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## Leaders' Response to Terrorism: The Role of Epideictic Rhetoric in Deliberative Democracies

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# Leaders' Response to Terrorism: The Role of Epideictic Rhetoric in Deliberative Democracies

## **Abstract**

New initiatives in deliberative democracy theory allow for a broader understanding of the different rhetorical practices that influence deliberation in real life settings. This solves the “problem” rhetoricians have long had with deliberative theory: that political communication is reduced to rational deliberation, disregarding a lot of non-deliberative forms of communication that are essential for the formation of public opinion and political decisions. This article elaborates on the role of epideictic rhetoric and provides an example as to how we might benefit from combining the two theoretical traditions. Often reduced to ceremonial practice, the epideictic genre has long been overlooked in political communication research. However, epideictic rhetoric plays a crucial role in shaping collective identity and values, thereby influencing citizens' and politicians' inclinations and scope of action in future deliberation. The article is concluded by a case study of the Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's address to the nation after the terrorist attack in Oslo on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011. By enforcing collective values such as democracy, solidarity, and openness towards other cultures the Prime Minister's speech contributed to what became one of the dominant frames through which the attack and related issues were interpreted and debated.

## **Keywords**

Deliberative theory, Deliberation, Rhetoric, Epideictic

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Three days after the July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 terrorist attack on the Norwegian governmental offices and the Worker's Youth League (AUF) at Utøya in Oslo, over 200 000 people gathered in front of Oslo city hall, holding roses as a symbol of compassion and solidarity. Both in Norway and abroad, the rose processions came to symbolize the people's response to terrorism. It echoed the Norwegian national character, as the trustee of the Nobel Peace Prize, as a liberal and tolerant nation and one of the most peaceful and egalitarian countries in the world. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's speech to the crowd made the connection explicit: "Our response has grown in strength through the incomprehensible hours, days, and nights we have been through, and it is amplified powerfully this evening. More openness. More democracy. Resolve and strength. This is who we are. This is Norway!"

The collective action and speeches in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> were strong and overt expressions of public opinion and in that sense profoundly political. Yet, it is doubtful whether these initial responses could be effectively understood as decision-oriented deliberation, and it is less than clear what future decisions might be at stake or in what way the public could be said to be in a state of disagreement. Rather, they fitted the rhetorical description of *epideictic* — ceremonial speeches displaying the present state of the society and its values. In the months and years that followed, the need for deliberative confrontation became evident, as political debates were raised about national security, juridical settlements, memorial sites, and other questions related to the terrorist attack. The initial responses did not address the need for political decisions directly, but they still had a profound effect on how the events were framed in the public consciousness as a political and civic issue.

In this article, I argue that deliberative theory should be more attentive to the functions of epideictic discourse. By considering such non-deliberative modes of discourse, we can give a more comprehensive description of political communication in modern societies. Epideictic discourse plays a significant role in deliberative processes. It has the potential to strengthen the common values in society, create community, and form the beliefs that determine future decision-making. Understood as such, the epideictic has the ability to define public issues. However, in order to understand the effect of epideictic discourse on deliberative processes we need to do just that: understand it as *epideictic*.

This article has three objectives. First, I discuss the connection between deliberative and rhetorical theory in general. Lengthy accounts of the relation of deliberative theory to rhetoric have been provided elsewhere (Garsten, 2011; Setälä, 2009), but less attention has been given to rhetorical theory. Also, recent developments within deliberative theory have opened new, interesting possibilities for joint perspectives. I refer in particular to the "systemic approach to deliberative democracy" (Mansbridge et al., 2012; Thompson, 2008), which has suggested a more flexible way of dealing with

different fields of discourse by viewing them as interdependent sites within larger systems of deliberation. Second, I elaborate on modern theories of epideictic rhetoric and discuss how they can supplement the deliberative perspective on the political public sphere. Finally, I return to Prime Minister Stoltenberg's speech as a case of epideictic rhetoric with political significance. This case demonstrates how rhetorical analysis can help us understand processes we would not be able to understand from a deliberative perspective alone.

### **Deliberative Democracy and the Rhetorical Turn**

According to Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (2004), the key characteristics of deliberation are its *reason-giving* requirement; that the process is *accessible* to the citizens; that the decision is *binding* for a period of time; and that the process is *dynamic*, meaning that the decisions that are made are open to challenge at some point in the future. Similar lists have been made by scholars such as Joshua Cohen (1989) and James Fishkin (2009), often including mutual respect and acknowledgement as additional criteria.

This list of characteristics emphasizes deliberative theory's normative pretense. For the Habermasian tradition, deliberation has been regarded as a way to produce legitimate democratic decisions (Cohen, 1997; Garsten, 2011). When presented with both statements and their reasons and a choice between accepting them or not accepting them, citizens should be able to make free, unconstrained decisions. This interrelation between communicative action, rationality, and freedom is important for the contrast often made between deliberation and rhetoric (Benhabib, 1996; Garsten, 2011). While deliberation is thought of as a process that will secure free opinion formation, rhetoric is thought to obscure this process by seducing people to accept the assertion without the open-ended process of reason giving. Many commentators on deliberative democracy have understood rhetoric as defined by an asymmetrical relationship between the speaker and his audience, and as predominantly concerned with impact on the audience and not the process of collective judgement (Setälä, 2009).

