green, author of *The Fear of Islam – An Introduction of Islamophobia in the West*, states that Islamophobia "constitutes one of the most acceptable forms of bigotry in the West today."⁵ Indeed, political leaders in many nations get away with sweeping generalizations about the threat of Islam to Western values or the Western legal system through the integration of Islamic religious practice and sharia law into the societies of nations not traditionally Islamic. Green goes on to state that there is some argument as to the nature of this fear, and questions whether the term "Islamophobia" is in fact a misnomer. Some critics of the term, he states, feel as though Islamophobia should be subsumed under racism or xenophobia, then secondly and specifically directed at those who practice Islam. Green goes on to break down several characteristics ascribed to Islam that may feed into Islamophobic sentiments. These "features" of Islam include: the notion that Islam is a static and monolithic religion; Islam is a separate, distinct, and alien religion to those practiced traditionally in the West, including Judaism and Christianity; and that Islam is inferior, hostile, and manipulative.⁶ These sentiments and prejudices against those who practice the world's fastest growing religion are remarkable, though they are becoming remarkably commonplace in the Western world. Green goes on to argue that these prejudices obscure substantive debates and legitimate criticisms of both Islam and Western values by placing one above the other in terms of self-righteousness and importance.⁷

Islamophobia has been more subdued in Europe (compared to in the US) in the post-9/11 period, though it has still remained strong there until this day. For example, France and Belgium have put restrictions on the ability of their citizens to wear the burqa, and politicians in Denmark and the Netherlands have criticized the influx of Islam as a threat to secular, Western values or the promotion of religious freedom.⁸ Most notably, two media outlets have suffered directly from criticizing Islam: a Danish cartoon office and, more recently, *Charlie Hebdo*. These two instances are of particular note given the vast amounts of media coverage and spin by actors around the globe.

The fallout from these two events, both of which criticized or made fun of Islam by depicting the Prophet Muhammad (an act forbidden in Islam), has made a deep impact on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment. In the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, a dozen people were killed due to the creation of these comics. Thousands of people around the world protested these attacks, carrying the slogan "Je suis Charlie" as an expression for "the protection of freedom

of speech and the press,” according to Karolin Machtans, a scholar in Western Europe.⁹ When a Danish satirical newspaper printed a comic of Muhammad a few years earlier, thousands of Muslims protested, burning Danish embassies and flags around the world. The West was outraged, seeing this as an assault on free speech in both cases.

Similarly, one might expect an outcry against Islam or the “assault on free speech” by Muslims by Norwegians, since Norway is a secular, Western democracy like Denmark. Unfortunately, little scholarship on these sentiments exists, though the propensity for this study could increase with the influx of immigrants and given the current threats of ISIS and Al-Qaeda. ISIS is of particular note in this case, due to the threat – founded or yet unfounded – that jihadists who leave to fight with this group and then return to their country of origin present. These individuals are known collectively as “foreign fighters.”

2.1.2. foreign fighters

Do so-called “foreign fighters” – i.e. those who leave their home country to train with jihadists and return to their home country – represent a tangible threat to countries in the West, or even in surrounding nations? Media outlets and conservatives in the United States have made this claim, but the fact is that tangible threats from these jihadists have not yet materialized in the West.

The concept of foreign fighters in the modern era can be traced to the Afghan civil war and the mujahedeen who were armed and trained by the United States. Thousands of jihadists who fought in Afghanistan went on to participate in attacks and to become involved with radical jihadist groups in other countries.¹⁰

Since the rise of the Islamic State, thousands have traveled to Iraq and the Levant to learn how to wage jihad and to commit to an extremist ideology.¹¹ As in previous eras, jihadists see this as an opportunity to connect with those who also want to undermine the West. According to the Brookings Institution, most of these fighters arrive and have arrived through Syria, though they stem from many origin countries.¹² Fighters from Turkey are currently causing a large problem as government officials within the country try to develop a strategy to cope with the return of these fighters. Given Turkey’s proximity to Iraq and Syria, this may present a very real threat or at least an opportunity to feed into the ranks of ISIS and other jihadist groups. Similarly, an estimated 1,000 Saudis are fighting and training alongside ISIS. The threat that these returned nationals actually present is not yet known, but the potential for great harm is plain to see.¹³

