



On Norwegian Politics in the 2020s

Observations and thoughts on Norway's political parties and the September 2021 election in Norway

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([Tinyurl.com/NorwayPolitics2021](https://tinyurl.com/NorwayPolitics2021))

(NOTE: This document has been updated substantially in several major revisions between July 18 and August 13. It could be expanded or revised further still, but this is a complete draft printed August 13, which is exactly one month before the election.) (See also [several follow-on comments](#).)

This is a wide and deep review of Norwegian politics and the many political parties active in Norway today.

There is a general election in Norway coming up, September 13, 2021 — which is a Monday and *not* a public holiday. Norway has high voter turnout, despite the lack of voting-day being a holiday, and has averaged 76-78% turnout in the past several elections. Unlike many countries, Norway shows no downtrend in turnout in the past thirty years, though in the 1980s turnout had been a notch higher at 82-84%.

What follows here has evolved into a full overview of the Norwegian political system, its political parties, and its entire political culture, as seen by me and as I now understand it, focusing on the present but drawing on the world of the 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s.

This started as a set of notes on Norwegian politics. I knew some already but lots of gaps in my knowledge have been filled in from reading and research inspired by getting started, and driving it to be what it is now.

The weeks before a general election is the absolute best possible time to do a project like this. Election (years) are important signposts for political parties and the entire political culture, when people pay attention and when open politicking and campaigning is much more normalized and general than normal. Doing this before the election rather than after also prevents outcome-based narratives from dominating.

Organization:

- First, a section on the mechanics of Norway's system, which I admire and find preferable in many ways to the US system. Then:
- An overview of their party system as it now stands, as something a like a ten-party system. There is a top-tier of three big parties, a second-tier of several medium-sized parties, and a third-tier of small parties still competitive enough to plausibly win some seats but not guaranteed to win any. A fourth-tier is also exists of parties far too small to mean much, but which still may have some importance in the overall scheme and which can occasionally be "promoted" to the third tier. In the first three tiers there are about ten parties.
- An extensive profile of each of the ten parties, taken one at a time, including with international comparisons and analogies a, and mention of several of the fourth-tier parties in cases of interest.

- Each party's range of outcome-possibilities in 2021 as measured in range of seats they might get. Seats won in September 2021 are to be held four years, bringing us to 2025.
- Several cases of analyzing real political sloganeering and campaign material but out by the parties, showing how they represent themselves to their own people and potential voters. In general all this combines to present a rich portrait of each party, or so is my goal.
- A final section on the Corona-Flu-Virus Panic of 2020-21(-22?) — a phenomenon which, if ignored, makes no political analysis of the early 2020s worth much. It had a curious effect on the Norwegian party system. The ruling party, the Right-leaning Conservative Party (*Høyre*), mandated lockdowns and oversaw some major disruptions to society, then apologized for the lockdowns and disruptions, but then realized it had become more popular for it all, rose in the polls to new heights, and had a political incentive to continue the disruptions, especially with an election coming. This breaks with the expectation of a US-only observer, who may think of Lockdownism and associated disruptions, rules, mandates, and hassling as a political project of the Left and one which is resisted, in fits and starts, by (some on) the Right..
- In the comments section, a few substantive followings-up on some of the content here.

Norway's national legislature, the *Storting*, is elected proportionally based on 19 electoral regions

Norway has proportional representation within an electoral-district-based system. Most electoral regions each have a population in the low hundreds of thousands, except for Oslo and Akershus (the region surrounding Oslo) which have resident populations above 600,000 each, combined total now above 1,300,000 or 25% of the national population.

Norway's political system has evolved mechanisms to limit Oslo from potentially dominating the politics of the whole nation.

The big difference with the US system is the method of allocating seats: None of the seats in the Norway *Storting* are directly elected in the US style of a head-to-head horse race (in which, for example, a 46% recipient takes the seat, a 44% recipient gets nothing, and a third-party with 10% also gets nothing. In the Norwegian system, if a given electoral region has 10 seats, that same vote-spread would come out as follows: The 46%-party would take five seats, the 44%-party would take four seats, and the 10%-party would take one seat. Representation proportional to support among voters.

A total of 150 *Storting* members are "directly" elected in this way. In the 2000s, a reform introduced a bonus of 19 seats, one for each of the nineteen electoral regions, for a new grand total of 169 *Storting* seats. The 19 bonus seats are allocated to parties which get over 4% of the total national vote. This "4% hurdle" is all-important to the small parties, generally determining whether a party will get several seats (e.g., at 4.1%) or possibly none (e.g., at 3.9%). The way to get seats is either do well enough in one or more electoral region(s) to win one or more seat(s) directly, or demonstrate substantial enough national support (4% or more) to take some of the bonus, "adjustment" seats.

Greater Oslo (i.e., Oslo and Akershus) elects 33 of the 150 direct seats to the *Storting*. This is 22% of the direct seats, somewhat below their total national population-share, because the system was designed to give greater weight to rural areas to counteract the privileged and potentially dominant position of the residents of the capital and only major metropolis. The bonus-seat mechanism further reduces Greater Oslo's power in the *Storting*, for each region gets

one bonus-seat, meaning Oslo City and Asekerhus region add two making 35 grand-total seats, over a grand-total Norway-wide seat count of 169, or 20.7% of total *Storting* seats. If seats were allocated rigidly based on resident-population, Greater Oslo would control at least 42 of the *Storting*'s 169 seats and not the actual 35.

Hedmark is a rural area of the kind favored by the system. It is also the source of fully one-quarter of my own personal ancestry (half of my father's). Hedmark elects seven representatives to the *Storting* for its 193,000 people. This is higher than it "should" be based on population, because the system assigns the number of seats each region is to get based on a formula weighting both population and land area. If it were strictly on population, Hedmark would get only 6 seats and would be at real risk of falling to 5 seats at the next adjustment as Oslo and some other big areas continue to grow. Hedmark itself doesn't have any large cities; its largest is Hamar, pop. 32,000.

The electoral system by which rural areas are favored is a bow towards Norway's traditional rural character and the concern that Oslo could swallow up the country's politics.

Norway now has a competitive, multi-party system in which even the little guys have a real shot at representation and ultimately influencing the government. This makes systems like Norway's, pound for pound, more interesting to me than the USA's in many ways. I assume people in Norway tend to (or, at least, the system tends to impel them to) vote for what they *want/like*, rather than cramming themselves into one of two huge-tent boxes (in the USA's case, the "D" or "R" teams), or being sullen Nonvoters, entirely detached. I have long envied these systems. You get to cast a positive vote for people/parties/agendas you *want* rather than a negative vote for people/parties you *dislike less*. The latter is the US system. (In recent years I have developed a greater respect for those who consciously choose not to vote, if out of principle and not laziness.)

The counter-argument is multi-party systems are too confusing, with "too many" competitive parties, often something like five instead of the two-party-duopoly US model. Sometimes these multi-party systems can have many more still — Norway today has a roughly "ten-party system." Too confusing, huff the naysayers will say. Even in a system like Norway's, there are

still minor protest parties which often end up getting similar aggregate shares of the vote as the “throw your vote away” US third parties usually get.

The larger number of parties makes for a responsive system which is specifically the attraction. Put another way, what is the point of a democracy under a two-party duopoly in which rivals are crushed by the system?

All political parties are run by “political machines.” More parties means a more vigorous competition and a system *in toto* more responsive to people’s views and needs and to changing conditions. If all political parties are little oligarchies, it’s best to have more of them to displace one another and keep the pressure on against a permanent political bureaucracy unresponsive to the people. Is this not preferable to a system in which monopoly (or duopoly) power can easily crush people—rivals, competitors, dissidents, or anyone it choose. Expressed in a slightly different way, a two-party duopoly system seems to share many of the negative traits of a one-party system.

The effective coalitions which make up the two parties in the US are always shifting, but the shift is often out of view because the two “tents” are too big to see what’s going on. The whole two-tented affair is stage-managed pretty slickly. The US political party system shifts when one party gets hijacked by either a single demagogic figure or by a cabal of agenda-pushers, or “special interests,” or ideologues. This is all part of the process, you say. Within a two-party duopoly system continental in scale, with major global ties and commitments, and with a resident population something approaching 350 million, most people never see the process going on. In a multi-party system the shifts would all be much clear and more in the open.

The risk of self-serving rule-bending with impunity, including the likes of election fraud, I presume also tends to increase when mega-parties are involved. Fraud is likeliest when a single-party *de facto* political monopoly or near-monopoly runs the show, as in the well-known cases of election fraud done by Mexico’s PRI in his era of hegemony. If a system balance by relatively smaller parties co-runs the show, each able to watch the process and keep an eye on others and none totally dominating in any particular area, the whole system is more likely to institutionally balance itself, in theory or in principle.

Few people long accustomed to the US system or US-style systems seem to “get it” that our system is a rather ridiculous anachronism to the horse-and-buggy era when running elections was a major logistical problem. In many cases, US-accustomed people are immediately suspicious of proportional-representation systems, sensing some kind of trick afoot which they can’t fully figure out but the trick must be in there somewhere. (I once asked an international-relations professor of Korean origin [born ca.1979] whether Korea might do well with a more proportional representation system and getting rid of the winner-take-all presidency position which seems to cause so much headache. She rejected the idea out of hand, saying Koreans need, and would demand, a strong leader and that’s that.)

An extension of these positive features of a Norway-like electoral system is that when big elections come up in such systems (as Norway’s), it creates an opportunity to learn a lot more than one could learn from an equivalent level of “D vs. R” analysis in the US system. The US system requires teams of gurus to interpret poll data and other things to see what’s really going on, since D vs. R is so uninformative on its own. Much of the gurus’ work is done automatically, in the open, and above-board in a multi-party system.

The greater insight doesn’t come free and requires some work at least. Just as democracy itself is supposed to imply greater responsibility place upon the citizen, A ten-party system is not as intimidating as it seems.

ON NORWAY'S POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM

Norway today has something like a “ten-party system,” along the following tiers:

Top Tier (FIRST TIER): Three big parties, often known by their acronyms, **H**, **Ap**, and **Sp**.

