

National Threat Assessment for 2022



The Norwegian Police Security Service
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State intelligence activities

Several countries' intelligence services operate on Norwegian territory. Among them, the Russian and Chinese services pose the greatest threat. They employ a number of different methods to achieve their goals. Their activities can have grave consequences for Norway. They could affect Norway's freedom of action and undermine our ability to deal with crises. Moreover, they could impair the competitiveness of business and industry and make individuals feel they are no longer safe in our country.

In the past year, we have seen a pronounced increase in the number of computer network operations. The threat posed by state computer network operations is serious and will continue to persist in 2022.

Further, foreign intelligence services will try to recruit individuals in Norway as sources. Foreign states will adopt increasingly more complex corporate structures and demonstrate great creativity in order to procure sensitive technology from Norwegian enterprises. Other countries will monitor dissidents and minorities.

Computer network operations will continue to constitute a serious threat against Norway

Computer network operations have become an integral part of the activities of foreign intelligence services. The cyber attacks on the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) in 2020 and 2021 are examples of extremely serious incidents. In recent years, the Norwegian National Security Authority (NSM) has observed a tripling of serious cyber incidents aimed at public- and private-sector undertakings in Norway. Some of these incidents were carried out by hostile actors operating on behalf of foreign states. In 2021, such actors succeeded in infiltrating networks belonging to the Norwegian authorities and private enterprises. China and Russia are generally behind these operations. PST expects that these countries will continue to carry out computer network operations against Norway in 2022.

Several countries are interested in information about Norwegian decision-making processes. In particular, undertakings that work with Norwegian foreign affairs, defence and security policy will be targeted for computer network operations. The same applies to companies and research groups in the fields of defence, health and maritime technology. The petroleum sector and the space sector should also be prepared for unauthorized parties to try to steal data from their computer networks.

Due to Norway's membership of the UN Security Council, the intelligence threat against Norway's foreign service has been heightened. This refers to the digital arena in particular. This threat picture will continue in 2022. The threat will mainly come from China and Russia. Meanwhile, we know that actors associated with other countries have also engaged in computer network operations against Norway. The goal of such operations has not necessarily been to undermine Norway, but to improve their own freedom of action in or in relation to the Security Council.

Since the normalisation of bilateral relations between Norway and China, PST has noted that Chinese computer network operations are increasingly focusing on political issues in

Norwegian undertakings can take simple measures to mitigate vulnerabilities

Hostile actors are continuously looking for vulnerabilities that might allow them access to their targets. One similarity shared by many successful computer network operations is that the hostile actor has exploited vulnerabilities which, in retrospect, would have been easy to eliminate. This includes, e.g., the re-use of weak passwords, the lack of two-factor authentication and outdated software.

Norway. This marks a change from earlier when operations were more geared towards technology companies. It is likely that hostile Chinese cyber actors have been tasked with identifying Norwegian politicians and others who criticise China. The increased focus on Norwegian decision-making processes may be a result of China's growing foreign and trade policy interests in Europe.

In other countries, we have seen that state actors are capable of performing sabotage by means of computer network operations. The steep increase in ransomware in recent years illustrates the potential damage that can be wreaked by digital sabotage. In other countries, health services, the police, fuel supplies

and the food supply have been targeted. Ransomware is generally something we associate with crime for profit. Yet there are several examples of cases where there have been links between the ransomware and foreign intelligence services. In the light of the global trend, the ultimate consequence of this could be that basic national functions³⁾ in Norway could be impacted by this type of digital operations, resulting in delays and interruptions in the provision of services.

Computer network operations usually start with the hostile actor performing reconnaissance of the undertakings, identifying assets, employees and technical vulnerabilities. The actor then has several feasible options:

First of all: The simplest method is still to dupe an employee of an enterprise to click on links from seemingly trustworthy sources. Another method is to direct the operations at Internet-exposed services, e.g., emails. In this context, the hostile actor exploits vulnerabilities like weak passwords, outdated software and the lack of two-factor authentication to gain unlawful access to computer systems.

Second: Even though the target of digital computer network exploitation may be well protected, computer network operations against vendors and subcontractors may be easier and highly effective avenues of approach for infiltrating an enterprise or organisation. Such attacks are known as 'supply chain attacks' because an actor attacks a weaker, more peripheral link in an enterprise's supply chain. The SolarWinds operation exposed in December 2020 is a prime example of a supply chain attack. In this operation, a hostile actor succeeded

³⁾ The term 'basic national functions' (BNF) refers to functions of such a nature that a total or partial loss of that function will threaten the government's ability to protect Norway's sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic form of government.