The ranks of foreign fighters have now swelled to include an estimated 20,000 individuals, from ninety foreign countries including the United States and other countries in the West.¹⁴ Scholars have attributed the influx of these foreign fighters with increased interethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq as the ranks of these groups swell.¹⁵ A 2014 United Nations resolution decrying ISIS and its brutal practices compelled all member nations to prevent foreign fighters from joining the Islamic State, thereby indicating the severity of this problem to those in the international community as a whole.¹⁶ Given the relative novelty of the Islamic State in the region, there is currently a lack of scholarship on this particular group’s draw of foreign fighters. As the Syrian civil war drags on, the severity of this problem will reveal itself. A much more tangible problem, at least to those in Europe and the West, is the massive number of migrants that ISIS has displaced.

2.1.3. migration to europe

So far, Turkey and surrounding Arab nations have taken the brunt of refugees fleeing from the ongoing civil war. Turkey has set up large-scale camps, taking in 200,000 migrants who were forced from their homes.¹⁷ Likewise, despite being a far-from ideal place to seek refuge, Iraq also houses around 200,000 Syrians displaced by the conflict.¹⁸ Finally, Jordan has taken in over a million Syrian refugees, the care of whom is “the greatest threat to the country’s stability.”¹⁹

Other than fears and claims by politicians and those in the media, there is again very little scholarship on the effects of this migration to countries outside the surrounding region. More research must be done into this issue if we aim to help these refugees and to provide for sustainable solutions. Europe has become the primary destination for those refugees not settling in the nearby Arab countries. Europe has much to offer these refugees, and the refugees in turn can offer much to Europe. Western leaders, currently in emergency meetings about how to deal with the crisis, could use this opportunity to show some serious leadership.²⁰ Thousands of asylum applications are currently pending, and the severity of this problem only continues to grow.

3. Case Studies

What role does Norway play in solving this crisis or its effects? Since it is not a member of the European Union (EU) but is a key player in the European Economic Area (EEA), what obligations does it have to provide economic assistance to those fleeing the civil war in Syria? How much do human rights play into this, and how strong of a motive do international human rights treaties provide in terms of actualizing rights protection and provisioning for those migrating and seeking asylum? How has Norway's recent struggle with Islamophobia – most clearly seen in Anders Behring Breivik's anti-Islamic-inspired massacre of 69 individuals in 2011 — played into the current political climate, and are his ideas echoed? Finally, what role does Norway provide in terms of fostering jihadist cells and would-be foreign fighters? What is Norway's approach to dealing with individuals who could and do join ISIS, and how does Norway propose to deal with this threat as Syrians arrive in the future? All of these questions lie at the heart of this research. Although Norway does not usually play a large role in international politics, its unique position as a human rights provisioner, large welfare state, and rich country make it a destination for these migrants and an interesting case study in terms of the reconciliation of Western and Islamic cultures.

When Breivik set off a bomb in downtown Oslo in July 2011 that killed seven people and then traveled to the island of Utøya to kill 69 more, he hoped to set off a bomb of a different type — one that would cause Norwegians to rise up in hatred of Islam and Muslims. Around ten percent of Norway's population is composed of immigrants, resulting in a highly homogenized population of ethnic Norwegians. Prior to carrying out his brutal attack, Breivik published a 1518 page manifesto, in which he echoed ideas of anti-Islamism, anti-jihadism, and right wing and fascist extremism.²¹ According to Åge Borchgrevink, author of *A Norwegian Tragedy: Anders Behring Breivik and the Massacre on Utøya*, Breivik was a proponent of the “Eurabia conspiracy theory,” which states that liberal elites in Europe welcome the “Islamification” of Western countries through colonization by Muslim immigrants.²² He was not alone. Many other individuals espouse similar hate-filled viewpoints about Muslims and “Islamification.” According to an article by *The Nation*,

“His rambling manifesto, titled “2083—A European Declaration of Independence,” contains a lot of gobbledygook about medieval knights, but also negative views on Muslims and liberals (“cultural Marxists”), which echo to a disconcerting degree what certain populists closer to the European mainstream are saying.”²³

No other right-wing extremists have yet carried out another deadly attack in Norway, but the potential remains.