- **H** (for *Høyre*, the party name; uses the English name Conservative Party) traditionally leads a “blue” coalition of the Right;
- **Ap** (for *Arbeiderpartiet*, Labor Party) traditionally leads a “red” coalition of the Left;
- No one is quite able to pin down the third big party, **Sp**; the party’s name in Norwegian (*Senterpartiet*) conveniently means “Center Party”;
- In the 2000s/2010s, another party, the FrP, was one of the big players, FrP, but is now looking to be clearly relegated the second tier in the early 2020s at least;
- All three big parties (H, Ap, Sp) are making a bid for the prime ministership in 2021.

SECOND TIER: Three moderate-sized parties who *will definitely* have seats/influence: **FrP**, **SV**, **R**.

- **FrP** (*Fremskrittspartiet*, Progress Party), long considered the most right-wing party in Norway;
- **SV** (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*, Socialist Left), a socially left-wing party with Marxist origins;
- **R** (*Rødt*, Red), a party with recent, left-wing radical, class-war, redistributionist origins. The “Antifa” party. recently moved up to the second tier after years on the third tier.

THIRD TIER: There are around four third-tier parties too small to be *securely* counted on to get seats, beyond perhaps one or two here and there. They are: **V**, **KrF**, **MDG**, **DEM**.

- **V** (*Venstre*, Liberal), a centrist party willing to cooperate with both “red” an “blue”;
- **KrF** (*Kristelig Folkeparti*, Christian Democratic Party), traditionally conservative-leaning of the Christian-Right but since 1990s transitions away from Right;
- **MDG** (*Miljøpartiet De Grønne*, Green Party), holding to its roots as one-issue party claiming to be neutral or centrist on all matters except environment and green-politics,

but this calculated neutrality may not survive contact with a significant presence in the *Storting*, which it will probably get for the first time in 2021.

- **DEM** (*Demokratene*), a challenger to the right of the FrP which conducted an ideological purge in 2020. DEM calls itself National Conservative and its interest has been surging since Dec. 2020.

The 4% threshold looms large for the third-tier parties. Any or all may fall short of the 4%-threshold and get few seats, or none at all. With a split parliament, the action on the third tier may be decisive and key to government-formation.

FOURTH TIER (negligible parties; political clubs; or single-issue parties): There are many other small parties, with a support base numbering in the thousands at most. Generally these are of a type recognizable across the Western European countries — single-issue parties without real hopes of taking seats, the occasional joke party (a form of ironic protest vote, such as the old Pirate parties, though some of their advocates began taking it all seriously when they started getting serious vote-totals), or certain single-personality-driven pseudo-parties.

There are a few among the fourth-tier-parties which aspire to replace one of the parties in a higher tier, often founded or joined by defectors from a big party. On the Right these include the PDK (*Partiet de Kristne*), the Capitalist Party (*Liberalistene*), and *Alliansen*. On the Left these include Feminist Initiative, Sentrum, the old-line Norwegian Communist Party, and (arguably) the Pirate Party.

In general, any of the parties can be promoted to a higher tier or fall to a lower tier at any time, though some parties have long-term bases with both support-ceilings and floors. The 4%-mechanism was introduced in the 1980s and expanded in the 2000s which encouraged the growth of third-tier parties who would otherwise have little real chance of gaining seats.

The 169-member *Storting* is not necessarily led by the head of the largest party but by the person who can negotiate majority support and election—as prime minister (*statsminister*)—by a majority of *Storting* members. In principle the prime minister could be *any* of the 169 elected representatives, but in practice the “prime minister candidates” are traditionally the the leaders of either the Ap or the H parties. This is not an iron-clad rule and second-tier parties have also supplied PMs.

Political traditions and political culture in Norway relevant today are broadly recognizable as similar to those of other Western European countries, though some are of greater or lesser importance in Norway than elsewhere. Some strains in Norwegian politics are without obvious analogs. Those familiar with the US Upper Midwest’s political history will recognize these. The unique-seeming Scandinavian political strains date back to the era when mass-electoral-democracy first emerged in Scandinavia in the late 19th century and overlap with some political strains that came on the scene in the US Upper Midwest. Obviously the tie-in is Scandinavian settlement there. This includes my father’s ancestors, for many generations in north-central Iowa.

The two traditional para-groupings of the parties tries to put them into Right-leaning (“Blue”) and Left-leaning (“Red”) big-tents. This doesn’t quite work in complex, multi-party coalitional systems, or in 21st-century Norway at all. The tendency is still there, though, and a lot of people demand simplified narratives.

Norway has not really indulged in long-run “*cordon-sanitaire*” politics by which a consensus forms to rigidly exclude one or more significant political parties, from *any* coalition negotiations and any hand in government at any level. The most right-wing party on the national level in Norway, the FrP, was in the government from 2013-2020. I compare this to the Germans, who would rather trigger major political crises and take the risk of being seen to trample on democratic principles than cooperate with the AfD (their version of the FrP, roughly), [such as in the Thuringia case, which I wrote in early 2020](#) (Post-383). Starting in 2021 there is talk that the “Red Party” might get the exclusion treatment, but talk is cheap when jockeying for position before the race really begins.

Having a handle on the bird's eye view, I'm going to record here some sketches of the parties individually, this time split into Blue (Center-Right and Right) and Red (Center-Left and points Left) terms.

I am an interested, outside observer. I am not able to read or understand Norwegian well, I have never been to Norway and do not even really know any Norwegians. These are weaknesses but still I think I have some insights into these things and have followed Norwegian politics occasionally and have strong familiarity with German politics.

Given how much Norwegians pay attention to US politics and make various judgements on it, it's only fair I do the same.

I think I have insights by merit of proxy experience in Germany and closer acquaintance with its politics, and in general European politics-following. In the late 2010s this included some study at the graduate level in the late 2010s, in which capacity I interacted on the margins with some well-connected people. I got research credit on a publication related to German politics (sadly, the author, a former professor of mine, misspelled my name in the Acknowledgements as printed!). Following European politics has been a hobby and this grows from that, as well as a specific interest in Norway since childhood.

First I'll go through the (arguably) Right-of-Center parties one by one, being careful to not mix up the concept of the political "center" with the major political party in Norway known as the Center Party.

The same treatment follows for the supposedly Left-of-center parties (in Norwegian terms those aligned with the "Red" coalition), for a total of about fifteen parties reviewed. Several of these are arguable or do not fit into the Left-Right model well. The groupings are in part for convenience's sake.

Parties supposedly of the CENTER-RIGHT and RIGHT in Norway

Norway's political parties (supposedly or arguably) of the Right:

First Tier

(1.) **Conservative** [*Høyre*, H], expected to take 35 to 48 seats in the new *Storting*.

Second Tier

(2.) **Progress** [*Fremskrittspartiet*, FrP], expected to take 15 to 25 seats in the new *Storting*.

Third Tier

(3.) **Christian Democratic** [*Kristelig Folkeparti*, KrF], to take 1 to 7 seats in the new *Storting*.

(4.) **The Liberal Party** [*Venstre*, V], to take 1 to 8 seats in the new *Storting*.

(5.) **Democrats in Norway** [party renamed in early 2021 to *Demokratene*, DEM; f.k.a.: *Demokratene i Norge*, DiN], , to take 0 to 7 seats in the new *Storting*.

Fourth Tier

(6.) **The Christians** (*Partiet de Kristne*, PDK), to take 0 seats in the new *Storting*.

(7.) **The Capitalists** (*Liberalistene*), to take 0 seats in the new *Storting*.

(8.) **The Alliance** (*Allianz*), to take 0 seats in the new *Storting*.

(Seat estimates are based on range of polling in 2021; summary at [PollofPolls.no](https://pollsofpolls.no).)

The CONSERVATIVE Party [*Høyre*, H]: centrist with a center-right tradition; generally aligned to a transatlantic consensus. A core plank of “the Establishment.”

This is Prime Minister Erna Solberg’s party. She became prime minister in 2013 after a lifetime of loyal affiliation with the party back to the 1980s and her youth. Her two terms as prime minister, and a possible third upcoming, are a major turning point for Norway at least in political-party terms, for Norway was dominated by the Labor Party (Ap) for several generations and a stable eight years under a Conservative Prime Minister is without precedent.

The party name, *Høyre*, in Norwegian means “Right.” Like a lot of Norway’s party names, the label is an anachronism. Norway’s mainline, big-tent, nominally conservative party followed a path not so different from the way Germany’s CDU, which now advertises itself as a party of the political center and disassociates from the Right. *Høyre*’s name ties it to its political tradition in the way my surname ties me to Scandinavia. I was born and raised (and for several generations) in the USA, not Scandinavia, so the name misses where I am even if it traces to where ancestors “were” or came from. It’s similar with Norway’s H party.

I don’t know when *Høyre* took to using the English name “the Conservative Party.” It must be quite a while ago. If all labels were dissolved and had to be chosen anew, I don’t think they’d use that label.

A common observation made since about 2016 is that Germany’s sometimes-so-called “far right” AfD is simply the CDU of circa 1990; the CDU itself drifted Left-ward and is now in the center. I think the same applies to the H party in Norway.

Relatedly, a low-hanging-fruit observation is that the figure, personality, career, and policy of **Erna Solberg** shouts out for comparison to Merkel of Germany. Norwegians often make this comparison, both for and against their prime minister. Solberg did one thing Merkel would never do, though: She has cooperated and co-governed for years with a party to her Right, in both in the 2013-17 and the 2017-21 terms of government, namely the Progress Party (FrP), on which more below.

Some Norwegian conservatives are unhappy with Solberg’s leadership. One recently [wrote](#):

“I do not claim that Erna Solberg is a Socialist agent who is destroying the Conservative Party from the inside. I only claim that it is a very credible conspiracy theory.”

(“[Hvorfor alle konservative gleder seg til å bli kvitt Erna Solberg](#)” [Why all conservatives are looking forward to getting rid of Erna Solberg], by Ole Asbjørn Ness, Nettavisen online political magazine.)