In recent years, this agonistic relationship between rhetoric and deliberative theory has been challenged on various grounds. In "The Rhetorical Revival in Political Theory," Garsten (2011) describes how the multifaceted and fragmented nature of our current public sphere and television's increased role in politics have sparked a renewed interest in rhetoric within political science research. Several attempts have been made to give deliberative theory a more comprehensive view of the various ways citizens are exposed to and participate in different forms of political communication. Looking to theories of rhetoric, commentators have suggested supplementing existing principles of

deliberation with a rhetorical view of the role of emotions (*pathos*) and trust (*ethos*) in collective judgements, or to replace the dominating Kantian understanding of reason with an Aristotelian, rhetorical one (Beiner, 1982, 1983; Garsten, 2011).

The responses to this “rhetorical revival” have been mixed, and there seems still to be no common understanding of what “rhetoric” is or what it most effectively can describe about public discourse. On the one hand, deliberative democrats such as John Dryzek (2000) and Gutmann and Thompson (2004) seemingly make more room for rhetorical perspectives. Rhetoric, they argue, can draw attention to deliberation and transmit arguments, but it cannot in itself be deliberative. Although this is hardly the authors’ intention, most rhetoricians would accuse them of actually limiting the role of rhetoric by making it merely supportive of “real” deliberation (Garsten, 2011, p. 163). On the other hand, the notions of scholars in the Habermasian tradition, whose relationship with rhetoric is rather unclear, display many resemblances with contemporary rhetorical theories of argumentation, such as “the new rhetoric” of Chaïm Perelman. Both are concerned with the application of reason to values and regard argument as a process that takes place between different actors.

It should also be noted that the uneasy relationship between rhetoric and deliberative theory goes both ways. Rhetorical theorists have often critiqued theories of deliberative democracy for being too prescriptive, too narrow in their understanding of rationality, and too limited in their field of study to comprehend how political communication actually works in modern democracies ( Hauser, 1999; Phillips, 1996).

This is not to say that deliberative theory has not had significant influence on rhetorical studies in recent decades. Discussions within the field of rhetoric have increasingly come to orient themselves in relation to deliberative theory. However, rather than seeing rhetoric and deliberation as separate phenomena, deliberation is here considered a distinct form of rhetorical activity that can be normatively defined but not necessarily empirically separated from other rhetorical processes.

Similarly, empirically oriented researchers of deliberative democracy have found that deliberation is a phenomenon that is difficult to isolate (Mutz, 2008; Thompson, 2008), especially if we are to keep to all the criteria suggested by normative theorists. Recent developments within deliberative theory recognize that deliberative processes include many non-deliberative kinds of interactions, and that we therefore need a more flexible way of dealing with different modes of political communication.

One recent contribution is particularly interesting in this regard. In “The Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy,” Mansbridge et al. (2012)

present a way to describe how deliberative systems are formed within or across institutions, or surrounding an issue, even if the separate practices do not qualify as deliberation in a strict sense. This opens new possibilities for doing rhetorical analysis within a deliberative democracy perspective. It allows us to study rhetorical practices according to the functions that seem most prominent in the given situation, without abandoning the normative claims that constitute deliberation as a legitimating process in democracy. This solves the “problem” rhetoricians have long had with deliberative theory: that political communication is reduced to rational deliberation, disregarding a lot of non-deliberative forms of communication that are essential for the formation of public opinion and political decisions.

However, this systemic approach still tends to regard many forms of rhetorical communication as supplementary, as a potential support to fulfill deliberative ideals. Even though it opens a wider selection of texts and practices, it sets criteria that limit whether a discussion should be included as part of a deliberative system. The discussions in question must “involve matters of common concern and have a practical orientation.” By “practical orientation,” the authors mean that the discussions in question are not purely theoretical but must involve “an element of the question ‘What is to be done?’” (Mansbridge et al., 2012, p. 9). The practices included in deliberative systems should hence still be deliberative by nature, although they may not adhere to the ideals of “genuine” deliberation when viewed independent of other factors.

Turning to the terminology of rhetorical theory, we could say that there should, within a deliberative system, be some degree of common understanding of what Lloyd Bitzer (1968) calls the “imperfection marked by urgency” that defines rhetorical situations as they arise. In other words, in order to involve an element of the question “What is to be done?,” there must exist some sort of agreement on the implicit question “about what?”

However, the relationship between rhetoric and situations is a complex one. Rhetorical practice is not only responsive to situations. It also creates situations. Richard E. Vatz has most prominently argued this last point. “Rhetoric creates the situational response,” he maintains, because “situations obtain their character from the rhetoric which surrounds them or creates them” (Vatz, 1973, p. 159; 2009). The creation of an issue is a rhetorical act that cannot be separated from the deliberative process. The borders of deliberative systems should not be so clear-cut that they leave us unable to respond to how issues are introduced and created as common concerns, what Vatz would call “creating salience,” or what media theory has popularized as “framing.”

Also, by defining deliberative systems by their orientation toward practical decisions, we might overlook practices that do not have a practical orientation, but can nevertheless have a practical *relevance*, as they can affect values and beliefs that can be mobilized in future decision-making. This is an important

point, as it concerns epideictic rhetoric in general and the case study of this article in particular. As the Prime Minister's address after July 22<sup>nd</sup> will show, non-deliberative discourse can affect not only a deliberative system's ability to comply with the ideals of good deliberation but also the deliberation itself.