In the wake of these attacks, the then-prime minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, responded: “We are still shocked by what has happened, but we will never give up our values... Our response is more democracy, more openness, and more humanity... We will answer hatred with love. That is us. That is Norway.”^{24,25} Has this been the case? It has, according to Borchgrevink. He states that Breivik's actions have actually had the opposite effect of what he intended. Though hate-crimes against Muslims occur, Norwegian society is more closely-knit than before the massacre, just as Stoltenberg predicted. To some degree, it remains to be seen how the most recent influx of refugees from Syria will affect this dynamic. According to *VG*, many refugees have found support on an individual level as kind Norwegians have given time and money to make the refugees' transfer to Norway easier.²⁶ Breivik himself has been granted admission to the University of Oslo (though he is notably not allowed to take part in classes or lectures directly), following a policy of rehabilitation over punishment, consistent with Norwegian values.²⁷ This plays into the view that many around the world have about Norway: it is a country in which human rights and dignity prevail above all. Though small and homogenous, Norway has been hailed by many as a bastion of support for humanitarian values. However, is this the case when Norway integrates those who are not ethnically Norwegian? Some scholars state,

“the influx of non-Western immigrants over the past three decades has been more modest in Norway than in many European countries, including Sweden and Denmark, but the problems with labor market integration of ethnic minorities are on the same level as in other small West-European states.”²⁸

People not only associate these immigrants with taking jobs, but also with “drugs and crime... female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and radicalization.”²⁹ According to Himanshu Gulati, who belongs to Norway's right wing Progress Party (FrP or Fremskrittets Partiet), there are “tens of thousands of immigrants ... on the streets of Oslo who could not be ‘reintegrated’ into society.”³⁰ According to members of this party, the problem of what is to be done with these immigrants as well as how they can integrate smoothly into Norwegian society is large and troublesome.

Breivik was a member of FrP, which was expected to take a large hit in popularity the election of 2013. Instead, FrP received enough votes to form a coalition government with Høyre, the Conservatives. FrP repeatedly used racist and xenophobic fears in order to stir up support, even in the light of the mass human rights abuses in Syria. FrP voted against taking in 8,000 Syrian refugees, insisting instead on using the money that would have been used to settle these Syrians as aid. Furthermore, Siv Jensen, the leader of the Progress Party, stated that individual municipalities should decide whether they take in Syrian refugees, as opposed abiding by an overarching decision from the central government.³¹ A video on the Progress' Party's website that was made for the elections in September 2015 invokes fear over the usage of Norwegians' tax money to help these refugees, who according to the video will soon multiply into a bigger problem. The video shows money being taken away from funds for schools, the elderly and transport and given to a mass of people, without commenting on how the addition and full integration of these people (i.e. as taxpayers and consumers) into the economy and society might in fact provide some benefit.³² A politician spinning an event to drive up their poll numbers is nothing new, but Sindre Bangstad writes in *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia* that,

“populist right-wing rhetoric on Islam and Muslims in Norway...has functioned as an amplifier, rather than merely a channel for anti-immigration and anti-Muslim views and sentiments.”³³

Which trend will become dominant as this Syrian conflict plays out? Will an increase in the overall number of Muslims in Norway provide for more conflict, or will it result in a continuation of the overwhelmingly positive reaction by the public that has occurred so far?

According to UDI (Norway's Immigration Directorate), Norway will receive approximately 60,000 refugees by the end of 2016. Though this may not seem like an overwhelming amount of people, Norway's population currently stands at only 5 million, making this a significant figure, logistically speaking. The police and immigration officials are setting up emergency check-in centers in order to deal with the influx and will soon begin asking municipalities to settle more refugees than originally anticipated, according to *Aftenposten*.³⁴

Norway plans to expand its capacity to take in more asylum seekers and refugees, but its resources may be stretched in its attempt to do so. Last summer, the government turned away over 100 Syrian refugees, who they deemed would be too “burdensome” on Norway's health system.³⁵ But this doesn't mean that the refugees have stopped trying to get in.