Among this op-ed author’s criticisms is the continued bloating of the public sector in Norway, i.e. government payrolls, still under Erna Solberg’s eight years. He says it has left Norway with almost as many public-sector workers as private-sector workers.

Norway is not an EU member, having rejected membership by a 52-48 vote in 1994 with 90% turnout, but in principle it could apply again, which *Høyre* supports. *Høyre* has always been an “establishment” party on the EU question, and was one of the clearest pro-EU-accession parties in the years of debate on the EU Question, and up to the early 1990s referendum campaign. “H” remained in favor of EU accession in the 2010s through all the turmoil and crises that hit the EU’s image at the time.

H is also reliably pro-NATO. If the Pentagon had the power to appoint some block of legislators from some existing party to Norway’s parliament, I’m thinking they would choose *Høyre*. On the other hand, NATO itself appointed Solberg’s predecessor, Jens Stoltenberg (of the Labor Party or Ap), as Secretary General of NATO after he left office, so NATO viewed as a political actor is happy with both of the two traditional big parties of Norway (H and Ap), both now embracing the transatlantic consensus.

Not all Norwegians are enthusiastic supporters of the elite transatlantic consensus, or some perceived follow-on effects from it. The Norwegian Right has been disgruntled with Solberg and she came under pressure from the FrP in 2019 and early 2020.

The FrP finally pulled out of the government in January 2020, in protest over a new and relaxed refugee policy which the FrP said was not in line with the spirit of the H-FrP cooperation deal, and serious enough to be a deal-breaker. The whole thing hurt *Høyre*, and H immediately lost support in the polls.

Such was the situation in the early weeks of 2020. January, February and into early March 2020 and it was the same, the Conservative Party (H) had arrived at one of its lowest ebbs.

And then — like magic! — in March 2020, the prime minister and her people enthusiastically pulled the Panic trigger on “Corona,” as a flu-virus panic of that year was called in many European countries (the label “Covid” only catching on in English-speaking countries) and turned ‘quisling,’ as it were, diving aboard the ascendant the global Flu Virus Panic of the moment.

There were early signs that Norway was one of many following the Swedish strategy of refusing to demagogue on a flu virus and resolutely staying open, a united-looking front. Most governments could not stand the pressure and flipped and flopped into Lockdown-ism for local whatever reasons, be it weakness or nerve, inability to resist mob-psychology, or deliberate power-grab.

Like a well-executed coup d’etat, everything changed as if overnight. Late March 2020 did not resemble the world of early March 2020 in political terms. This applies to Norway and most everywhere else.

We may ask why the government did it. “It” was under the guiding influence of the Conservative Party. I believe there is a political answer, not just for Norway but for most places. At some point, “Covid” and the decisions related to it — the cave-ins to Lockdown-ism, the refusal to change course, the bizarre demagoguery from people wishing to whip up terror over one flu virus even when it turned out to be in the normal severe-influenza range, the arbitrary-seeming power grabs uncharacteristic of liberal-democracies — *must* be analyzed politically. The people imposing the “lockdowns,” the endless rules, the goalpost-shifting, the Panic-spreading, all amounting to a series of hurdles to normal life, were political figures and therefore subject to political pressures, by instinct, temperament, and experience. They are inclined to weigh the costs and benefits to their own political position within their own systems. Panic passes, but political cost-benefit remains.

The Norwegian government under Solberg, by its extreme lockdown-ism, encouraged war-like hysteria, did its part to prop-up flu-virus hysteria across the entire world, and guaranteed a long period of disruptions and recession upon itself.

But we find something in Norway here which might be surprising. During the “Covid” Panic, the Conservatives in Norway (H), as ruling party, *regained all their lost popularity and more*. No wonder it seemed like such a good idea to dig in on Lockdownism!

H’s baseline was 25%. They polled a remarkably consistent 23-27% through almost most of the 2010s (after a major rise in the early 2010s at one point hitting 35%, in response to the various European financial crises and bailouts. H got 25% of total votes cast in 2017. Then, by early 2020, they were down below 20%, staying there from mid-January to mid-March 2020. The lowest one poll at this time pegged them at just 16%. This after the looser refugee policy went through and the fallout from it and whatever other set of reasons there were, the longer-term disgruntlement by some in the base with Solberg and a steady, continued drift to the economic-Left. In any case, *Høyre* was down and looked its weakest in many years. Then came March 2020. The “Panic Pandemic” period began. The Conservatives imposed a severe, “copycat” lockdown on the China model.

Like so many governments across the world, Solberg’s government soon discovered it had found something of a political genie in a bottle. Already by late March 2020, H was pushing 30% support. Frightened people flocked to the safety of the ruling party. *Høyre* consistently held at the 25%+ level for more than a year. Clearly the Flu-Virus Panic, lockdowns, the attitude of “we’re doing something!”-ism, and the general global media storm pushed a lot of marginals into the warm embrace of the ruling party, the ones who promise to keep them *safe* from flu viruses near and far, which, trust us on this, are very dangerous and you should be very scared, but find salvation in trusting the State.

Less clear is whether the magic can last till Septemebr 2021. Odds seem better than anyone would have guessed in January or February 2020 that H could give a strong showing.

Conservative Party (*Høyre*, H) seats won, 2017:

45 (of 169)

Expected to win in **2021:**

35 to 48

If *Høyre* lose seats, which even-money says they will, it won't be many, and if some kind of titanic scandal implicating H is to do it, time is fast running out. None should be surprised if they maintain about the same number at 45, but this is probably not enough to guarantee a Solberg third term because their erstwhile governing partner the FrP will lose a lot of seats.

In 2017, H were able to take charge of the government holding just 45 *Storting* seats (26.6% of all seats) via its coalition with the Progress Party (FrP) (27 seats) and others. But the FrP is sure to do worse than before and the bad blood between them in 2019, which broke through in early 2020, may not be easily forgotten.

The Conservatives may yet be able to lead a governing coalition again, *if* all the cards fall in their favor, and Erna Solberg is exactly the kind of politician skilled in operating in her environment who could pull it off.

If they win, it may be that the whole 2021-21 Virus Thing, and the demagoguery around it, let them limp over the finish line. Corona features in H's sloganeering in 2021, boasting that Norway supposedly has among the world's best Corona "stats."



It says:

“Norway ranks top in the Corona-rankings. / Høyre, We believe in Norway.”

But they also know they bear the moral responsibility of the effects of the Lockdowns. Here is one of *Høyre*’s campaign posters in 2021 tacitly covering the other side without admitting fault on Lockdownism:



The woman in black is Erna Solberg, certainly one of the more overweight world-leaders. Given how well she has done in politics, it gives the lie to the idea that a woman must look a certain way to go far in public life.

The poster says: “*Erna will speed things up in Norway again.*” The accompanying commentary Høyre put out (July 20) makes it clear this is about the Lockdowns, for they boast about how they have re-opened economy and Erna Solberg is best to “speed up” the Norwegian economy.

The lockdown year of 2020 was Norway’s sharpest recession since 1945, and in peacetime the worst since the 1930s global economic depression. The whole 2020-21 disruption amounts to

was around twice as bad as the 2008-09 recession in measurable terms and probably many more times worse in non-quantifiable terms.

This “Erna will speed things up” messaging must be an attempt to cover the anti-Lockdown political flank. There is a hard core of anti-Lockdown people who will refuse to vote for any of those responsible for the Panic and the unprecedented Flu Virus Lockdowns, and the major losses to civil liberties which have followed. Some of these can be peeled off from the hardline anti-Lockdown side with a plausible-seeming, evergreen promise of a return to normalcy (– *After just this one more round of Flu Virus Fighting! We promise this time*).

Here are some excerpts from *Høyre*’s 2017 party platform from long before Flu Virus Politics and which give their public-facing rhetoric on the major policy questions. They had, by this time, begun using the slogan “We believe in Norway,” or just “Believe in Norway”:



Believe in Norway

Høyre's Parliamentary
Election Manifesto for
2017–2021





We see the influence on Høyre by its rival to the Right, the FrP, in some of the wording, but nowhere more than on the top-line “strict immigration policy” phrasing, the promises to deport illegals and on no tolerance for fraudulent asylum-seekers.

2

STRICT IMMIGRATION POLICY, GOOD INTEGRATION

Høyre seeks to have a strict, fair and predictable asylum policy in keeping with international conventions and in cooperation with other countries.

Europe is experiencing a historically large influx of refugees and migrants. The migration is international, and can only be managed through extensive cooperation between many countries. Høyre wants to strengthen international cooperation to secure Europe's common external border, ensure a fair distribution of refugees in need of protection, and prevent vulnerable groups from becoming refugees.

Norway has an obligation to help people in need and provide protection from persecution. The asylum institution is a critical means of providing protection to people at genuine risk. To prevent misuse of asylum, strict but fair practices are necessary. This implies a consistent policy that will result in fewer groundless asylum seekers coming to Norway, and that those who are granted asylum will have their applications processed rapidly. The potential to delay repatriation after rejection of an asylum application must be restricted.

HØYRE WILL:

- › Pursue a strict, fair and predictable refugee and asylum policy that limits groundless asylum applications to Norway;
- › Comply with the international conventions to which Norway is bound regarding reception of asylum seekers.
- › Use Norwegian aid and emergency assistance to alleviate the situation in refugees' and asylum seekers' home countries and neighbouring regions.
- › Make provisions so that highly qualified labour, including from countries outside the EEA, can be employed in Norway.
- › Norway will give refugee status to individuals that satisfy the requirements of the UN Refugee Convention, and give other asylum seekers the right to subsidiary protection.

- › Expand cooperation with other European countries to prevent inhumane escape routes and irregular migration, and to fight human smuggling.
- › Support sustainable distribution of asylum seekers to Europe via the Dublin Regulation.
- › Ensure the quick return of groundless asylum seekers and persons who are staying illegally in Norway to their country of origin.
- › Increase the level of expertise on the LGBTQ community throughout all asylum stages and ensure their safety while staying in asylum reception centres;
- › Introduce restrictions in the Immigration Act to make it less appealing to send unaccompanied minors without a need for protection to seek asylum in Norway.
- › Introduce restrictions in regulations regarding family reunification.
- › Adjust the processing capacity of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and police to correspond to the immigrant arrival figures to ensure the shortest possible waiting time.
- › Put in place effective methods of establishing the age and identity of immigrants and ensure effective enforcement of the requirement in the Immigration Act that asylum seekers help to clarify their own identity.
- › Respond to countries that refuse to repatriate their own citizens by reassessing Norwegian development assistance to these countries.
- › Consider introducing a period of limitation in citizenship cases.
- › Strengthen efforts to prevent children from disappearing from reception centres.