Characteristic challenges related to Chinese intelligence activity

Chinese intelligence activity is characterised by several singular features that distinguish them from other state actors' intelligence operations. Although China's intelligence services are sophisticated and technically advanced, they often make use of civilians with access to information. These people exploit their positions voluntarily or under duress.

According to Chinese law, any Chinese citizen or business can be ordered to cooperate with the country's intelligence apparatus. This means that actors whose intentions are initially legitimate can be ordered to obtain information on behalf of the party-state.

China is characterised by its lack of distinction between the private sector, the state and the party. In China, there is significant and growing state control of private enterprises. The Chinese authorities are also running a strategic campaign to get high-tech commercial enterprises involved in military modernisation. The upshot is that it is exceptionally challenging to distinguish between purely commercial actors and actors being exploited for intelligence purposes. Similarly, it is hard to tell whether an enterprise supports China's violations of human rights or military rearmament.

in installing a back door in a software update made by the IT company SolarWinds. This enabled the hostile actor to compromise the undertakings that used the software, including US government agencies.

Third: When hostile actors look for vulnerabilities, they try to hide among the multitude of actors on the Internet. They rely on this method to perform digital espionage in Norway. One trend observed by PST lately is that hostile actors are becoming increasingly likely to use digital infrastructure in Norwegian homes to hide. In such cases, the hostile actor gains access through home electronics connected to the Internet, e.g., PCs, routers, and smart TVs, to access the undertaking that is the real target of the digital espionage.

Efforts will be made to recruit individuals in Norway

Although computer network exploitation has been an integral part of the activities of foreign intelligence services, we see that some services are devoting considerable resources to recruiting human sources in Norway. Russia is especially prone to give priority to recruitment in Norway. This is done, for example, with the help of intelligence officers who work under cover at the Russian Embassy in Oslo. They conduct intelligence operations in Norway under the protection of diplomatic privilege and immunity. Norwegians who travel in Russia may also encounter attempts at recruitment. Russian intelligence services have broad authority to engage in surveillance and exercise pressure domestically, and they take advantage of that to find opportunities to exploit individuals in Norway.

The first contact between an intelligence officer and a potential source often takes place in a professional setting. We have numerous examples of this happening at seminars, conferences and trade fairs. People need not have access to classified information to be relevant. Intelligence officers will often seek out

individuals who do not have such access today, but who may eventually gain greater access. They also seek out people who have access to sensitive information through their networks. Such individuals may be easier to dupe into cooperating, and they can receive information from colleagues or acquaintances without raising any suspicions.

There are many people who could potentially help intelligence officers by responding to their need for information. A useful source can provide information about people, decision-making processes and future events that is not available online.

Sources can provide information to which they have access through their positions. They may also actively obtain new information on behalf of foreign intelligence services.

Building a trusting relationship between a source and an intelligence officer is often a lengthy process. On several occasions, we have seen that a year or more may pass before sources share information that they consider sensitive. Meanwhile, sources have grown accustomed to increasing secrecy. They may even have ended up in a relationship that offers no easy way out. A source may be convinced that the person in question is in control of the situation, while actually having no idea how he or she is being manipulated by the intelligence officer.

Examples of fields of technology that may be targets for clandestine and covert procurement activities:

- Sensor and detection technology
- Marine and subsea technology
- Oil and gas technology
- Semi-conductor technology
- Space and satellite technology
- Drone technology
- Laboratory and production technology
- Communication technology

Research fields of particular interest to foreign states:

- Metallurgy
- Nanotechnology
- Cyber security
- Cryptography
- Robotics and autonomics
- Molecular biology
- Chemistry
- Micro-electro-mechanical systems (MEMS)
- Acoustics
- Nuclear physics

Norwegian enterprises will be exposed to covert attempts at procurement

One important aspect of great-power rivalry today involves trying to out-compete rivals when it comes to technology. Consequently, new technology is sought after by state actors to ensure military capability, political influence and economic growth. Many states are willing to go to great lengths and do not rule out using unlawful means to obtain technology and knowledge. Norwegian enterprises will also be affected by this. Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan are among the states PST expects to continue to engage in illegal procurement activities in Norway in 2022.

Indications of illegal procurements:

- You are given limited information about the buyer
- You are given limited information about the end user, or the customer is reluctant to provide this type of information
- The order is unusual in terms of shipping and payment
- The goods are to be sent to a warehouse, forwarding agent or duty-free zone
- An established customer asks for products that you do not normally sell
- The buyer has a simple website that has not been updated and includes little contact information
- The order is unusual with a view to number or volume
- You receive comparable or similar orders from several different actors

Actors involved in covert procurement attempts in Norway will employ a wide variety of means, some of which are typically legal, e.g., acquisitions and investments. Other means are illegal, e.g., cyber hacking or circumventing export control regulations. Many activities are in a grey zone.