Refugees from Syria are taking extraordinary lengths to get to Norway. According to *Sky News*, over 1,500 Syrians have crossed into Norway from Russia by bicycle, braving snow and wind in order to cross safely. Many of these refugees heard about the route via social media and see the trek as one of the easiest ways into Norway. This has put a heavy strain on tiny border towns, causing places like Kirkenes to commandeer old military bases in order to process asylum applications. Syrians on student or tourist visas can enter Russia then cross the border, but those refugees without can become stuck in Russia, which has accepted only a dozen Syrian refugees.³⁶ This discrepancy makes Norway such an enticing target — one that these refugees are prepared to travel thousands of miles to reach. To those fleeing, Norway represents a haven and another chance at life at a time when almost everything else is in question. According to a *Sky News* video about the refugees, many would rather “set themselves and their families on fire” than return to war-torn Syria.³⁷ On the other hand, there are some for whom reaching Syria is the ultimate goal.

According to Norwegian officials, approximately 150 Norwegians have traveled to Syria to join ISIS as of February. Some of these Norwegians have allegedly taken up leadership positions. Kjell Grandhagen, the head of the Norwegian Intelligence Service stated,

“We believe there is a significant terrorist danger against Norway. There is a danger with returnees who can form cells in the West. And there is the psychological impact - people who are attracted by ideology, but who never even been in Iraq or Syria, which is calling for action and then perform it with the funds are available.”³⁸

Adding to this worry is uncertainty about the identities of refugees coming into Norway. Norwegian authorities discovered in June that ten refugees who had been screened for resettlement in Norway by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) had links to ISIS and al-Nusra (another jihadist group). The authorities discovered these links during their own screening process, and some officials within police authorities expect attacks from such individuals in the near future.^{39,40} Though reports of pending attacks surfaced last year and no attacks have materialized, the dormant threat remains.

According to officials, ISIS mainly recruits young men with immigrant backgrounds.⁴¹ A *New York Times* article entitled, “A Norway Town and Its Pipeline to Jihad in Syria” chronicles the journey of several such young men from the small town of Fredrikstad in eastern Norway to Syria, indicates that this isn't always the case. This story, which

traces the journey of a few young Norwegians to Syria, states that all of the individuals came from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Local police authorities, which had become quite familiar with the men due to their police records and repeated involvement in illegal activities, stated that the men had shown little to no interest in Islam before leaving for Syria. Mr. Foss, a local police officer in Fredrikstad, stated, “The only thing they had in common is that they did not function in society,” he added. “But they wanted to be able to do something, to be good at something.” Radical Islam, he said, “offers a whole package.”⁴²

Radical groups, such as the *Profetens Ummah* (The Ummah of the Prophet), take advantage of such feelings among these young men, offering them acceptance and a chance to prove their worth and to work toward something greater. Last year, police indicted Ubaydullah Hussain, the spokesperson for this group, on terrorism charges. According to the charges, Hussain helped a young Norwegian travel to an airport in Sweden, from which he would then travel on to Turkey to join the ranks of the Islamic State.⁴³ Hussain stated in an interview with *VG* that he and the group unquestioningly support ISIS and believe that Norway should be ruled under sharia law. Thousands of Muslims and non-Muslims took to the streets of Oslo to protest the rhetoric of Hussain and those like him, joined by government figures as they marched to the parliamentary buildings.⁴⁴ This was a remarkable display of solidarity against extremism, stereotyping, and hate speech. However, does this integration occur in daily Norwegian life as immigrants find their way in Norwegian society, or do they feel “othered” by ethnic Norwegians, as Breivik hoped that they would?