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H wrote this platform in 2017, a year after the subsiding of the political shock that was the “Merkel Migration.” In late August and September 2015, out of nowhere and unilaterally (without consulting her own government ministers or advisers, Chancellor Merkel of Germany declared an open entry policy for all would-be migrants from the Mideast and Africa, all would be let in and allowed to stay and given lavish support so long as they were willing to claim they were refugees. Chancellor Merkel further dug in against early critics and said explicitly there were would be *Keine Obergrenze* (no upper-limit) on the number of migrants she would take in. She threatened those who tried to stop the migrants and then began vowing to force other European governments to host some of migrants, quickly becoming unmanageable for Germany. It’s unclear what she was thinking.

The Merkel Wave of migrants broke all the records up to that time and the whole thing triggered political earthquakes all over, possibly including the UK (the Brexit referendum campaign, 2015-16) and even the US (Merkel Migration Mania kicked off as the Republican primary campaign season were getting going, eventually won by Trump, who often pointed to the Merkel migration as the worst immigration policy in the world), and it certainly also affected Norway, whose attractive social-benefits system ended up netting them lots of the Merkel Wave migrants.

In Norway, Høyre had just come off co-ruling for four years with the FrP, whose voices were united in strong opposition to the Merkel Wave and its implications for Europe and favored the Orban Wing of European politics which demanded a secure external border and deportation of those illegally entering, no mass-exceptions for those who claim to be refugees from thousands of miles away. Norway’s *Høyre* Party knew well it had to rhetorically overlap with its governing partner if it wanted to keep a stable majority, but also to shore up its own vote-totals and prevent too many potential H voters going over to the FrP. In other words, the FrP functioned exactly as a political party is supposed to, influencing events and policy by the government.

Norway ended up with around 75,000 net-added migrants from arrivals in Europe over the eight months of the Merkel Migrant Wave, between its start (by fiat in the end of August 2015) and the negotiated end to the migrant flow (via large payoffs/bribes to Turkey in spring 2016). Seventy-five thousand is a big number for a low-population country, in relative terms comparable to a one-time migration into the USA of five million (of whom nearly four million

are young men), entering extra-legally, claiming to be refugees, being waved in under pressure from a larger power abroad to accept them and distribute them around the USA.

Where are the Merkel Migrants now? Some were sent back or otherwise left. A lot have ended up still there, five years later. As for Solberg she oversaw the influx and declined to side with the bloc of countries saying ‘No.’ Every now and then one of the Merkel Wave Migrants in Norway is arrested for crime, such as a double-murder in Trondheim in 2018, in a country whose 4 million-strong ethnic-Norwegian population in aggregate commits around twenty homicides a year.

In retrospect, that “Merkel surge” was not exactly the *Götterdämmerung* for Europe that an alarming straight-line extrapolation implied, a nightmarish vision was of some kind of never-abating *Völkerwanderung* from Africa and the Mideast, one marked perhaps by scenes of plunder and destruction. Norway avoided most of the worst of it.

(In Cologne in the New Year’s overnight of 2015-16, gangs of males then-recently arrived from the Mideast and Africa, claiming to be refugees and processed as asylum-seekers per the Merkel edict, moved throughout the downtown area sexually assaulting hundreds of women who were out to ring in the new year and were unable to defend themselves from the gangs of migrants. The footage and horror stories of these savage attacks turned many-a fence-sitter against the Merkel Migration project and contributed to the surging of the AfD, a challenger to Merkel’s Right whose platform of the moment was more-or-less two-planked: “Secure the border against migrants and deport those who’ve arrived illegally.”)

(Rumor of a similar attack to the atrocity at Cologne, by a locally known group of aggressive asylum-seekers who had been divvied out to the city of Chemnitz to care for, in which the alleged attackers knife-attacked three local men who intervened, killing one and hospitalizing two, triggered a major protests in August 2018. The protest escalated and culminated in what was described as an anti-foreign riot in broad daylight. The protest was a total success in that it took over the city for a time. Reports spoke of mobs finding and chasing nonwhite foreigners out of town, telling them in English to never return to Chemnitz. I was in Chemnitz in 2007. I remember a sleepy eastern town peopled by their equivalent of Rust Belt people or Rednecks,

few if any visible foreigners, and a drab town square with a leftover statue of Karl Marx's head. By 2018 there were apparently migrant knife-gangs active, and local toughs willing to fight them. Low-level ethnic hostility now seems to define many more areas of Germany. Norway's Right, especially in the form of the FrP, has seen this in other countries and has semi-successfully mounted a political policy of limiting the number of migrants.)

The unlimited migration policy became a PR nightmare for Merkel, formerly among Europe's most popular leaders, and was definitely a warning-signal to "Norway's Merkel," Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Høyre. Scenes lifted from nightmarish dystopian fiction seeming to symbolize Europe's downfall playing out in graphic terms can be a powerful motivator. Deportations of fraudulent asylum-seekers became normalized in Norway.

But the 2015-16 wave was a temporary turbocharging of an ongoing process. It ran for a time before they turned off the spigot via lavish payoffs to Turkey and a closed external EU border (which they could have done from the start...). It was exactly this "ongoing process," back in its early stages, which gave rise to H's rival to the Right, the FrP, whose unlikely rise to near the top, at times seeming to possibly displace *Høyre*, is probably the most important story of the past generation in Norwegian politics and within the party-system.

But *Høyre* maintains its prestige, for one thing for being the party of the Prime Minister, among the only really visible figures to those least interested in politics.

One of its political posters in 2021 is simple a photo of PM Erna Solberg with the words: "Erna is the most trusted":



The slogan is a simple appeal to Consensus and even to Authority. (The prerogative of the ruling party?). You'll also see the big center-left party (Labor Party, Ap) do this. Other parties will usually make their pitches using issues/ideas. Certainly that includes the second-tier party the FrP.

The **PROGRESS Party** [*Fremskrittspartiet*, FrP]: National-populist, immigration restrictionist. Against EU accession but pro-NATO. For a form of soft-nationalism. Laissez-faire-leaning in economics. Pro-Oil (i.e. North Sea drilling). Now positioning itself as against costly and “symbolic” green initiatives.

The FrP’s signature issue was always immigration restriction and a major tightening-up of the asylum system, if not closing it down entirely. In Norway there is hardly a practical difference between the Immigration and Asylum debates. Operating a system to grant asylum to persecuted people in distant places ended up becoming a part of Norwegian political culture in the late 20th century and no party was able to fully end it even as it often became unpopular. In the most general terms, Norwegians for thirty years have known the FrP as the most vigorous and consistent voice in Norwegian politics for drastically tightening up the long-abused asylum system, and much of the time a vote for the FrP was a vote with that specifically in mind.

Its influence has been felt. By the 2010s, even the centrist or center-left state bureaucracy now thoroughly investigates asylum claims and has a policy now of proactively deporting those which it finds committed fraud in their asylum applications. The FrP’s traditional position, at least tacitly but generally fairly openly, is that most of those processed through the Asylum system are not really legitimate refugees, and anyway who defines the meaning of Refugee/Asylum?

The FrP in the late 2010s was urging resistance to backsliding on immigration/asylum reform by its the Høyre Party, its senior partner in government. The argument led to a split in early 2020, the repercussions of which were buried over with layers of political sand by a subsequent flu-virus panic.

A headline-grabbing case in 2021 was about one group of fraudulent, now-deported asylum-claimants from the Mideast. They had brought an underage son. For whatever reason it took the government (of which the FrP co-leads!) years to figure out that this particular grouplet’s claim was fraudulent and to finally physically deport them. By that time the son, the Mustafa, had gone through years of school and befriended other Mideast-origin migrants in greater Oslo. He is now

19. His case became a small *cause celebre* in Norway for some on the political spectrum who demanded he be allowed to stay. Courts have now signaled that “Mustafa” can stay, despite the deportation of every one of his purported relatives for fraud — a one-off version of the USA’s “DACA” in spirit.

This “Norwegian DACA” story shows that today’s Norway is somewhat more serious about actively deporting illegal migrants, in some cases, than is the USA. In the USA almost no non-violent-criminal migrants ever seem to get deported. This probably comes down to the influence of the FrP’s influence on Norwegian politics, both before it entered government (1990s, 2000s) and during its time in government (2010s). The major parties could not simply ignore the calls for major belt-tightening of a flabby Asylum/immigration system given the strong vote totals the FrP was getting.

Depending on how one defines the Right, the FrP has arguably been the banner-carrier for Norway’s Right for a generation now, with *Høyre* in the center or center-right.

Any basic political analysis will tell the *Høyre* party bosses that it and the FrP share much of the same potential voter pool, which means “ignore the FrP’s issues at their peril.” Rational actors in theory respond to such pressures, and H generally has.

But the influence has worked both ways. In the past few years even the FrP has been seen as drifting towards the center and softening its line. Ironic: If the FrP took over the banner of the Right political tradition in Norway because of H’s own drift (towards a form of reliable transatlantic consensus-centrism, which itself was under a steady Left-ward drift in many ways), it is ironic that the the FrP itself may have trod the same path in the 2010s, just a few steps fewer and with much more negative baggage attached to itself by years of generally hostile media coverage. A lot depends on luck and on the personalities of individuals involved with how these things work.

The FrP’s considerable electoral successes probably kept the Conservatives (H) from drifting even further Left-ward still, and kept Norway anchored in a place the beleaguered Swedish Right no doubt envies very much, to a noticeably more conservative general political line than Sweden.

Critics say Sweden started to go off the rails in the late 20th century in a way Norway looked poised to do but never quite did.