State actors regularly employ means such as false documentation, intricate corporate structures, shell and front companies, and supply chains. They also use third party states, including other Western countries, in their campaigns against Norwegian undertakings. We expect such methods to continue to be used in the years ahead.

Technology developed for civilian purposes may also be pivotal for the development and production of weapons of mass destruction, along with their delivery systems, as well as conventional weapons and surveillance systems. A great deal of today's civilian technology can also be used for military purposes. This makes it hard to know whether a technology can be used in ways that run counter to the regulations. Foreign countries are

not only interested in the most advanced technology; used equipment is often a target. In addition, there is extensive resale of technology to countries of concern. Norwegian goods can end up in completely unexpected places, such as North Korea or Syria.

The acquisition of and investments in Norwegian enterprises could allow foreign states access to information and influence that it is not in Norway's interest for them to obtain. This was decisive in 2021, when the Norwegian government stopped the sale of Bergen Engines to a Russian company. The fact that Norwegian enterprises offer goods, services, technology and expertise that are important for other states' military development may motivate foreign acquisitions and investments once again in 2022.

Norwegian research and educational institutions maintain a high calibre by international standards. They often have good funding schemes and access to advanced laboratory facilities as well as other research infrastructure. Foreign states have

a strong interest in exploiting the advantages offered by Norwegian research communities. Their intention may be to use Norwegian technology and knowledge in ways that run counter to Norway's export control regulations. Any contact with the Norwegian enterprise keeps the real end user of a product or its real purpose in research collaboration secret. Funding for research projects or offers of lucrative financial deals to researchers who possess cutting edge expertise are also among the incentives that PST knows are employed. Such incentives can lead to sensitive information, knowledge and technology falling into the hands of the foreign actor.

Dissidents and minorities in Norway will continue to be monitored by other countries

Certain countries are willing to go to great lengths to silence political adversaries living in Norway. In recent years, PST has seen that China, Iran and other authoritarian states use their intelligence services to identify and monitor individuals in Norway. These countries' authorities want to ensure that their political adversaries do not feel safe enough to speak out in public. The point is to eliminate political opposition or what they perceive as undesirable statements.

In 2022, authoritarian regimes will obtain data on dissidents and minorities in Norway. Among other things, they will do reconnaissance on events and associations for groups of exiles. Several countries use their official delegations in Norway as a platform for espionage against refugees. Some countries also use religious meeting places for this purpose. In addition, the Internet is an increasingly important arena for obtaining information. Foreign intelligence services do everything from monitoring social media to hacking into electronic devices to monitor individuals or groups.

Knowing that one might be or is being monitored owing to one's political involvement is threatening in itself. In addition, explicit threats are used against individuals or their family members who remain in their country of origin. The threats often come through the Internet and are often made by representatives of the security authorities in the person's native country.

Some states are willing to take significant risks to eliminate political dissidents in exile. In recent years, we have seen several examples of dissidents being liquidated or being the targets of assassination attempts in Europe. Another method is to dupe individuals into travelling to a third-party state where the foreign intelligence service has significantly greater freedom of action to abduct them and take them to their home country.

The sum total of the negative influences on individuals who live in Norway and are politically active constitutes a problem for democracy and international affairs. In a digitised global world, however, it is challenging both to identify and to counteract such oppression.

Several countries' intelligence services can influence Norwegian decisions

Thus far, PST has uncovered few cases of coordinated, targeted influence operations in Norway. Nevertheless, several of the intelligence services that operate in our country are tasked with influencing political decisions, and we remain cognisant of the possibility that foreign intelligence may try to influence public opinion in Norway in 2022.



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Over the past year, actors working on behalf of Russian and Chinese authorities have spread disinformation and conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic. Even though we have not seen such campaigns specifically targeting the general public in Norway, Norwegians have most likely been exposed to global disinformation campaigns run by Russian and Chinese actors.

Influence operations under the auspices of foreign intelligence can undermine the general public's confidence in the Norwegian authorities. When foreign intelligence services succeed in influencing or changing a political decision in Norway, they are undermining democracy. While such influence is sometimes legal and other times illegal, it is always unwanted.

Attempts to exert influence can take various forms. For example, Russia has previously tried to influence democratic processes in several countries. PST has not found any influence operations under the auspices of state actors in connection with last year's parliamentary elections (to the Storting and the Sámediggi) in Norway.