According to Unni Wikan, author of *Generous Betrayal: Politics of Culture in the New Europe*, migrants to Norway face being pulled into an “ethnic underclass.” The author uses this term to mean “a marginalized, socially deprived, and partly stigmatized group of easily identifiable citizens,” going on to argue that high school completion, language proficiency, and college matriculation rates for children of immigrant backgrounds are much lower than that of ethnic Norwegians.⁴⁵ Wikan continues, arguing that stigmatization of immigrants is strong, leading to conflict and poor integration. Refugees receive access to (and take full advantage of) the full range of benefits offered by the Norwegian welfare state, including healthcare and education, and immigrants often have higher rates of unemployment. These two facets, coupled with visible ethnic and cultural differences, have led some Norwegians to see these refugees as “milking the system” – thereby “sowing the seeds of conflict.”⁴⁶ These ideas are not new and certainly not unique to the Norwegian situation. While these problems may be magnified in Norway due to its incredibly generous and massive welfare state, coupled with its small size, many other European (and non-European states) are dealing with these issues. Wikan argues that the fact that these refugees and immigrants use the services provided for them can make them dependent on these services. Wikan continues that Norwegians expect those receiving these benefits to be grateful to Norwegians for the assistance and to pay back into it when they can. His insinuation is that they do neither.⁴⁷

Perhaps Wikan is right in some sense – herein lies a possibility for ire and xenophobia against those who (ostensibly) take advantage of a system, do not pay back into it, and shun some attempts at integration. The other side of the equation certainly needs review. As mentioned above, some individuals who feel that they are not welcomed have joined terrorist or extremist groups in an attempt to spite the system in which they are immersed. But how accommodating is this host society? Lauded as a bastion of democracy and religious freedom, does – and should – Norway put measures in place to welcome and integrate these others into their society?

For years, Norway has banned the production of *halal* meats – that is, meat prepared in the traditional Muslim fashion rendering the meat acceptable for consumption. Many, including leaders in the Jewish tradition, which utilizes a similar method of meat-preparation, have seen this move as a result of a secularizing Europe – one that moves away from older, more traditional rituals and methods toward those that hold more “scientific merit.”⁴⁸ Norway has not followed France in secularizing public life by banning the headscarf, but is this what the future holds? Norway removed the last vestiges of Christianity from its constitution a few years ago, and one might wonder what other changes could follow suit.

For the refugees from the Syrian civil war coming to Norway, these inconveniences must be outweighed by the memories that they carry and the future that they hope for. Over four million have fled Syria, with many more on the way out. Around 50% of the refugees are women, symbolizing the urgency of this situation. There has been no time for young, able-bodied males to leave Syria and then come back for their families after scoping out the situation in another country. Syrians are caught in a pincer movement between Assad’s brutal regime and the enslaving Islamic State. For these people, countries in Europe represent a means of escape and at a chance at a new life. Right now, asylum seekers may be returned to their host country after five years in Norway if the situation there improves.⁴⁹ Though it is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, the Syrian civil war will leave a massive mark on contemporary geopolitics. As a leading provider and protector of human rights, is it Norway’s prerogative to accept these refugees for good, or do economic interests outweigh human rights obligations, thereby rationalizing Norway’s decision to send them back? The Syrian civil war presents a massive challenge to Norway – one that unfolds even more with each passing day.

4. Conclusion

Though Syria and Norway are not usually mentioned in the same sentence, the two countries are inextricably linked. One country is embroiled in a years-long civil war, with factions fighting proxy wars within its borders and other sects trying to dissolve its borders altogether. The other represents a bastion of social democracy, recently ranked as one of the best countries in which to live. It makes sense, then, that those fleeing from war-torn Syria would want to maximize their chances of not only surviving but also thriving by starting a new life. For many refugees, Norway represents an ideal haven — one with a large social welfare state to accept them and a thriving market economy in which they can apply their skills and fashion a new livelihood.

Of course, everything is not that simple. Though Norway is in many ways an idyllic destination, it is certainly not without problems. For many years, Norway has provided refuge for those displaced by conflict and strife, but these days may be numbered as more pour into the tiny country and the right wing and conservative government seeks to stem this tide. Generally, Norwegians are very welcoming people, committed to human rights and to making positive change. One of my Norwegian friends stated that his family has looked into hosting a Syrian refugee, and he and his family are not alone in extending this kindness toward complete strangers.