The party's name, *Fremskritt*, means “[make] progress” or “[make] advance[s],” and it has always used the English name The Progress Party. This name seems a particularly strange mismatch with what the party *is*, which is not that which we call progressive. Using the acronyms for the parties, as Norwegians usually do, helps separate parties from concepts, and the FrP is not the only party with a name-ideology mismatch.

The FrP's first breakthrough was in 1989, before which it was a minor and negligible party. Something was “in the air” in the late 1980s, the full story of which has never properly been told, I think, because everything was inundated with news of the anti-communist protests which brought down Warsaw Pact regimes. Those protests themselves were a part of something bigger, something which influenced thinking in both East and West and which both fed upon each other. A nationalistic-patriotic mini-wave and moderate political flux cycle was going on, which was enough to crack the more brittle regimes of the East but only caused ripples in the West. This is a complicated subject but a phenomenon observed in many countries and now, thirty-plus years on, long forgotten, but the sudden breakthrough of the FrP is the Norwegian datum to support the general theory.

The 1989 election in Norway was held in early September, one week after the first of the church-organized mass anti-government protests began in Leipzig, East Germany, the first large-scale and open defiance against the East Berlin regime since 1953, protests which grew larger each week until the wall was breached in the November 8/9 overnight. The FrP's boat, fresh in the water, got lifted on the rising tide of the moment.

The 1989 wave was enough to topple the sclerotic Soviet-sphere regimes (which looks inevitable in hindsight once Gorbachev signaled there would be “no Tienanmens” in Europe). It was not enough to do anything comparable in the West, especially once the East's unraveling became so clear, a development which majorly boosted the prestige of the NATO bloc and all the US-backed regimes of the West, including Norway, and therefore a considerable prestige boost to the

centrist, “system” parties. Still, 1989 was a good enough jumping-start that the FrP did not fade away.

The surprise is not that a party like the FrP broke through, but that it never went away. Many such parties or movements came up only to disappear. Whatever the reason, the FrP stuck around and even grew to become a mainstay of the Right in Norway by the 2000s and 2010s, which is the position Norwegians are now accustomed to seeing it.

The FrP demonstrated its real staying power in the 1997 *Storting* election, and it has gotten respectable shares of the vote in every election since, holding at least 15% of seats in the national parliament in every session since 1997, and its peak holding 25% of seats, which led to the big meta-story of the 2010s in Norwegian politics: The FrP entering government in 2013, where it stayed more than six years until the break in early 2020 over immigration policy.

Some will say that the bigger “political” story in Norway in the 2010s was not the FrP entering government but an event in summer 2011 in which a politically motivated attacker targeted the longtime ruling party (Labor Party, Ap)’s summer camp for its party elite’s teenage children, killing dozens. They will also say that the terrorist had ties to the FrP. This was true in years past, but at least one quarter of all politically active Norwegians had “ties to the FrP” at some point. The attacker had drifted into eccentric beliefs and left the FrP behind long before the attack and convinced himself political violence was the only way to make change. The very purpose of politics/elections, done fairly and with perceived legitimacy, is to prevent bloodshed, as a peaceful proxy for war, so the attacker was no longer engaged in politics at all when he chose to plan and carry out the attack.

Another clue to Norway’s political culture in the 2000s/2010s era was Norway’s reaction to the attack in political terms. Norway’s entire mainstream political spectrum in 2011 resolved to *not* politicize the attack because doing so risked only making things worse. This seems a mark of great maturity, for trying to “politicize” the attack, presumably by blaming the FrP and perhaps the entire Norwegian Right in all its many forms, would effectively mean calling some enormous portion of the nation — 20%, 30%, even 40%? of the entire population — potential terrorists, enemies to be suppressed (that sounds familiar with the USA at times in 2021...).

Political figures are in theory representatives of the people and if they declare their own people The Enemy they are on a path towards a dark place indeed. The attacker had in younger years been involved in some way with the FrP but the attack had nothing to do with the party or anyone in it. If an Islamist terror attack were to come and the attacker had had ties to Norway's Ap in some way, as most Muslims traditionally have had in Norway, would the Ap be blamed for the attack and declared an enemy of the state? The neutral line on the 2011 attack was a practical one.

The FrP of the 1990s and 2000s was a “protest party.” In the early 2010s it entered the mainstream in earnest and actually governed with H. They renewed the bond in 2017 (but by then needed the backing of a third party to make a majority).

The H-FrP union became strained in the late 2010s, came near snapping in 2019, and then *did* snap in January 2020. Softliners in *Høyre*, the prime minister's party, had taken a firm stand for a new softline refugee policy, which was cited as the reason for the split. At first it hurt H very much, until the *deus ex machina* of a flu-panic swooped down to the rescue.

The FrP had bigger problems, and something of an identity-crisis of its own (more on this in a section below), and the party got a new leader in spring 2021 is Sylvi Listhaug and she says the goal in this election season is to form a new government with *Høyre*.

Reporting in the agenda-setting *Aftenposten* newspaper suggests FrP core members are demoralized over recent reverses, sagging support, the longer-term failure to break through and permanently displace *Høyre* itself as the major party of the Right and natural leader of the government — a tough task, but which had looked possible in the FrP's peak days of the 2000s and into the early 2010s. Many FrP'ers, it is said, have given up on governing, wanting instead to regroup for the 2025 election when they hope for a new breakthrough. It might sound like a strange stance for a political party to consciously want to be in opposition, but it can happen in multi-party parliamentary systems.

The electoral peak for the FrP at the national level was in 2009, when they took 41 (of 169) seats, 24% of the *Storting* seats. This was during a dramatic global recession, the follow-on effects of which gave Europe problems for years. Such a large seat total to a party to the Right of

Høyre made the electoral math problematic for the “blue” side (i.e. Center, Center-Right, and Right). *Høyre* itself only took 30 seats (18% of seats) in 2009, and the Labor Party (Ap) again led the government.

Nothing succeeds like success. The FrP’s strong performance in 2009 set the stage for its 2013 entry into the government. Nothing succeeds like success, which looked to be Norway’s most-“right wing” government in living memory.

Twelve years after the 2008-09 global recession came an ever bigger, far more bizarre, and artificial recession, imposed on countries by their own governments in many cases, because of panic over a flu virus. What makes the latter recession (2020-21) so strange from a political-party-analysis perspective is that for once dissident parties did *not* gain from this major recession. All around the world, establishment parties gained from it. The whole thing probably hurt the FrP vis-a-vis *Høyre* during and after the Covid Flu-Virus Panic (and the never-ending response to placate people who cannot let go of terror over one flu virus and who willingly consume and indulge in flu-terror-propaganda).

Things don’t look good for the FrP now in part because of internal problems and in part because they lost out when politics had something of a “reset” in March 2020 over the flu-virus panic. But political parties always try new things to gain marginal votes and the FrP has tried to maneuver into a space to scoop up voters of people against the ascendant Green politics and the many “symbolic” measures taken by the government and demanded in unison by the parties of the Left especially. This is a shift in the FrP’s rhetoric from some years ago.

Another of of the party’s big issues in 2021 specifically a campaign-promise to work to remove every road toll from Norway. This cause is proof that minor, single-issue parties can have effects if they do scoop up protest-votes even without taking seats, for the FrP lifted the entire Remove All Tolls thing from [a minor, single-issue party active in the 2010s](#). The FrP proposes to use some of the extra oil wealth (currently in a “lockbox”) to make up the budget shortfall caused by lower toll revenues, meaning also no new taxes. This is now one of the FrP’s signature issues and headlines their sloganeering (it appears in large text on the back of their main campaign bus), in addition to a toned-down version of their usual, characteristic holding of the

immigration-restrictionist banner, even if somewhat more loosely than before, and their call for belt-tightening of the (once-bloated, still-flabby) asylum system.

Progress Party (FrP) seats won, 2017:

27 (of 169)

Expected to win in **2021:**

15 to 25

It looks certain that the FrP will lose seats and that they are now definitely a second-tier party in Norwegian politics. On the other hand, if the FrP performs at the top end of its possible range, they could still take 15% of seats, and in this case they can potentially squeak over the finish line and join a “Høyre – Center Party – FrP,” government, which one of their leading figures has recently (July 29) [explicitly stated is the goal](#).

Even if *Høyre* leads the next government, it is not clear the FrP will be back with them this time, for their negotiating position if they are around ten seats “lighter” is necessarily weaker and it would most likely depend on Center Party (Sp) support.

While the FrP will not be totally irrelevant, the momentum has clearly slipped from their grasp. Even if they *do* end up back in government, their influence will probably be at its lowest in many years.

Here is the FrP’s campaign bus (RV) with new party leader **Sylvi Listhaug** at center. She has been touring Norway campaigning in this RV, which they have decorated with slogans.



The two visible slogans on the bus say:

“Immigrants must learn Norwegian and participate in society.” “Yes to pensions and no to cuts.”

At the front of the bus, partly visible, are two other slogans which seem to be against vigorous climate-change policy and something about diesel and gasoline-powered cars.

The question of whether to institute a top-down ban traditional “emission” cars was current in Norwegian politics in the 2010s, and the pro-Ban side quickly got the upper hand, shifting the question from “whether” to “when.” The current target is 2025, approaching fast. The FrP was once for banning diesel cars but has shifted to a stance against mandates. New FrP party leader Sylvi Listhaug has slammed the mandate to sell only zero-emission cars in Norway starting Jan. 1, 2025, which some of her own party had pushed for in the mid-2010s. The party has now shifted to opposing “symbolic” climate measures which they say make people’s lives harder with little gained except symbolic vale.

Another FrP slogan in 2021 makes a characteristic pitch to romantic-nationalist-type imagery without the nuisance of any actual policy proposals even in slogan form:



It says: “We must have clean seas.” The FrP logo is the only other thing cluttering the imagery of clean seas and snow-capped mountains. The logo is a red apple and symbols suggestive of the letters F, r, and P inside.