Chinese influence activities are well documented in Western countries. PST is aware that actors working on behalf of Chinese intelligence services use both legal and illegal methods to obtain information in Norway. This information can also be used to exert influence. This year, we can expect such reconnaissance activities to target issues and individuals that could affect the interests of the Chinese Communist Party.

Politically motivated violence - extremism

The terror threat level in Norway is **moderate**. Right-wing extremists and extreme Islamists are expected to continue to pose the greatest threat of terror against Norway. PST believes there is an **even chance** that right-wing extremists as well as extreme Islamist will attempt to carry out terrorist acts in 2022.

It is **unlikely** that individuals with anti-government convictions will attempt to carry out terrorist acts, and **highly unlikely** that left-wing extremists and activists engaged in the climate, the environment or nature conservation will try this. It is considered more likely that they will turn to illegal activities such as vandalism and disturbing the peace than to commit terrorist acts.

The threat from right-wing extremists

There is still an **even chance** that right-wing extremists will attempt to carry out terrorist acts in 2022. The threat of terror comes first and foremost from people who have been radicalised by participating in right-wing extremist networks online. Their stereotype of the enemy includes ethnic and religious minorities, the Norwegian authorities and politicians, LGBT+, as well as traditional media.

The number of right-wing extremist terrorist acts in Europe has been stable for the past two years, with few attacks carried out. However, several attacks have been averted since 2020. Attention devoted to immigration-related issues and major right-wing extremist terrorist attacks are especially likely to inspire terror planning. The threat may change quickly.

Conspiracy theories unify right-wing extremists

Many right-wing extremists will still be unified by conspiracy theories asserting that the white race is being subjected to genocide, and that Western culture will disappear. Such ideas are ascribed to immigration from non-Western countries and low birth rates among whites, among other things. Right-wing extremists portray this as an existential threat.

It is primarily accelerationists who are deemed the greatest threat among the right-wing extremists. We still expect cases in which right-wing extremists in Norway will be radicalised by accelerationist ideas.

Accelerationism

Accelerationism is a direction within right-wing extremism. One central notion is that a racial war is imminent, and that it is urgent to precipitate the collapse of society while whites are still in the demographic majority in the West, in order to save the white race. Accelerationists emphasise terrorism as a valuable tool for destabilising society and igniting a racial war. The perpetrators of several completed and averted right-wing extremist terrorist acts in the West in recent years have been inspired by this mindset.

Norwegian authorities and politicians will continue to be accused of treason by ostensibly paving the way for the alleged white genocide, making them key figures in right-wing extremists' stereotype of the enemy. Conspiracy theories, especially those involving the Labour Party, have circulated among Norwegian right-wing extremists for many years. It is expected that the Labour Party will assume a more prominent position in the stereotype of the enemy now that it is the largest party in Norway's new coalition government.

Another pervasive opinion among a number of right-wing extremists is that certain perceived negative trends in

society are supposedly steps in a larger conspiracy involving a secret world-wide Jewish elite.

Right-wing extremists will continue to use current events, e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, to confirm and propagate their convictions. Conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic and mass vaccinations will continue to be a topic of discussion for many right-wing extremists in 2022. They are of the opinion that the vaccine is a tool to control or kill off large parts of the population. This feeds into an already powerful hatred of the authorities among right-wing extremists.

Further, certain right-wing extremists emphasise the increased risk that climate change will contribute to mass immigration as proof of the conspiracy theory centred on the ongoing genocide against the white race and culture.



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Radicalisation will primarily occur on digital platforms

Digital platforms will still be the most important arenas for radicalisation to right-wing extremism. The key arenas are digital applications through which right-wing extremists can contact each other, exchange extreme opinions and share right-wing extremist material.

Radicalisation will take place in Norwegian, Nordic and transnational online networks on which there are discussions about ideology, stereotypes of the enemy and weapons. Several of the transnational networks are more apt to glorify violence and contain a great deal of propaganda intended to incite terrorism. Participation in such right-wing extremist networks can help ensure that individuals develop a desire to commit acts of violence or terrorism.

Several participants in right-wing extremist online networks end up there out of curiosity or thrill-seeking, or because they want to be part of a social community. Opportunities to act without constraints and communicate extremist opinions and appeals anonymously lower the threshold for participation.