Many would argue that Norway in fact has an obligation to take in these refugees, pointing to international charters onto which Norway has signed and pointing out that changing its long-standing refugee policy would be a step in the wrong direction. However, is Norway ready for this future? Breivik did not convert Norwegians into Islamophobes with his hate-filled rhetoric or his massive, xenophobic manifesto. Still, some reticence and uncertainty remains in dealing with this contemporary problem. Islamist cells operate within Norway, though to a limited degree, and ISIS has recruited Norwegians to fight in Syria and Iraq. What happens when these young men return home, or if ISIS fighters hide within the ranks of incoming refugees? These fears serve to stoke the latent Islamophobia and fear of the other within a deeply homogenous society and are part of the reason that parties such as FrP can take and retain power. Indeed, these fears have led to the resurgence of many right-wing groups and conservative parties across Europe.

Still another large question has to do with the economic impact of all of this. Norway is currently suffering economically due to rock-bottom oil prices — a trend that is unlikely to change in the near future. Further still, Norway's population is decreasing and lacking a tax base with which it will support its massive welfare state into the future. The result of these two forces has yet to be seen, but the challenges that Norway will face economically within the near future will likely determine its ability to keep up its reputation as providing one of the largest and most lavish social safety nets in the world. This, in turn, could make Norway a much less attractive option for immigrants and refugees.

The situation in Syria, Norway, and the dynamic between the citizens of the two countries changes daily. As the war drags on, ISIS continues to recruit, and Islamophobia spreads, what will be the result on Norway? To date, this conflict has left a surprisingly large mark on this tiny Scandinavian country, despite Norway's distance from the conflict and its lack of commitment in the area currently. Will this influx lead to Norway getting more involved in the crisis — with humanitarian or military aid — in order to offset and stem the crisis within its borders? Time will tell to what extent this conflict will shape Norway, but the Syrian civil war has already left a massive impact.

5. Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Dr. Agya Boakye-Boaten for his advice and support during the writing of this paper.

6. References

1 Harress, Christopher. "Syrian Civil War: Russian Refugee Tent Camp In Syria Is Country's First, Will Accommodate Thousands." *International Business Times*. IBT Media, Inc., 18 Sept. 2015. Web. 27 Nov. 2015.

2 Kaplan, Michael. "Syria Refugee Crisis: Germany To Expect 1.5M Asylum Seekers In 2015, As Merkel's Support Suffers." *International Business Times*. IBT Media, Inc., 5 Oct. 2015. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

3 "Hungarian PM: We Don't Want More Muslims." *Al Jazeera English*. Al Jazeera Media Network, 4 Sept. 2015. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