This poster is clearly an appeal to romantic nationalism characteristic of the FrP’s position within the Norwegian political spectrum. There are no concrete ideas, just imagery, and some would read into “clean seas” as a metaphor for a “clean country,” without shiftless, entitled, and aggressive asylum-seekers outnumbering Norwegians in some places.

As for the concrete policy goal of clean seas, the FrP supports the oil industry and also opposes wind energy (a slogan painted near the back of their campaign bus says: “Yes to hydropower, No to wind-power.”)

Here is the new party leader, Sylvi Listhaug with her campaign bus, standing in front of a picture of herself:



The slogan on the back of the bus I think translates as:

“Sylvi is on the road to take action against tolls”

This is in reference the FrP’s proposal to eliminate every road toll in Norway by using oil-wealth money, a large portion of which is under lock and key by long-running government policy.

In principle, as a major-party leader Sylvi Listhaug is a future prime minister candidate, though clearly not in 2021. As the new face of the party, her own political future may depend on the result in September.

The **CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC Party** [*Kristelig Folkeparti*, KrF]: A (traditionally) moderate-conservative party with traditionalist-Christian overtones. Although the KrF was guided away from the political Right about a generation ago, it still appeals to some Right sensibilities for votes.

In general the KrF less relevant than it was before, and far fewer on the traditional Christian-Right (Lutheran-Right) vote for it now.

Like a lot of Europe's small parties, the KrF has effectively positioned itself as a "kingmaker" and is willing to work with any of the big parties — though for a time it said it ruled out working with the FrP, but eventually gave up on this stance. In cases where neither of the two traditional big parties (H and Ap) have a majority, the KrF's votes in the *Storting* are decisive and its negotiating position is strong.

Because of the way coalition politics works, especially in Norway, the minor-party KrF has been even able to supply the prime minister. The KrF party leader was prime minister for four-fifths of the period Oct. 1997 to Oct. 2005.

The man from this party who served as Prime Minister of Norway for six-and-a-half years was **Kjell Magne Bondevik** (b.1947), an ordained Lutheran pastor, but one who regards himself as "Sixty-Eighter" (in US terms, a Sixties/Seventies Radical). A strange thing to say for a man heading a party which in principle embraces the Christian Democrat political heritage and identity!

The party's origins are with a 20th-century a Lutheran-Right, something which also once existed in the USA and in its time was the subject of some commentary. The KrF's party-base was basically moderate-to-conservative Christians wishing to maintain ties to the Christian tradition and who thought the Christian tradition was under threat or negative pressure by ongoing developments, and alarmed enough by such developments to break with other parties and field their own. The KrF *as a political-actor* the 2010s and 2020s (and probably in the 2000s and even 1990s) was no longer understandable in these terms.

The KrF has drifted steadily into the political "center" on a generally parallel track to *Høyre*; By today the KrF seems almost of the Left. From Lutheran-Right to Lutheran-Left? Yet its actual voters, the ones who keep the ship in the water (for no party exists without a voter-base) are still more conservative-oriented than the party itself. This uneasy balance persists, but may well finally break if the KrF fails to take seats in 2021.

I sense a parallel here to the drift of the ELCA in the USA, a story with which I am familiar from experience. The ELCA story and the KrF story closely parallel each other, so I will indulge a few paragraphs onto a tangent, keeping in mind that everything I say about the ELCA I expect parallels, roughly in content and chronology, with what was going on with the KrF.

The ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) was basically a centrist organization circa 1990, with groups I'd call theological-political moderate-conservatives, moderates, liberals, and a small post-Christian element. (The last group effectively Unitarian-Universalists in everything but name.) This entire spectrum was present in the ELCA when the 1990s opened. Missing were hardline conservatives, as I cannot imagine many were ever in the ELCA or its immediate ancestor church-bodies. You'd find some such (strong conservative) Lutherans in other Lutheran church-bodies like the LCMS or WELS, or as non-aligned free churches. But except for the missing hardline-conservatives, the ELCA really was a big-tent, a primary successor to a lot of the strains of US Lutheranism going back to the colonial era and up to the end of the big waves of immigration from Northern and Central Europe in the 1910s or so, including Norway.

By the mid-2000s, a fair number of the moderate-conservatives and moderates were gone from the ELCA, leaving on principle. They saw a slow usurpation of the organization, which was

supposed to be a neutral church body, by the liberals and even by the post-Christians. Besides the liberals and the post-Christian element who seemed to be winning the day, many who stuck who were either less ambitious, less willing to make life-changes stuck around, and many were too attached by social ties to a specific congregation, and the people in it, to leave. And so so the ELCA slumbered on, and still does today. Eventually the ELCA as an entity became something almost identifiable as of the political-Left outright, pretty much unmoored from the big-tent position of its origin and its own status circa 1990.

I noticed this change as an early adolescent. The feel of the ELCA church my family belonged to changed considerably between the early-mid 1990s (my early childhood) and the early 2000s or so. Later on I realized this was a local example of a general trend. By the end of the 2000s, everyone could see it. There was no more ability to deny or ignore it. Some were for, some were against, some were indifferent, but all were aware.

By some point in the 2000s, and unmistakably so by the 2010s, the ELCA had become an institution seemingly dedicated primarily to social justice causes with some remnant talk of Christianity tacked on as an afterthought. This did not apply to all or even most of its members, congregations, pastors or lay-leaders, but it definitely applied to the central leadership, agenda-setters, and core-activists.

The ELCA's individual congregations and members may still today (in the early 2020s) have plenty of moderates — especially among the elderly, those 'grandfathered' in, as it were, and unable or unwilling to leave — but the ELCA as an institution is now *unmistakably* of the Left. The moderates who remain kind of know this and have made peace with it. I cringe when I see almost anything the ELCA central command puts out, and am even ashamed to be associated with it, but emotional ties, family ties, and ties ongoing by long experience (inertia?) are enough to keep many around, even if discouraged and unenthusiastic.

I suspect this basic outline, of this ELCA's political-theological trajectory, applies to the KrF in Norwegian politics. The ELCA is a US church body and not a political party. But it shares a lot with Norway's KrF, which is a political party. Both are institutions of Christian origin and specifically of the Lutheran tradition, existing in wealthy, modern or postmodern, and

increasingly post-industrial, nations. Both in theory were centered on a group that sought to uphold the Lutheran-Protestant-Christian tradition in a hostile-seeming, secularizing world, in which some influential players seemed to want to elevate 'state' far over 'church.' The parallel even goes further than politics: The KrF is Norwegian; the ELCA has lots of aggregate Scandinavian ancestry among its membership, with Norwegian especially strong (and the non-Norwegian majority largely of similar kindred peoples of Northern and Central Europe).

This makes me wonder. If the ELCA *were* a political party, and had to run as a party in popular-vote-based elections within a proportional-representation system like Norway's, if the ELCA were dependent on votes, on a voter-base, and on an activist base, would it have remained more moderate? Even if still drifting Left-ward (towards a post-Christian position), along with the rest of the churches, I can only suspect so.

All the news lately is that the KrF remains committed to its own Left-ward move which happened primarily in the 1990s and was knotted up in the 2000s.

To return to the analogy with the ELCA, I notice the ELCA's declining appeal in the USA parallels in time the KrF's vote-share decline in Norway. The ELCA, for one, just doesn't understand that its natural constituency tend to be moderates and originally even many conservatives were on board; the ELCA doesn't realize playing hard to the Left does them few favors, discourages their own people and wins few kudos from their enemies. The KrF has the same dilemma and barely got past the 4%-of-the-vote threshold in 2017 in Norway.

Opinion polls show it will be lucky to stay above 4% in 2021. This means the KrF could get nearly wiped out of the *Storting*. It will be close.

Party support remains strong enough in the KrF's traditional strongholds that it is almost guaranteed to get at least one seat directly elected — from Rogaland in the southwest, the heart of [the "Norwegian Bible Belt."](#) The regions Aus-Agder and Vest-Agder would also elect KrF representatives if their populations were higher and they had more seats allotted. In each of these electoral regions (Rogaland, Aus-Agder and Vest-Agder), the KrF traditionally took impressive

vote-shares, often comfortably in the 20%+ range, but this time will do well to hold 10% in its best (erstwhile) strongholds.

Even with snagging a direct seat or possibly two, the KrF will have only around 1% of *Storting* seats. In the old days, the KrF generally always held at least 10% of seats, and in good years 15%, representing a substantial pressure group on the main party of the Right, *Høyre*. The KrF's strong showings anchored *Høyre* to the traditional Right and a moderately Christian-conservative stance, in principle making the KrF a blocking force against too-strong drift to the Left. The KrF had consistently strong showings between the 1950s and 1990s, and did very well as late as the 2001 election, perhaps to be its last really strong showing when it could claim to be a second-tier party rather than the third-tier party it knos is.

Make of this what you will: One survey showed 62% of the KrF's voters were women.

The long story short is that the KrF faces long-term relevancy problems. The problem can be concealed, and the blow softened (or accelerated), by the whims of a small number of their marginal voters either defecting or staying home. The KrF falling below the 4%-hurdle nearly wipes them out and it must be the source of much apprehension at party-HQ this year.

The KrF's messaging in 2021 is heavily family-oriented, so much so that a foreigner with zero knowledge of Norwegian politics, upon encountering party promotional material, might be surprised to learn the KrF is a political party at all, rather than some kind of child-care agency.

A conservative rival for the "Christian Vote" faces the problems of setting itself up and getting traction, but in time perhaps one will emerge on the scene. Because a key feature of these kinds of systems is that new parties can and do emerge. As for now, the possible Christian-Right challenger to displace the KrF is called the *Partiet De Kristne* (Party of Christians, PDK) and while it (the PDK) will take no seats in 2021, it represents at least a rhetorical pressure on the KrF from the (Christian-)Right.

Christian Democrats [KrF] seats won, 2017:

8 (of 169)

Expected to win in **2021:**

1 to 7

For the KrF to have *any* real influence, they have to perform at the top of their current polling range, which is now 2.5% to 4%.

All past experience suggests the KrF is willing to cooperate with either a consensus-establishment Labor (Ap) or a Conservative (H)-led government, though cooperation with Ap would be contingent, probably, on excluding the redistributionist “Red” [*Rødt*] Party.