### Contemporary Understanding of Rhetoric

The contemporary rhetorical approach I refer to here represents an understanding of rhetoric that is quite far from the antagonistic, potentially manipulative discourse that has led to the contrastation of rhetoric and rational and "free" deliberation. It is more prone to view deliberative processes as interchangeable with other forms of collective judgement that take place in the public sphere, and it offers the means to describe how these functions of public discourse mutually affect one another. Rhetoric is here understood not as supportive or interruptive to "genuine" deliberation, but rather as a framework within which we can understand deliberative processes.

While writers of normative deliberative theory have often treated rhetoric and deliberation as separate, even conflicting phenomena, rhetorical theory has, since Aristotle, considered deliberation a genre of rhetoric, alongside epideictic and forensic rhetoric. These speech genres are defined by the audience's function in the public sphere. In *forensic rhetoric*, the audience is to pass judgement on past events based on existing laws; in *epideictic rhetoric*, to which I will return later, the audience is an "observer" of the orator's skills as he gives praise or blame to things in the present; and in the *deliberative genre*, the role of the audience is to make decisions on future action in the political assembly (Aristotle, 2006). The Aristotelian understanding of deliberative rhetoric is thus, as deliberative theorist Simone Chambers has argued, easily comparable to the normative descriptions in deliberative democracy theory (Chambers, 2009). The goal of the political orator is to lead the audience through a process of collective judgement to the most beneficial outcome.

The notion of speech genres as basic categories of rhetorical praxis is still present in rhetorical theory. However, as our modern public sphere and democratic processes are immensely more complex than in the Greek *polis*, the role of the citizens as audience has become ever more complex. Modern rhetorical theories have generally been formulated as an alternative to what was for long the dominant understanding of antique, especially Aristotelian rhetoric as strategic responses to historical exigencies, in which "success" could be determined by the speaker's ability to impose his will on an audience whose role is clearly defined (Brummett, 1995; Ede & Lunsford, 1982). As suggested above, it is this understanding of rhetoric that remains predominant within deliberative theory. Rhetorical research, on the other hand, has

increasingly turned from viewing the speaker–audience relationship as antagonistic one-way communication to viewing rhetorical communication as *a cooperative two-way process that requires mutual understanding and trust*.

Kenneth Burke (1969) describes modern rhetoric as “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (p. 43). This definition suggests that rhetoric is situated in every instance of symbolic interaction, and not just in texts that intentionally seek to gain influence over others. Burke’s chief concern is language, but it invites a perspective on rhetoric as an inevitable part of every symbolic expression, be it in pictures, clothing, music, or gestures.

Broadening the field of democratic participation has also been the object of rhetorical theorists concerned with deliberative democracy and public theory. Through what he calls the “rhetorical model of the public sphere,” Gerard Hauser (1998b) calls for a shift in analytical perspective from rational deliberation to “the communicative and epistemic functions manifest in the range of discursive exchanges among those who are engaged by a public problem” (p. 109) — or, in short, to rhetoric. This should include what Hauser calls *vernacular exchanges*, the multitude of informal, everyday conversations and symbolic actions through which ordinary citizens engage in public opinion (Hauser, 1998a, 1998b, 1999). People interact differently in different spheres, Hauser argues, and therefore we should be more open to the diversity of rhetorical norms that arise within different arenas.

What then, are the common denominators that make a rhetorical outlook distinctly rhetorical and also a valuable contribution to deliberative theory? In *What Is Rhetoric?*, Norwegian professor in rhetoric Jens E. Kjeldsen argues that at least two main perspectives have been central to a rhetorical perspective on communication throughout time. Rhetoric will always be *contingent* and *situated* (Kjeldsen, 2014). The object of both rhetorical studies and rhetorical praxis are issues in which there is no absolute certainty (Aristotle, 2006). Not only the outcome of the case in question, but also what is likely to be the best or most efficient rhetorical action will depend on the particular circumstances. Thus, rhetorical communication is always inextricably linked with the entire situation in which it occurs. If we hold these perspectives as central for our way of understanding rhetoric, what determines a rhetorical perspective is not that we observe a certain kind of discourse, but that we observe *the function of symbolic action in its rhetorical situation*, by seeing the speaker either as reacting to a set of situational exigencies (Bitzer, 1968) or as creator of the situation (Vatz, 1973, 2009).

Rhetorical studies are still concerned with persuasion as a primary function of rhetoric, but persuasion is not considered isolated from other potential functions, such as informing, creating salience, being aesthetically pleasing, or arousing emotions. On the contrary, these functions are regarded as necessary



components to persuasive discourse. Contemporary rhetorical critique is concerned with how these potential functions are realized in different contexts, for instance to what extent political debates provide relevant information, or how news reports shape the perception of current affairs.

Nevertheless, the Aristotelian distinction of forensic, epideictic, and deliberative rhetoric can be thought of as a more or less exhaustive categorization of collective judgement. Public discourse will necessarily pass judgement about the past, evaluate the present, or advise about the future. But contemporary rhetorical theory will suggest that there are some fundamental functions of rhetorical practice that can be observed across genre particularities. This implies that these branches should not be understood as mutually exclusive genres, but rather as rhetorical functions that can be realized in and across different forms of social action. A particular situation can contain both forensic, epideictic, and deliberative elements.