- 4 Bleich, Erik. 2012. "Defining and Researching Islamophobia". *Review of Middle East Studies* 46 (2). Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA): 180–89. <http://www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/41940895>.¹
- 5 Green, Todd. "Combating Islamophobia". *Combating Islamophobia*. The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West. Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2015. 311. Web.
- 6 Ibid. 12
- 7 Ibid. 18
- 8 Nacos, Brigitte L.. "Muslims in America and the Post-9/11 Terrorism Debates: Media and Public Opinion". *Covering Bin Laden: Global Media and the World's Most Wanted Man*. Ed. Susan Jeffords and Fahed Al-Sumait. University of Illinois Press, 2015. 211. Web.
- 9 Machtans, Karolin. "Navid Kermani: Advocate for an Antipatriotic Patriotism and a Multireligious, Multicultural Europe". *Envisioning Social Justice in Contemporary German Culture*. Ed. Jill E. Twark and Axel Hildebrandt. NED - New edition. Boydell & Brewer, 2015. 292. Web.
- 10 Bergen, Peter, and Alec Reynolds. "Blowback Revisited: Today's Insurgents in Iraq Are Tomorrow's Terrorists". *Foreign Affairs* 84.6 (2005): 2–6. Web.
- 11 "Spillover of the Syrian Conflict into Iraq". *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria: An Assessment of the Factors That Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence*. RAND Corporation, 2014. 36. Web.
- 12 *Lasting and Expanding: The Islamic State: A Brief Introduction*. Brookings Institution. Brookings Institution Press, 2015. Web.
- 13 *Lasting and Expanding: The Islamic State: A Brief Introduction*. Brookings Institution. Brookings Institution Press, 2015. 57. Web.
- 14 "Conflicts Real, Latent, and Imaginable". *The Future of Land Warfare*. Brookings Institution. Brookings Institution Press, 2015. 33–78. Web.
- 15 Ingber, Monica. "Transubstantiatory Violence and the Militant/multitude Problematic". *The Politics of Conflict: Transubstantiatory Violence in Iraq*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. 127–152. Web.
- 16 Ganguly, Sumit. "U.S. Foreign Policy and the Snowden Leaks". *The Snowden Reader*. Ed. David P. Fidler. Indiana University Press, 2015. 52–69. Web.
- 17 "Spillover of the Syrian Conflict into Iraq". 17
- 18 Ibid. 37
- 19 Ibid. 49
- 20 Anderson, John Lee. "Where Refugees Want to Go - The New Yorker." *The New Yorker*. Conde Nast, 16 Sept. 2015. Web.
- 21 Eakin, Hugh. "Norway: The Two Faces of Extremism." *New York Review of Books*. 5 Mar. 2015. Web.
- 22 Borchgrevink, Åge. "Reclaiming Utøya." *Al Jazeera English*. Al Jazeera Media Network, 7 Aug. 2015. Web.
- 23 Buruma, Ian. "Europe's Turn to the Right." *The Nation*. The Nation, 10 Aug. 2011. Web.
- 24 Orange, Richard. "'Answer Hatred with Love': How Norway Tried to Cope with the Horror of Anders Breivik." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 14 Apr. 2012. Web.
- 25 Eakin
- 26 Sarwar, Shazia. "Flyktninger, Velkommen!." *VG*. VG, 1 Sept. 2015. Web.
- 27 Reuters. "Norway: Mass Murderer Is Admitted to University, Though Not to Spend Time in Class or on the Campus." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 17 July 2015. Web.
- 28 Brochmann, G. and Hagelund, A. (2005) *Innvandringens velferdspolitiske konsekvenser*. Nordisk kunnskaps status. TemaNord 2005:506. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers. Web.
- 29 Townsend, Mark, and Ian Traynor. "Norway attacks: How far right views created Anders Behring Breivik." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, July 30, 2011. Web.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 "Siv Jensen Avviser Sabotasje Av Syria-forlik." E24. E24, 16 Aug. 2015. Web.
- 32 "Syriasaken." *Fremskrittspartiet*. Fremskrittspartiet, 15 Aug. 2015. Web. 4 Dec. 2015. <<https://www.frp.no/hvavi-mener/syriasaken>>.
- 33 Eakin
- 34 Strand, Tron, Simen Granviken, Andreas Bakke Foss, and Stine Barstad. "Myndighetene Regner Med 60.000 Flyktninger Innen Utgangen Av 2016. Lager Kriseplan for Langt Flere." *Aftenposten*. Aftenposten, 12 Oct. 2015. Web.
- 35 Eakin
- 36 Sparks, John. "Syrian Refugees Cycle To Freedom In Norway." *Sky News*. Sky UK, 25 Oct. 2015. Web.
- 37 Ibid.

- 38 "Norway Boosts Security in Syria-linked Terror Alert." BBC News. BBC, 24 July 2014. Web.
- 39 Zaghmout, Moayad. "UN-cleared Refugees to Norway Revealed as ISIS Militants - Report." RT English.Reuters, 1 June 2015. Web.
- 40 "Norway Boosts Security in Syria-linked Terror Alert."
- 41 Borchgrevink
- 42 Higgins, Andrew. "A Norway Town and Its Pipeline to Jihad in Syria." The New York Times. April 04, 2015.Web.
- 43 "Norway Islamist Risks Terror Recruiting Charge." The Local. The Local Europe AB, 19 Oct. 2015. Web.
- 44 Blumberg, Antonia. "Muslims Protest Islamic State In Norway." The Huffington Post. The Huffington Post, 24 Aug. 2014. Web.
- 45 Wikan, Unni. Generous Betrayal: Politics of Culture in the New Europe. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2002. 49. Web.
- 46 Ibid. 60
- 47 Ibid. 62
- 48 Overgaard, Sidsel. "Banning Traditional Animal Slaughter, Denmark Stokes Religious Ire." NPR. NPR, 9 Apr. 2014. Web.
- 49 "Asylsøkere I Norge Får Bare Midlertidig Opphold." Aftenposten. Aftenposten, October 09, 2015. Web.