Online platforms also make it easier to exchange information about experiences and to find and share manuals and instructions for making explosives and weapons. This may make it

The far right

The far right is a general term for individuals with right-wing radical or extremist ideologies, and it has two main characteristics: The first is the idea that the state and the people should be one. Groups that are not considered part of this entity are considered threats. Second, those on the far right either oppose democracy as a form of governance or challenge the central liberal values upon which democracy is based. What distinguishes right-wing extremists from right-wing radicals are their views on democracy and whether or not they are willing to accept violence to incite political change. Right-wing extremists want to destroy democracy and they accept violence as a means to achieve political goals. However, that does not apply to right-wing radicals. Still, both right-wing extremists and right-wing radicals are often sceptical of the authorities, viewing them as corrupt.

easier and faster to acquire expertise and the ability to carry out physical attacks.

Extreme right-wing propaganda, symbolism and materials are also found on several image- and video-sharing applications that are popular among Norwegian young people. The content will often dehumanise ethnic and religious minorities, who are typically portrayed with a humorous bent to ensure wide dissemination. Algorithms lead users to increasingly more right-wing extremist content. Participation in online social communities can usher some individuals into a process of radicalisation. This process can take place quickly for some.

We also expect attempts to radicalise individuals in extremists' own circles of friends, within their families, at school and at work, as well as in other places where radicalised individuals recognise opportunities to make converts. This may take place in person, or by the radicalised person inviting others to join right-wing extremist networks online.

The right-wing extremist group called the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) has a long-term goal of introducing a National Socialist government in the

Nordic countries. NRM will continue to practice activism, both in-person and online, to influence, radicalise and recruit new members. Nevertheless, we expect little recruitment of new members to the NRM in Norway. The activism of NRM's members may, however, result in some individuals becoming radicalised.

Further, we see that meetings and gatherings, as well as websites and online groups for right-wing radicals, can act as gateways to right-wing extremism. Right-wing radical activity is legitimate in a democracy, but it presents a challenge that some people are radicalised in such arenas.

Mass murder or targeted assassinations of individuals who fit the stereotype of the enemy are the most likely form of attack

Any potential extreme right-wing terrorist act in Norway will probably be attempted by an individual acting alone.

Attacks will probably be in the form of mass damage attacks or the assassination of a particular individual. The targets will be groups or individuals who fit the stereotypical image of the enemy. This could be people with a non-Western appearance, Muslims, Jews, dignitaries, LGBT+, or traditional media.

Other forms of attack might be vandalism to buildings, infrastructure or other property belonging to individuals who fit the right-wing extremist stereotype of the enemy. The point of such acts will be to instil fear, not necessarily to take lives.

An extreme right-wing terrorist will probably use firearms, improvised explosive devices (IEDs⁴⁾ or vehicles to carry out an attack. In attempts to assassinate a particular target, an edged weapon or blade will also be a likely weapon. With a view to attempted vandalism, PST finds that arson or the use of IEDs will be among the most likely forms of attack.

⁴⁾ IED is the acronym for Improvised Explosive Device. The same abbreviation is used in Norwegian.

The threat from extreme Islamists

There is still considered to be an even chance that extreme Islamists will attempt to carry out terrorist acts in 2022. The threat of terror will either come from individuals who are inspired by the ideology and message of the terrorist organisations ISIL and al-Qaeda, or from individuals mobilised by factors perceived as provocations, desecrations or oppression of the Islamic religion and of Muslims.

Extreme Islamists' stereotype of the enemy has many faces. ISIL supporters belong to the most extreme groups, believing that all who are not followers of their version of faith are infidels. This includes apostates or so-called heretical Muslims and regimes, as well as Western states, groups, organisations and individuals. They claim that the West is conducting a perpetual war against Islam and Muslims, both in and outside the West. In consequence, Western support for intervention in Muslim countries and for warfare against ISIL and al-Qaeda, as well as what they experience as oppression and transgressions against Muslims in the West, are used as justification for terrorist attacks.

The number of terrorist acts committed by extreme Islamists in Europe declined significantly from 2017 to 2021. At the same time, we see that attacks are still being averted in several European countries, including here in Norway, where a 16-year-old boy was found guilty of planning an act of terrorism in 2021. Experience indicates that the threat picture can shift quickly in response to emergent incidents in Norway and abroad.

Although ISIL and al-Qaeda maintain a local focus, they remain a threat against the West

The existence and ideological ballast of ISIL and al-Qaeda that leads them to think that the West is at war with Islam will continue to incite individuals in several Western countries to plan terrorist acts. The threat will primarily come from those who participate in extremist online networks that are loosely connected to international terrorist organisations. These people will often also associate with other extremists in person.



Supporters of ISIL and al-Qaeda in the West will continue to produce and disseminate both new and old extremist propaganda that incites recipients to carry out terrorist acts in Western countries.