A campaign poster for the KrF in 2021 characteristic of their political messaging:



It says: "KrF in government: Increased child-benefits!"

Another campaign poster:



This one says: “Yes to cash-benefits [for families with children]. Families know best!”

And a third, all three being a representative sample of their sloganeering and the imagery they choose to use to elicit interest and votes:



This one is more subtle than the others. It says: “It is clear we must keep Sunday as a different kind of day!”

There is a triple-message here from the KrF sloganeers:

(1) The right-wing FrP (which is a potential rival for the KrF’s voter-pool, and long a likely destination for ex-KrF voters who want an alternative of the Right), proposes a change in the law to allow shopping on Sunday, making Sunday “just another day.” This would be a breach with

Norwegian tradition, beloved by many, by which most stores are entirely closed on Sundays. The message is: If you support keeping Sunday a Rest Day, vote KrF and not FrP.

(2) Sunday is the Christian day of worship and rest, and therefore is “a different kind of day.”
The message: Loyal Christians who observe the Sabbath as a rest day (should) vote KrF.

(3) If things stay closed on Sundays, families *will* spend more time with each other (implied in the image used), and given that the KrF is the most pro-family party there is, you’d better vote KrF to make sure we keep it that way.

The KrF’s opposition to the Shopping on Sunday proposal is therefore attacking the FrP from the Right, we might say. In Norway the tradition of closing on Sundays is at least something of the Right in that it has always been done that way, is a tradition. (Personally I like the idea of no shopping on Sunday and what it implies about the society’s goals and purpose. I’m surprised to hear that Norway still keeps up the tradition of having all stores closed on Sundays and all legal holidays. Germany also long had this tradition, and elements of it are with us in US culture in observable if much-diluted form.)

One can easily get lost in the pro-family sloganeering and family imagery. A strong hint at the KrF's positioning on the Left, now a kind of Christian-Left (these labels can bog one down) is this one:



This is a complicated political poster from KrF with several things going on. The words say:

A life of faith cannot be described on paper. Now more converts will be able to tell their story face to face.

A description adds this:

It is still dangerous to be a believer in many parts of the world. The KrF has made sure that all asylum-converts get to meet a caseworker face to face.

This framing appeals to the KrF's traditional voter base via an (implied) vigorous defense of the Christian faith (implied: Muslim-controlled regions, and other non-Christian governments, often persecute Christians). But ties that to the idea of asylum-seekers resettled in Norway proper, and to the empowerment of social workers, and fits in more with some kind of White Man's Burden of the Left (the 21st Century White Man's Burden). Even if framed in terms of fighting for Christians, the implication here positions the KrF away from the populist-Right.

This last poster, with the African asylum-seeker Christian-convert resettled in Norway, is one of only two non-family-related political posters I found released in recent months by the KrF. The other non-family one wishes the Queen a happy birthday. All others had some kind of direct family pitch, often showing parents with small children, sometimes grandparents, and always family-related slogans.

The **LIBERAL Party** [*Venstre*, V]: A small party, “V” positions itself as centrist while advocating a set of boutique issues not emphasized by other, comparable parties, making it rather lack a unifying or consistent ideology.

Venstre signals that it will be a force-multiplier for the center-right *Høyre* (Conservatives, or H).

Given such a position within Norway’s political spectrum today, it is ironic that the party’s name, *Venstre*, means “Left” in Norwegian. The English name it picked up along the way, “Liberal,” is unhelpful given that word’s various meanings. Really both V and H are centrist. If we used three categories — Left, Center, and Right — the *Venstre* Party would go with a centrist bloc for sure. But what these terms specifically mean will of course differ by country, so a closer look is worth the effort.

Venstre as a political party dates to the 1880s. As such, *Venstre* can claim to be Norway’s first true, organized political party of Norway’s mass-democracy era, formed at the very cusp of the mass-democracy era. It has many successors on the Left and Center. The original, *Venstre*, formally and legally continues to exist, even if at a different place on the political spectrum than before, but all parties are always evolving and conditions in which the parties operate are very different.

The original *Venstre* may have been something like a big-tent party of reformists in an era when Norway was neither quite a recognizable mass-democracy yet, nor technically yet a sovereign nation. (The process of Norway’s modern independence began on May 17, 1814 — Norway’s version of the USA’s July 4 — and ended with full independence and recognized sovereignty in the European family of nations only in 1905).

The current party of *Venstre* has not been doing very well, long suffering from an unclarity of purpose. It has ties at the European level to a family of parties which includes the Free Democrats of Germany, and other freemarket-oriented parties.

Odds are that V doesn’t make it over the 4% threshold this time, though it might sneak in a seat here or there. It still does seem to have a small, loyal base.

Liberal Party [*Venstre*, V] seats in **2017**:

8 (of 169)

Expected to win in **2021**:

1 to 3 seats (likely)

or

up to **8** seats (if break the 4%-threshold, unlikely)

In all likelihood, V will get no more than two or so seats directly elected in the big regions.

But if the cards fall just the right way and V gets its best possible result, squeaking above the 4% threshold, they could take 8 seats (according to PollofPolls.no). This would be a big story and suddenly make V a moderate little power-player again. A majority coalition in the 169-member Storting needs 85 seats, and if V holds 8 seats that is near one-tenth of the needed. Given that V is positioned to flexibly cooperate with any of the big three parties (H, Ap, or Sp), it could be another potential kingmaker — the goal of all these small parties.

A breakthrough by Venstre probably slightly boosts the chances for an Erna Solberg (Conservative, H) third term, for they (V) have been part of the government under Solberg since October 2017.

Here is a campaign ad which came up in my daily Internet activities in late July, some days after first writing the early draft of this:



The woman is the new party leader, *Guri Melby*, longtime party figure. Guri Melby was recently appointed Minister of Education for Norway (Sept. 2020), succeeding the previous leader of the party (Trine Skei Grande) who briefly held the position of Education Minister after the January 2020 shakeup in which the FrP broke with the government over an Asylum policy dispute. Somehow, in the fallout, the Education Ministry fell to the *Venstre* Party as a still-loyal member of the governing coalition.

I assume it was the *Venstre* Minister of Education who demanded schools re-open in spring 2020, which caused Prime Minister Erna Solberg to issue a televised apology to the nation for closing schools unnecessarily for over two months, vowing never to make the same mistake again. If the Education Ministry had had a hardline pro-Shutdown attitude the Solberg apology would not, I assume, have happened.

The man in the ad next to (incumbent Education Minister and *Venstre* leader) Guri Melby is *Ola Elvestuen*, identified as “*Storting* candidate” in the ad. He is another longtime leading figure of the party.

The few cents' worth of google-ad money V paid to place that ad in front of me was wasted in that I cannot vote in Norway. On the other hand, it did catch my eye enough to get included, and memorialized in a sense, here.

The slogan says: “*Vi kutter utslipp of styrker skolen*” (We cut emissions and strengthen schools).

Another of V's campaign posters:



“Venstre’s election promise: Guaranteed Daycare. Everyone shall have a right to daycare placement after parental leave [permisjon] ends.”

On the electric car issue:



“Lots of people are choosing electric cars [elbil]. Are you one of them?”

The explanation with the poster continues:

In July [2021], 400,000 electric cars cruised Norwegian roads. That is twice as many as in January 2019 [emoticon]. The Electric car benefit is an important factor in more people choosing an environmentally friendly alternative, and an important contributor in reducing emissions! Therefore, Venstre wants to keep the electric car benefit!

So V is for electric cars. But it's easy to say you are for electric cars in some general sense. The Norwegian government has been majorly subsidizing these cars with taxes, which is a policy question, and here V says "Yes" to subsidies (i.e., "the electric car benefit").

Many of *Venstre*'s positions seem to position them on the Left, but some end up on closer examination putting them more on the Right. This is one:



“We want a ban on conversion-therapy” [i.e., therapy to ‘convert’ a homosexual to a heterosexual].

In 2021 the H-led government submitted a bill to the effect that conversion-therapy for under-16s was made illegal and discussion is ongoing on whether it should also cover 16- and 17-year olds, but from age 18 it is to be still legal under the law. *Venstre* had been active backers of the bill.

Left-wing commentators attacked the bill because some conservative Christians had expressed support for it. The two main left-wing parties (Ap and SV) both attacked it for not going far enough — i.e., demanding a full legal ban on the practice at all ages, not just for under-16s.

Venstre comes down on this on the Right with this one, at least the way it played out in Norway's own politics.

But here is something really revealing about *Venstre*. The Facebook post in which *Venstre* posted the “conversion-therapy ban” poster got many comments, presumably from party supporters, expressing positions to the Right of the party's on the issue. One said there needed to be a full legal ban as well on gender-reassignment surgery. Another said that the outlawing of the practice of gay conversion therapy is an affront to freedom of speech and speaking of which (he continued) why don't you work to abolish the anti-free-speech hate-speech laws in the same vein. This comment drew several “Likes,” indicating it is a popular position among *Venstre*'s Facebook followers, who are presumably party V-voters or at the least possible V-voters. If so, *Venstre* can be anchored to the Right in that its voter base leans to the Right on the big social issues, if this case is representative.

Another thing you notice about *Venstre*'s rhetoric, if you look through it, is what is un-said. They mention nothing about immigrants, asylum seekers, religion, or the National Question (i.e., What is a “Norwegian”?). Nothing one way or another, as if the Norway of 1980 or 1990 still existed and that set of issues, so important to some other parties, was just trivial or maybe the purview of eccentrics. How do we interpret this conspicuous absence in V's rhetoric when the set of identitarian and immigration-related issues is so important to Norwegian politics?

In the end, despite it all, *Venstre* is a non-Left party in Norway, and given that *venstre* means “left” in Norwegian, add another entry to the column of “parties with confusing and potentially misleading names.”

The DEMOCRATS [long known as *Demokratene i Norge*, DiN, now renamed *Demokratene*, DEM]: We can understand this party as a firmer, more vigorous version of the FrP (Progress Party), because of its small size able to be “leaner and meaner” than the now-fattened-up FrP.