### **Epideictic and Constitutive Rhetoric**

Unlike the deliberative and forensic genres, the epideictic is not directly linked to any future decision or democratic institution. Rather, it reflects upon the situational and cultural context in which it takes place. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does not reflect much on its social function, but attaches it to a series of ceremonial events in which members of the audience are observers that merely evaluate the orator's skill (Aristotle, 2006). Based on this description, epideictic rhetoric has often been reduced to ceremonial "praise or blame" speeches or to displays of eloquence, which have led many scholars to place it under literary studies rather than rhetoric. However, in the last decades, there has been a revival in the understanding of epideictic speech and its role in society. This revival is the result of new observations on Aristotle's writings on the subject (Hauser, 1999; Oravec, 1976), renewed interest in sophistic thought (Carter, 1991; Chase, 1961; Duffy, 1983), and redefinitions of the epideictic in line with contemporary rhetorical theory (Beale, 1978; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991).

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have reinterpreted the function of epideictic rhetoric by redefining its role in the public realm and its interconnection with the other speech genres. In *The New Rhetoric* (1969), epideictic speech is considered preparation for action (Perelman, 1982; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1991), it is central to all argumentation, "because it strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing the adherence to the values it lauds" (p. 50). In line with a modern rhetorical understanding of genre, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca thus focus less on the ceremonial functions and aesthetic qualities of epideictic

speech and more on its performative functions and its effect on future argumentation.

In a review of modern principles of epideictic rhetoric, Celeste Michelle Condit (1985) argues that influence on subsequent argumentation is only one of three functional pairs that epideictic discourse serves: *definition/understanding, display/entertainment, and shaping/sharing of community*. By explaining a social world, epideictic speech can give the speaker the power of definition, at the same time as the audience gets new understanding. Eloquence can both display the speaker's skills and virtues, and arouse the audience's interest. And by developing a sense of community, the speaker can simultaneously shape collective identity and invite the audience to participate in the community that is articulated.

Modern scholars have been particularly interested in the latter function (Danisch, 2008; Deneef, 1973; Duffy, 1983; Oravec, 1976; Rosenfield, 1980; Sullivan, 1993b; Weaver, 1953). This focus is usually grounded in a reinterpretation of the ancient notion of "praise and blame" and a closer attention to epideictic discourse's educational and philosophical functions. Investigating this from a Platonic perspective, Bernard K. Duffy (1983) argues that the purpose of epideictic oratory is to "represent, however imperfectly, timeless values distilled from past experiences" (p. 85). The philosophical purpose of epideictic discourse, according to Duffy, is centered on educating the audience in the ideas that underlie human judgement. Dale L. Sullivan (1991, 1993a, 1993b) has argued that a successful epideictic encounter "creates an aesthetic vision of orthodox values" and through that instructs the auditors and invites them to take part in a celebration of communal traditions (1993b). Through praise and blame, the orator can thus enforce the cultural and political values that make a society a community.

Gerard A. Hauser (1999) finds the educational function of epideictic implied in Aristotle's writings as well. He argues that epideictic discourse concerns the shared assumptions of civic norms on which the enthymemes of deliberative and forensic rhetoric ultimately rest. Thus, epideictic discourse can educate the people in the civic virtues on which their public role as democratic citizens is built (Hauser, 1999, p. 18). Robert Danisch is also concerned with epideictic discourse as a way to bridge conflicting values in society, but makes his argument on a far more present matter. In his study of African-American culture in the US, Danisch (2008) explores how epideictic expressions can create cooperation and dialogue between different value systems within a society.

Connecting epideictic rhetoric to modern speech act theory, Walter H. Beale (1978) has introduced the notion of "the rhetorical performative" as a primary definer of epideictic speech. Reinforcement of values is a central characteristic of the epideictic but it is seldom an explicit function, Beale argues (1978, pp.

221–222). Rather, epideictic speech is a way of performing these values. Based on John L. Austin’s speech act theory, Beale (1978) suggests that epideictic rhetoric should be understood as the composed and more or less unified act of rhetorical discourse that does not merely comment on or claim something about the world of social action, but that constitutes a significant social action in itself. In the situation traditionally associated with epideictic rhetoric the audience’s attention is not typically drawn to the “facts of the case,” the *locutionary* aspects, but to the “communal and historical significance of the speech itself,” the *illocutionary* aspect (Beale, 1978, p. 229). Similarly, Michael F. Carter has argued that epideictic discourse may be best understood through the much more elaborate literature on ritual. Like rituals, epideictic discourse generates a distinct kind of knowledge; it constitutes and promotes community and offers its participants guidance in conducting their lives (Carter, 1991).

In her rereading of ancient sophistic sources, Cynthia M. Sheard (1996) finds a conception of the epideictic as a vehicle for change with a central role in the public sphere. She suggests that we should understand epideictic rhetoric less as a genre with a fixed set of rhetorical elements and more as “a persuasive gesture or mode we might locate in any number of discourses, *including those we might regard as deliberative or forensic*” (Sheard, 1996, p. 774). In this view, epideictic rhetoric is a force that can inspire and compel people to act. It does so through its ability to move the audience toward a process of critical reflection that “goes beyond evaluation toward envisioning and actualizing alternative, possible worlds” (Sheard, 1996, p. 787).