There are several active extreme Islamist networks in Europe. The networks include returned foreign fighters, convicted terrorists who have been released from prison, and convicted terrorists who are still imprisoned. The fact that Norwegian extremists have contact with people through these networks has an adverse impact on the threat picture in Norway. This is because it brings them into contact with individuals and communities that encourage and are able to provide guidance in respect of attacks.

Supporters of ISIL and al-Qaeda in the West will continue to produce and disseminate both new and old extremist propaganda that incites recipients to carry out terrorist acts in Western countries. This activity will continue to take place through online platforms. It has proven challenging to prevent the dissemination of extremist propaganda.

We expect the terrorist organisations ISIL and al-Qaeda to give priority to building up branches and affiliated groups in countries in which they have gained a footing, rather than carrying out terrorist acts against the West. Norway will continue to be considered an enemy by the terrorist organisations, but not as a high priority target for terrorist attacks, compared with certain other Western countries.

The situation in Afghanistan will have a limited impact on the threat from extreme Islamists

The withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan and Syria has weakened Western military involvement as an incentive for radicalisation and terror planning in the West. Even though both ISIL and al-Qaeda now have more freedom of action and capacity in these countries, this will only have a limited impact on the threat of terror against Norway. The situation in Afghanistan is exceedingly complicated and it is shifting constantly.

Certain extreme Islamists in Norway would like to be foreign fighters in Afghanistan or in other countries or areas of conflict. However, ISIL and al-Qaeda are expected to give priority to local and regional recruitment rather than to facilitate recruitment of Western foreign fighters in 2022. That being said, even a small number of Western foreign fighters could result in more focus on Western countries as targets for terrorist attacks.



The absence of any unifying cause with sufficient appeal means that we do not expect the establishment of organised extreme Islamist groups in Norway in 2022.

Continued small scale of radicalisation to Islamic extremism

The absence of any unifying cause with sufficient appeal means that we do not expect the establishment of organised extreme Islamist groups in Norway in 2022. Despite the continuing small scale of radicalisation to extreme Islamism in Norway, we do, however, expect to see some cases of it.

Radicalisation will take place through transnational online networks on encrypted platforms that enable users to act and communicate anonymously. Relationships are built through these networks, and participants develop the trust needed to plan and support terrorist activities. Among other things, such networks are used to share extremist propaganda and instructions for making home-made explosives. Guidance is also provided for how to carry out a terrorist attack.

We see that ever younger individuals, all the way down to age 12, are participating in such transnational online networks. This is not least because a great deal of extremist propaganda is designed to appeal to a younger audience. Young people who are attracted to such networks are often vulnerable, impressionable and generally have less understanding of the consequences of actions than adults have. That can increase

the probability that young people will be incited to carry out acts of violence and terrorism.

Some are also radicalised to extreme Islamism through in-person contact within their own social circles. We still expect to see cases of radicalisation within families, among friends, in prisons, and at reception centres for asylum seekers, as well as in religious arenas and other locations where radicalised individuals recognise opportunities to convert others.

In addition, there are certain circles in Norway that help spread the notion that Islam, as a religion, is at odds with Norway's lifestyle and culture. The people in these circles often have an ambiguous relationship to the use of violence, even though they give the impression that they are non-violent. Experience shows that participation in such circles can sometimes serve as a gateway to extreme Islamism.

Perceived provocations will continue to contribute to radicalisation

Situations experienced as insults to and attacks on the religion of Islam and Muslims will contribute to radicalisation and make it easier to justify terrorist acts. When such incidents take place in Norway, they add to the likelihood that certain individuals will start planning terror-related actions. For several decades, incidents of this kind have inspired certain extreme Islamists to carry out terrorist acts. Most recently in 2020, several terrorist acts were carried out in Europe in response to perceived transgressions.

The probability that this type of events will lead to radicalisation and terror planning will increase if it elicits broad coverage in traditional and social media, supplemented by the dissemination of information via extremist networks online. Experience nonetheless shows that it can take a long time from the time insults are perceived until retaliatory actions are committed.

Simple attacks on densely populated targets or symbolic targets are the most likely forms of attack

Any potential extreme Islamist terrorist act in Norway would probably be committed by a lone individual. It is expected that the perpetrator would have been in contact with other extremists in the run-up to the act.

The most likely targets are considered to be civilian crowds, institutions or individuals perceived as having insulted the Islamic religion, as well as uniformed police and military personnel in public areas. Churches, synagogues and other religious meeting places are also deemed likely choices of targets.