A term that is particularly relevant for the case study in this article is *constitutive rhetoric*. The term has strong connections to what Condit calls the shaping and sharing of community, as it refers to how narratives create, alternate, and uphold collective identities. An elaborate description of the constitutive functions of language is given by Maurice Charland in “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*” (1987). The two main inspirations to Charland’s theory are Kenneth Burke’s turn from persuasion to identification as the key function of rhetoric, and Louise Althusser’s description of the construction of the subject as the key process in the production of ideology. Charland (1987) argues that, if we are to have a theoretical understanding of the power of discourse, we must account for the audiences that are addressed. A theory of rhetoric simply as persuasion will not do that, as it “requires a subject-as-audience who is already constituted with an identity and within an ideology” (1987, p. 134). It is indeed easier to praise Athens before Athenians than before Lacedaemonians. However, to focus on the praise as persuasive or as more or less deliberate will give us a limited understanding of the reasons. We need to account for the audience’s social identification. Such social identifications are rhetorical, according to Charland (1987), since they are “discursive effects that induce human

cooperation” (p. 133). These identifications logically precede persuasion and, one could add, deliberation. To study deliberative processes without considering how the issues and the actors are rhetorically constructed would be to ignore the rhetorical process that qualifies both the issues and the citizens’ judgement.

In sum, contemporary scholars of epideictic rhetoric can be said to make a close connection between epideixis and deliberation. The role of epideictic discourse in the public sphere and in processes of collective judgement is repeatedly emphasized. However, unlike deliberative discourse, epideictic discourse does not address the question “What should we do about this?” Rather, it constitutes the common grounds that make deliberation possible. The ecology of deliberation requires the maintenance of community, which is a constitutive function of rhetoric. In a deliberative democracy, the citizens ideally makes independent judgements on matters of collective concern, but these judgements are derived from the citizens’ prior knowledge, values, and opinions and from their knowledge and understanding of the issue at hand. This is the domain of epideictic rhetoric.

It is through “praise and blame” that we define ourselves as political subjects. In this sense, the epideictic is profoundly political. To deliberate how we as a society should act on an issue requires a notion of who “we” are and what the issue is. This is the concern of the epideictic. This is what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to when they claim that the epideictic is preparatory to action. Epideictic discourse establishes and re-establishes the premises on which deliberative arguments are built.

Speeches like Douglas MacArthur’s “Duty, Honor, Country”, John F. Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural address, or Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream,” which in their nature and content are epideictic, play a special role in building, or rather performing, community. In this way they have a latent influence on deliberation. Few would argue that “I Have a Dream,” though not in itself deliberative, did not have a significant influence on the deliberation surrounding the civil rights movement.

From the perspective of normative deliberative theory, objectors could claim that the deliberative process should be a way of reducing the power of the epideictic, and in particular the constitutive rhetoric Charland describes. This is suggested by insisting that deliberation is free opinion formation by rational individuals. To include epideictic and other forms of non-deliberative rhetoric without an obvious connection to future discussions, then, would obscure the object of study and reduce the field’s normative and empirical relevance.

This is an important objection. In its extreme consequences, constitutive rhetoric can represent exactly the kind of nationalistic propaganda that theories of deliberative democracy set out to eliminate. This does not,

however, negate the fact that epideictic discourse is an essential part of civic and political life, and thus entangled with society's deliberation. Even in less extreme cases, the constitution of different political subjects is done through identification and not by free non-coercive ways of deliberative argumentation. A systemic approach to deliberative democracy should not reduce itself to studies of discourse oriented toward future decisions about what is already acknowledged as common concerns. It should also include the other forms of rhetorical activity that take place within and across deliberative systems and that form the contextual basis for deliberation. Such rhetorical practices may hold the key to more comprehensive understandings of deliberative processes. At the very least, this approach can give us a better understanding of who has the privilege to define the common concerns within deliberative systems.

As I now turn to Jens Stoltenberg's speech, I try to illuminate the nature of epideictic rhetoric and how it can expand our understanding of deliberative processes. Rhetorical impact is a complex matter that cannot fully be explored here. The main point is to show how a rhetorical analysis can uncover discursive functions that a deliberative democracy perspective is not necessarily able to pick up. Thus, rhetorical analyses can broaden our understanding of how deliberative processes unfold.

### **The Prime Minister's Address: Democracy as Course of Action**

The act of terrorism July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 was the first of its kind in Norway. In total, 77 people were killed, 69 of whom were attending a camp organized by the Labor Party's youth organization (AUF) at Utøya. Hundreds of others were wounded. For a nation of fewer than five million inhabitants, the tragedy was overwhelming. That the acts of terrorism could come from within, from a seemingly average young man from a middle-class neighborhood in the nation's capital, was particularly confusing and troubling. Prior to the attack, the terrorist distributed a self-written manifesto, a 1500-page document of extremist ideas announcing the terrorist attack as the start of a crusade against "cultural Marxism" and "the threat of Islam." For the common citizen, these concepts were as unfamiliar as they were frightening.