The perpetrator will probably employ simple means such as edged weapons or blades, arson or a vehicle. However, attacks that have been averted show that extreme Islamists would still prefer to carry out attacks with explosives and firearms.

In a great many extreme Islamist terrorist attacks, the perpetrators themselves wanted to be killed by the police while committing the act. Police responders must therefore expect to be attacked by the perpetrator.

The threat from individuals with anti-government convictions

It is considered **unlikely** that individuals with anti-government convictions will try to carry out terrorist acts in Norway. Generally speaking, the authorities in Norway enjoy a high level of trust, meaning that anti-government ideas have a limited potential for expansion compared with the situation in several other countries. However, in recent years, we have registered more activity among individuals with anti-government convictions in Norway as well.

In Norway, the threat comes from individuals radicalised through conspiracy theories and anti-government ideas. Perpetrators responsible for several acts of violence and sabotage in Western countries in recent years believe in the same conspiracy theories promulgated by individuals with anti-government convictions in Norway.

Conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic will be a unifying topic

One central idea among individuals with anti-government convictions is the notion that the State does not have a legitimate platform for the exercise of power. The State's legislation and regulations are perceived as instruments of power used to violate individual citizens' freedom and sovereignty. Further, conspiracy theories claiming that the world is governed by a secret global elite with an evil plan have become more prominent among anti-government sympathisers.

Large volumes of anti-government propaganda and related conspiracy theories are shared on several online fora, Norwegian and transnational alike. The ideas that characterise the anti-government movements in Norway are impacted by and commingled with developments abroad. The rhetoric sometimes includes smears, hate speech, threats and appeals

to carry out acts of violence and terrorism. Moreover, current events largely determine their focal points. Global disinformation campaigns under the auspices of state actors are also considered to maintain and, to some extent, strengthen anti-government ideas among sympathisers in Norway.

Conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to be a unifying topic. Theories that Covid-19 was created by the authorities to control the general public and that vaccinations will lead to mass death are among the most common conspiracy theories. Accordingly, we expect that the handling of the pandemic will continue to provoke involvement on the part of anti-government sympathisers.

There is some overlap between anti-government and right-wing extremist ideas. Conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic are also promulgated by multiple right-wing extremists. Further, the idea that a secret global elite governs the world partially coincides with anti-Semitic right-wing extremist notions.



Theories that Covid-19 was created by the authorities to control the general public and that vaccinations will lead to mass death are among the most common conspiracy theories.

Attacks on targets involved in the response to the pandemic are the most likely ones

An increase has been registered in the number of acts of violence and sabotage motivated by anti-government ideas in several Western countries these last years. The targets of the attacks have primarily been state institutions, along with vaccination centres and individuals involved in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the time being, it is unlikely that individuals in Norway with anti-government convictions would commit a terrorist attack. Any potential attack would probably be carried out by one individual acting alone or a few individuals. Illegal activities such as vandalism and disturbing the peace are, however, considered more likely than a terrorist attack. This type of incident may either be planned or carried out more spontaneously. In respect of spontaneous incidents, for example, during a ceremony, the group dynamic can have a mobilising effect and lead more people to participate in violent acts on impulse.

As long as the Covid-19 pandemic continues, likely targets include locations and people associated with the vaccination

process, as well as key people in the authorities' handling of the pandemic. A shift in the focus of anti-government sympathisers will create new stereotypical images of the enemy and targets for potential attacks.

The threat from left-wing extremists

It is considered highly unlikely that left-wing extremists will try to perpetrate terrorist acts in 2022.

In Norway, left-wing extremism will continue to be a marginal phenomenon with few active groups. The left-wing extremists' ideological convictions are grounded in the glorification of violence advocated by various brands of Communism, anarchism and anti-fascism. We still expect a small scale of new recruitment to the groups that exist in Norway.

The struggle against right-wing extremism will continue to be the unifying cause for left-wing extremists in Norway. Norwegian left-wing extremists have a broad interpretation of right-wing extremism as a phenomenon. Their stereotype of the enemy therefore includes everyone from organised right-wing extremist groups to groups of right-wing radicals and individuals.



The struggle against right-wing extremism will continue to be the unifying cause for left-wing extremists in Norway.

Some left-wing extremists will continue to carry out politically motivated acts of violence and to confront and publicly harass individuals they consider to be right-wing extremists. This feeds continued polarisation between the groups. Several left-wing extremists also include the police in their stereotype of the enemy, although mainly when the police are deployed to protect freedom of expression, e.g., during demonstrations.