In the days that followed, the city of Oslo was marked by a solemn silence, broken only by the telling presence of armed forces and a stream of citizens placing flowers and condolences in front of the cathedral and the Parliament. Spontaneous expressions of community and compassion quickly found a common form. People changed their profile pictures on social media to banners saying "I \*heart\* Oslo" and decorated national monuments with flowers and letters of grief. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, the first public ceremonies were held. Across the nation, people gathered in "rose processions" commemorating the

victims. In Oslo, a city of 650 000, over 200 000 participated, making it one of the biggest public events in Norwegian history. Citizens' processions hold a special meaning in Norway. They are associated with both the Nobel Peace Prize and Constitution Day. These events are usually considered a display of the peace-loving, democratic community of the nation. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, roses accompanied the traditional torches. In addition to being an international symbol of love and hope, the rose has long been the symbol of the Norwegian Labor Party. The double meaning conveyed the nation's solidarity with the organization, a vernacular gesture that was verbalized by the leader of the opposition Progress Party: "Today we are all AUF."

The addresses by the Prime Minister, the Mayor of Oslo, and the Crown Prince to the citizens of Oslo on July 25<sup>th</sup> were epideictic in intent. As a rhetorical situation, the scene had elements of several traditional epideictic genres, such as the funeral oration, town meetings, and leaders' addresses to the citizens in times of emergency. It also had several distinct "imperfections marked by urgency." As national leaders, the speakers were expected to show their support for the victims, display leadership, and give the events a communal definition. The distinct presence of vernacular expressions also had an impact on the words spoken, making it a "happening" as much as an arena for public speech. As fundamental epideictic the Prime Minister's speech did not suggest any concrete action to be taken or judgement to be made. Rather, it reinforced the values of society through praise—of peaceful democracy—and blame—for the atrocity of the deeds. As this short analysis suggests, the speech was first and foremost praise and an acknowledgement of the vernacular expressions of the crowd.

In the Prime Minister's speech, we can distinguish three dominating themes of different epideictic nature. First, the speech is composed of several performative acts and recognizable *topoi* from funeral orations and crisis management. The speaker addresses both those who were directly afflicted—"We are there for you"—and the community at large—"Be compassionate toward one another!" He also makes a strong appeal to the younger generation: "You can keep the spirit of this evening alive. You can make a difference. I urge you to do it!" The day before, Stoltenberg made a similar appeal to relatives and surviving members of the AUF in Oslo Cathedral. Here, Stoltenberg talked about individual victims of the attack, describing their personal characteristics and his relationship with them. In this speech, the similarities with funeral orations are evident, and Stoltenberg's role as the current leader of the Labor Party and a former leader of the AUF—a leader who had been personally affected by the tragedy—is very much present. In the July 25<sup>th</sup> speech, however, the personal approach is replaced with that of the national leader. Here "the young" are addressed as political subjects and their role in the tragedy is given a societal background, enforcing the understanding of the attack not as just a tragedy but as a political event. In Stoltenberg's

words: “The massacre at Utøya was an attack on young people’s dream of contributing to a better world.” The appeal to them is clearly political: “Get involved. Care. Join an organization. Take part in debates. Use your vote!”

The second epideictic feature of the speech is the (re)construction of the national “we” as a collective political subject. In his opening lines, Stoltenberg makes it clear that he recognizes the turnout and the symbolic gestures as an expression of public opinion: “I am standing face to face with the will of the people.” By defining the crowd as “a march for democracy, solidarity, and tolerance,” Stoltenberg gives words to the vernacular rhetoric of the crowd, making himself a spokesperson for the public. As in other cases of constitutive rhetoric, the speech upholds a collective identity through a central narrative: Norway, a fundamentally democratic and tolerant nation, has reached a defining moment in its history that tests its foundations. The speech more than suggests that the Norwegian people’s response to terror is a direct result of their national character. As a vivid example of constitutive rhetoric, it puts across a particular understanding of what defines the collective identity of the Norwegian people. “This is who we are! This is Norway!” Stoltenberg proclaims, referring to fundamental democratic values such as openness, solidarity, and tolerance. The fact that the terrorist was Norwegian makes it particularly important for Stoltenberg to emphasize that the attack was directed toward society as a whole, the big “we” that is defined by shared democratic values. This community is now in a defining hour, and it is “we,” the people, who are the acting subject: “It is we who will decide what that version of Norway will be.”

The third central epideictic function of the speech is the definition of the events as an attack on democracy. This threat is twofold. On one hand, the speech implies that the intention of the attack was to paralyze Norwegian democracy. The “defiant message” that the speaker identifies is marked by the rhetoric of resistance, demonstrating a will to fight back with the very same weapons of democracy that the terrorist wished to subdue. On the other hand, the threat comes from within: from the fear that spreads in the wake of terror. When the attack is presented as a dividing line in the nation’s history, it is also a test of democracy. “Norway will pass the test,” Stoltenberg assures. “Norway will be recognizable.” These words imply that it is how a nation chooses to react to terror that decides its impact. The real danger is not the terror itself but how it may change the society’s values. This may also suggest that other democracies in their moments of peril did not pass the test. The Bush administration’s response to 9/11, with increased focus on national security and passing of the controversial Patriot Act, has been viewed by many in Norway, as throughout Europe, as a limitation of democracy and a threat to civil rights.<sup>1</sup> When Stoltenberg states that Norway will respond with “More

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Murphy has given a detailed description of George W. Bush’s epideictic rhetoric in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (Murphy, 2003).

openness, more democracy,” it can be, and was, by some, interpreted as an assurance that Norway will not react in a similar way. Instead, the collective but rather abstract values of democracy and openness are presented as a course of action. “We will take back our security!” Stoltenberg proclaims, implying that security primarily is a question of feeling secure.

The constitutive elements of the Prime Minister’s address must be understood in light of the particular situation. It did indeed echo the sentiments of the public. Two hundred thousand people holding flowers and singing partisan songs is a powerful vernacular presence. The Prime Minister’s speech was an interpretation of public opinion as much as a formation of it. It expressed what the epideictic situation demanded. Condit’s description of the epideictic of the Boston Massacre could just as well be applied here: “The event had to be subsumed and articulated within the communal history and the feelings and values of the citizens. Such placement helped provide events with motive and meaning” (Condit, 1985, p. 294f).

What, then, can an analysis of the epideictic tell us that a deliberative perspective would benefit from? First, even if an analysis of public deliberation after July 22<sup>nd</sup> as a deliberative system could most certainly include the prime minister’s speech, it would be limited to its deliberative qualities in relation to future decision-making. By arguing in this way, we may be overlooking that the speech is also what Beale would call the *rhetorical performance of societal values*. The Prime Minister did not merely present his audience with a set of claims about collective identity and values. His speech constituted a significant social action in itself, through which these values were realized in a reflexive relation to the vernacular expressions of the public. The Prime Minister could have given another communal definition of the events. The attacks had similarities to school shootings and other murderous acts carried out by a single perpetrator. It could also be thought of as a matter of national security, as it was in the debates following the official report. When they were interpreted as an attack on democracy and the defining values of the Norwegian nation, it created salience, a “frame,” to one particular interpretation of circumstances that later came to affect the deliberation.

This function is foregrounded by analysis of the uptake of the speech. By analyzing the coverage of the attack and its aftermath in 24 Norwegian newspapers over a period of three years, Åse Marie Bernes has documented how the frames of understanding established in the initial speeches came to mark the public debate in different stages. In the first days following the attack, the call for “more openness, more democracy” and the identity constructed in Stoltenberg’s speeches were echoed and enforced by the press (Bernes, 2014). Both in Norway and abroad, the press retold the story of the small but proud nation whose response to terror was love, dignity and democratic values. Stoltenberg himself was repeatedly depicted as not only a



strong leader but as a role model for the nation, an embodiment of the dignified response. *Dagens Næringsliv* (Financial Daily) wrote that: “Stoltenberg helped us channelize the grief and horror into something positive, something beautiful in which we can find consolation” (July 20<sup>th</sup> 2011). *Verdens Gang*, known as *VG* (Norway’s biggest newspaper), wrote that: “Just as Gerhardsen unified the nation to build our welfare state, Stoltenberg has unified us to build our values [...] He has defined how we as a nation shall react” (July 30<sup>th</sup> 2011). International media gave similar reports, but with more focus on the vernacular expressions. *Der Spiegel* wrote that: “[The people of Norway] are in mourning, but they have not called for revenge. Instead, they call for more humanity and more democracy” (July 26<sup>th</sup> 2011). Under the headline “Flowers for freedom,” *The Economist* wrote: “The public’s resolve to preserve Norway’s cherished freedom, openness and tolerance was as striking as the grief” (July 30<sup>th</sup> 2011). The impression that Norway reacted differently from other democracies struck by terrorism echoed in the media’s reactions. *Dagsavisen* wrote: “Many of the leaders that have expressed their condolences have much to learn from Stoltenberg and King Harald” (July 27<sup>th</sup> 2011). The leader of the Swedish Labor Party, Mona Sahlin, wrote in a blog entry that: “My friend Jens (Stoltenberg) did everything right where Bush did everything wrong” (“Newsmill,” July 25<sup>th</sup> 2011). The initial press coverage and reactions thus confirm that the “democracy as response” frame was not only accepted by a large part of the public, but also identified as an expression of public opinion.

Second, as an articulation of public opinion, the Prime Minister’s speech and other speeches given by prominent public figures at this crucial moment had the privilege of defining the events and shaping the understanding of community in relation to them. Later deliberation, filling the need for placement of responsibility and political decisions, would have to relate to this frame, either by confirming it or challenging it. In the weeks and months that followed, the public debate came to display the discrepancy between existing political differences and the constitutive “we” that so clearly came to represent public opinion in the immediate aftermath of the events.

The trial against Anders Behring Breivik—the next monumental public happening after the attacks themselves—raised several political and civic issues that sparked public deliberation. The debates were still partially framed as an issue of democratic values, encompassing themes such as freedom of speech, voter participation, the nature of extremism, the role of the media, and the essence of democracy. However, what “more openness” and “more democracy” should come to mean in practice came increasingly under scrutiny (Bernes, 2014). This was evident in debates about the trial itself—e.g., about principles of justice, treatment of the defendant, and debates about the news reports from the trial—and also in the vernacular rhetoric surrounding the process. Bernes notes that public displays of rage or desire for revenge were

almost completely absent during the trial. Such feelings were not consistent with the dominating frame of love and “more democracy” as the collective and “dignified” response. An often-expressed attitude from those involved was that the dignity of the reactions itself was an enforcement of the values and collective identity the terrorist threatened, and hence a way to show the terrorist that he could not “win.” Even the commentators that questioned this conformity did so by challenging whether or not this was really in accordance with the ideal of “more openness, more democracy” (*Aftenposten*, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2012; *Dagbladet*, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012). Both the collective response and the critical remarks about it were thus situated within the frame of democracy as a course of action.