The climate, the environment and nature conservation are issues with the potential to lead to radicalisation

PST considers it highly unlikely that activists associated with the climate, the environment or nature conservation will try to carry out terrorist acts in Norway in 2022. We expect that activism related to these issues in Norway will continue to be non-violent. For certain individuals, however, the climate situation may be perceived as an urgent existential threat. Thus, the topic still has a potential for radicalising individuals.

Many in Norway and abroad are committed when it comes to issues involving the climate, the environment and nature conservation. We find that issues involving these topics capture people's interest, regardless of whether or not they adhere to a particular ideology. As a result, support and commitment may have a wide embrace, meaning there will be a vast array of views on the use of policy instruments.

Most of those involved in these areas in Norway employ legal means, e.g., demonstrations and protests. Some groups and individuals will nonetheless turn to the use of illegal means like vandalism and disturbing the peace. In some cases, certain politicians and those with differing opinions will be subject to harassment and threats.

The threat against dignitaries

It is considered **unlikely** that Norwegian dignitaries will be the target of serious acts of violence or terrorism in 2022. However, certain development trends indicate that there is growing danger that dignitaries will be subjected to spontaneous, less serious acts of violence and confrontations.

⁵⁾ Dignitaries are defined as members of the Royal family, the Government, MPs and Supreme Court justices. The report also covers certain politicians who do not fit the definition of dignitaries, but who are in a vulnerable position by virtue of being politicians.

More negative attention directed at Norwegian authorities on the part of extremists

Norwegian authorities definitely fit the stereotype of the enemy as perceived by right-wing extremists, meaning that dignitaries⁵⁾ are among the potential targets for any right-wing extremist terrorist act. Right-wing extremists accuse the authorities and politicians of treason. Historically, the Labour Party in particular has been ascribed responsible for this. We expect that key politicians from the Labour Party will play a more prominent part in the right-wing extremist stereotype of the enemy now that Labour is the largest party in the coalition government.

In recent years, we have also registered an increase in activity among people with anti-government convictions. To those who advocate anti-government ideas, the State and dignitaries play a large part in the stereotype of the enemy.

We expect that topics related to the authorities' handling of the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to incite hatred of the authorities in some individuals in 2022. Right-wing extremists and individuals who expound anti-government convictions stand united in their resistance against the authorities' handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is expected to continue for the duration of the pandemic.

Ongoing threat activity on the part of individuals without ideological platforms

Norwegian dignitaries and politicians will continue to be the targets of smears, hate speech, threats and other undesirable attention from individuals without any ideological platform. As a rule, those behind such activities have been mobilised by personal frustrations and life crises that they blame on the authorities. Experience shows that many of them have mental issues caused by a perceived experience of justifiable anger.

Other topics expected to result in threats against the authorities include matters perceived as incursions on individuals' private lives. Examples of this may include political debates on issues that involve child welfare, direct and indirect taxes, the climate, the environment and nature conservation, as well as immigration and integration.

Social media help spread such threat messages to a larger audience. As a result, these messages can have a knock-on effect, provoking others to make new hateful and threatening statements. Ultimately, this could lead certain individuals to consider the use of violence against dignitaries to be justified.

More concern about spontaneous confrontations

Historically, violent actions against dignitaries or politicians have been rare in Norway. Any potential threatening act directed at dignitaries is expected to be a confrontation or a less serious act of violence carried out by one lone individual acting on the spur of the moment. The purpose of the act will probably be to attract attention or to instil fear, rather than to inflict serious bodily harm.

Which dignitaries are at the greatest risk depends on several factors, including whether they are responsible for political issues experienced by some people as controversial, and how much media attention is devoted to them.

Receiving threats is stressful for dignitaries and politicians alike and can potentially have consequences on their participation in democratic activities⁶⁾. Such threats may result in them not being willing to play a leading part in controversial matters or wanting to resign. It is also a problem that this may mean that others choose not to undertake political offices and duties.

The intelligence threat against Norwegian dignitaries

Norwegian politicians and others who work with them are among the intelligence targets in Norway, and it is likely that some of them will be exposed to intelligence and influence operations this year. Intelligence activities have several purposes. The goal of some operations will be to change minds and decisions on matters where the politician in question may wield influence. In addition, certain operations will aim at obtaining information about the values and vulnerabilities associated with the individual politician.

We find that some countries have a low threshold for using different types of pressure and threats to influence politicians and other decision-makers in areas they consider to be sensitive and important. Increasingly, methods like these may be used to target individual politicians in Norway as well.

⁶⁾ For more information on assessments of this issue, reference is made to the report submitted by the Norwegian Police University College entitled "Harassment and threats against politicians: A survey among MPs, members of Government and members of the Central Committees of the parties and the youth parties".