As the notion of the common concern changed—as public deliberation turned toward more clear-cut political matters—the frame of democracy as a course of action became less effective. One turning point in the deliberation was the debate that followed the release of the Gjørsv Commission’s official report in August 2012 (Bech Gjørsv, 2012). The report was a devastating critique of the state of national security and the police force. It was also a blow to the Labor Party, as it had been in government for almost six years when the attack occurred. Discursively, the understanding of security finally turned from the abstract notion of communal trust to the state of national security. After the report was published, *VG* printed an article with the headline “This is how Jens failed.” The editorial demanded that Stoltenberg “should have the decency to resign” (*VG*, August 14<sup>th</sup> 2012). The demand was supported by several central public figures, among them members of parliament. According to the polls, the public was of another opinion, some giving Stoltenberg an approval rating as high as 72%.<sup>2</sup> The question of voters’ confidence in government is obviously a lot more complex than could be settled by a single speech given a year earlier. However, the reactions illustrate the discrepancy between the premises set by the official report and the collective memory of the events. Moreover, the issue must be understood partly in light of the strong connection made between the collective memory and the political leadership due to compelling epideictic rhetoric.

Finally, the collective identity as a fundamental democratic and tolerant nation came to influence other public debates that were not directly related to the terrorist attacks. In debates about illegal immigrants, asylum seekers, and ethnic and religious minorities, the collective identity and values established in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> quickly became a central *topos*—a recurring argument that for the initiated citizens invoked the collective memory of the events (e.g., *Fædrelandsvennen*, April 18<sup>th</sup> 2012; *Stavanger Aftenblad*, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2012; *Avisa Nordland*, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2012). An illustrative case in point is the public debate about the situation of the Romani people in the summer of 2012.

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<sup>2</sup> *VG* found an approval rating of 52% (August 15th 2014); whereas a Norstat poll for NRK found 72% (NRK, August 15th 2014).

This debate played out close to the one-year day of remembrance. On July 21<sup>st</sup> 2012, *Avisa Nordland* wrote: “While we are preparing for a difficult but necessary remembrance, the Romani people are fighting for a chance and a place to stay in the small country with the big heart. It is at odds with the big promise we made one another one year ago.” Other commentators made similar arguments, evoking the collective memory of July 22<sup>nd</sup> and the national identity attached to this to substantiate their view about how the Norwegian public should act.

A rhetorical analysis can describe how epideictic rhetoric in the midst of the events can define common concerns by giving salience to certain issues. In the year between the terrorist attack and the official report, freedom of speech and the relation between rhetoric and divergent values were elevated as central issues for public debate. These issues were certainly in line with the epideictic responses in the immediate aftermath. It could be questioned whether these debates involved an element of “what should be done” or whether they should be regarded as mainly theoretical. However, as they were oriented toward public policy and even legislation, these debates were obviously relevant within a deliberative democracy perspective. The fact that it was these concerns and not other issues that dominated public deliberation should be a relevant question for those who are interested in democratic aspects of deliberative systems. In between the speaker defining the issue and the public understanding it, and the speaker shaping communal values and the public sharing them, common concerns are brought to the forefront. Thus, the epideictic discourse of the national leaders after the July 22<sup>nd</sup> attack affected the course of deliberation.

The ongoing debate about national security in Norway and other pressing matters after July 22<sup>nd</sup> are clearly cases of political deliberation, conducted in both the chambers of parliament and the mediated arenas of the public sphere. Yet, if we are to understand the complexities of the deliberative system surrounding this event, we must be responsive to how epideictic rhetoric in line with public opinion came to form the events in the national collective memory and identity.

### **Conclusion**

A systemic approach to deliberative democracy will allow us to include the sort of non-deliberative discourses described in this analysis within a deliberative democracy perspective. Rhetorical theory would insist that we should not merely view them in relation to deliberation, but focus on the function that is most prominent in the situation. As the case study in this article shows, such a rhetorical analysis will actually give us a more comprehensive understanding of the speech’s impact on deliberation. It is

precisely because of its epideictic function—its ability to define the issue and identify the political subjects that would have to relate to it as a common concern—that the Prime Minister’s address influenced political debates after the terrorist attack. Analysis of the speech as predominantly epideictic provides us with a better understanding of how both the events themselves and the debates that followed were infused with motive and meaning.

Such understanding of the ways in which political issues and social actors are rhetorically constituted should better equip practitioners of deliberation to critically assess the premises on which deliberation rests. It can also be an important tool for community organizers and media actors who create the conditions for public deliberation to strengthen the dialog between generations and between different social and cultural groups.

To comprehend how deliberative systems work, we need to learn how issues arise and how collective judgement is constituted and upheld. This short analysis has demonstrated the role of rhetoric by describing features of vernacular, epideictic, and constitutive rhetoric that a strict deliberative analysis would not be able to capture. This shows how rhetorical analysis can afford a deliberative democracy approach to give us a more complete understanding of deliberative processes.

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