The DEMs were long a minor party but could surprise Norway by taking seats in 2021, giving Norway a new national-level (*Storting*) party of the Right and a challenger to the FrP, and potentially also activating tens of thousands of apathetic and nonvoters sympathetic to the idea that Norwegian sovereignty must be protected.

Apparently this party is now (2021) legally known as the “Democrats” (*Demokratene*), yet another quite confusing name within the Norwegian party system. Some will be tempted to call them non-democrats perhaps sympathetic to this-or-that right-wing tradition. Part of its own base might not even like the name: I saw some supporters complain about how the name (*Demokratene*) is the same as the name in Norwegian for the the US Democratic Party. One jokingly asked a party figure, in a Q-and-A the spokesman was doing, if he could promise then and there that the Norwegian *Demokratene* had nothing to do with the US *Demokratene*!

The party’s leader is Geir Ugland Jacobsen, previously of the FrP but expelled from the party in late 2020.

Much more on this party in a longer section below on the flux on Norway’s Right or Populist-Right in the late 2010s and early 2020s, of which the *Demokratene* is looking like a key actor and the expulsion of Geir Ugland Jacobsen looking like a key signpost.

Some election campaign material from the *Demokratene*:



It says: “The Democrats. We must secure the nation and put Norway first. Norway needs an alternative.”

Rooting out “hate-preaching imams” and expelling them from Norway is one of publicly stated goals, paired with a similar foreign policy to de-fund all ways Norwegian foreign-aid supposedly flows to “corrupt regimes and terrorists”:



“No more money to corrupt regimes and terrorists! We support Norway’s welfare.
Demokratene.”

Judging by the level of Facebook activity and the Likes/Shares/Replies they get as compare to other parties, the party really is now a third-tier party — i.e., one capable of winning seats even if not guaranteed. They look at least as strong as some the smaller players like KrF and *Venstre*.

However, their outsider status allows the insider-parties to often exclude them from debates and the like. The influential website PollofPolls.no does not even list them. Polling itself can of course be an agenda-setter, and to not list a party at all makes it look hopeless. Time will tell.

One of the leading figures in the party behind Geir Ugland Jacobsen is *Kent Andersen* (b.1962). Like the new *Demokratene* party leader, Kent Andersen is defector from the FrP who came to the *Demokratene* in late 2020 and is a veteran political activist and typical of peak-era FrP figures in his thinking and general political stance. If it comes to pass that the Democrats break the 4% barrier in 2021, Kent Andersen will definitely be in the *Storting*.

A quote from Kent Andersen, high-ranking figure in the *Demokratene* (2021-) which gives a flavor of what the party is “about” (machine-translated and cleaned up):

“The biggest political threat in Norway is that our democracy has collapsed into a kind of globalist one-party state, monomaniacally obsessed with only one thing: Fulfilling the Paris Agreement at any cost so the EU is happy with its colony.”

I return to the *Demokratene* in a longer section below.

OTHERS — *some fourth-tier parties of the Right.*

I classify as “fourth-tier parties” those with absolutely no hope of taking any *Storting* seats even in a best-case-scenario. Even without hope of seats, they often still have some kind of important role in Norway’s ideological system and political system. Sometimes they are single-issue parties or interest-group parties. They can influence the larger parties and, that accomplished, may even dissolve themselves.

Other times such small parties are more coherently ideological in their own right and aspire to enter the third-tier of parties, becoming competitive for actual seats, perhaps with the goal of displacing one of the established parties on the third-tier. I sketch out three of these fourth-tier parties active in 2021: The Alliance (*Alliansen*), the Christian Party (*Partiet de Kristne*, PDK), and the Capitalist Party (*Liberalistene*). (The *Demokratene* party was formerly a fourth-tier party (2000s and 2010s, even up through late 2020) but has now rapidly risen into the third-tier.)

The Alliance / Alternative for Norway (*Alliansen*).

This small party has positioned itself on a hard-line ethnonationalist line but in 2021 is looking to be drifting into eccentric directions and in-fighting, its purpose not fully clear.

Formerly called The Alliance, now with the “Alternative for Norway” added, the new extended name is clearly in reference to the success of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and also on the model of a small new party in Sweden, Alternative for Sweden (AfS), though this party is much less successful and serious than either of those efforts.

Alliansen’s origins are in the 2010s. One account claims it originally grew out of the Coastal Party, a longtime minor party, but really *Alliansen* was founded (or hijacked ver early on at least) by a colorful figure who goes by the name **Lysglimt Johansen**.

Partu leader Lysglimt Johansen made waves in 2019 by inviting right-wing speakers from across Europe and North America to an Oslo conference which was banned at the last minute by the government, after which some of the foreign speakers were temporarily arrested for supposedly being a danger of inciting a riot. The arrests were the subject of some derision in the Norwegian media, widely seen as an embarrassing misstep for the government on free speech grounds. Few could or would sympathize directly with the organizer, who was the only public figure of Norway’s most “far-right” party (*Alliansen*), but many sympathized with the principle, which seemed breached. The Right also contrasted the *de facto* policy of allowing so-called “hate-preaching imams” to stay in most cases, or at least behaving with great sluggishness on the question, while the same government instantly arrests and deporting siome foreign right-wing intellectuals of European and American origin on a brief visit to speak. Lysglimt Johansen, much more an agitator than a politician, chalked it up to a win for making headline news.

Alliansen has been dogged with insinuations that it has ties to right-wing militants, the type which prepare for civil unrest via gun training. The party denies such ties.

A US-style “militia movement” is not absent in Scandinavia but more present as bogeyman than reality. (I have not seen much Scandinavian TV, but I once saw a detective show which depicted a right-wing group of this kind, as the bad guys, whom the heroic detectives had to expose and

defeat to save the day.) The small and often informal grouplets which exist in Norway could become important if Norway ever slips into 1990s-Yuoslavia territory. Such a world may be hard to imagine now as a future for what is among the world's wealthiest, stablest-seeming countries. An influential Norwegian political blogger, active especially in the 2000s and who went by Fjordman, wrote of such scenarios.

Alliansen is unlikely has any kind of national-level electoral future on anything like the current general trajectory. It got 0.1% in the 2017 *Storting* election and is back on the ballot this time.

In July 2021, *Alliansen* apparently busied itself in a smear-campaign against the *Demokratene*. Big-fish-in-little-pond syndrome? *Alliansen*'s Facebook page is considerably less active than the *Demokratene*'s as of July/August 2021, and the comments have people asking why they (*Alliansen*) are attacking a party so basically similar to their own, even if more moderate (*Demokratene*), instead of attacking the Left.

When Donald Trump shocked the world by winning the 2016 US presidential election, European countries' TV news shows scrambled to bring on local-country supporters of of the Trump movement to deliver commentary from a pro-Trump perspective in the native language of the country. One of the few active in Norwegian politics willing to openly identify as a Trump man in 2016 was Lysglimt Johansen, the very same later founder of *Alliansen*.

Here he is on (what I think is) a morning broadcast the day after the US election. Whatever the exact date and time of broadcast, it was definitely after Trump was declared the winner. They sought out pro-Trump voices for comment and found him.



The Norwegian TV station NRK1 identified Lysglimt Johansen by his name and with the label “Trump-supporter.” English and Norwegian may be close languages but “Supporter” is not a Norwegian word. NRK1 used the English word, perhaps to imply that “Trump support” is something foreign, unnatural to render in the Norwegian language, and worth putting in English to demarcate as such.

Lysglimt Johansen formed the political party *Alliansen* in the weeks after the Trump election. He was not then, and apparently has not since been, a good politician in the traditional sense (if that was ever his goal), for he positioned the party more radically than the Norwegian political system was capable of integrating. It never got off the ground beyond a small group of fans attracted to Johansen’s charisma and defiant attitude.

Glancing at *Alliansen*’s rhetoric in early August 2021, I see the party declaring itself to be the party most opposed to Corona Flu Virus vaccine mandates in Norway, and boasting (?) that each of its first-line candidates has sworn to never take the Covid vaccine on principle, and adding that the *Demokratene* are too soft on the mandatory-vaccination issue. Here is the same on official campaign material:



It says: “Lysglimt speaks!” referring to an event held July 15. Alongside are a “No forced vaccination” image and a “No to Agenda 2030” image.

One of their *Storting* candidates did a live-stream broadcast in late July 2021, perhaps a Q-and-A. I cannot understand much Norwegian but can get enough to understand his first line, the first words he said right as the livestream went up. It was something close to this: “My mission is to stop the Islamization of Norway.”

The CHRISTIAN PARTY (*Partiet De Kristne*, PDK): A more recognizably and “classic” Christian-Right party than what today’s KrF is.

I was correct to assume that the PDK was formed by conservative defectors from the KrF (Christian Democrats) after it had become clear by the 2000s or so that the KrF had drifted far

from its Lutheran-Right origins. The Rubicon having been crossed by the KrF's central command and the boats on shore set aflame to prevent a return to the Christian-Right, it was time to leave, so thought the defectors setting up the PDK.

Any breakaway movement is always risky, in this case the risk being full political marginalization. Certainly the breakaway by conservatives hurt the KrF because many of its committed activists bolted for the PDK, leaving the apathetic and low-info voters still hanging around the established KrF — this being one part of the KrF's general decline narrative mentioned earlier.

It may be no surprise that there were several breakaway attempts by groups on the Christian-Right (Lutheran-Right) in the 1990s, including the 1998-founded *Kristent Samlingsparti* (Christian Unity Party), now defunct. These parties, including today's PDK which is flying its flag for the *Storting* races in 2021, all faced problems of many older and low-information but otherwise-sympathetic KrF voters never getting around to joining in, never working up enough energy to defect. Political parties have their own inertia just as churches do, and once in, people often stick around.

There is space for a party like PDK in Norway's politics today. But there is probably no space for two (or more) parties competing for the Christian-Right vote, people primarily wishing to vote for a religious-identifying Christian party. As long as legacy-KrF exists, it (KrF) will continue to soak up votes and be a downward pressure on the PDK's possibilities.

I previously analogized the KrF to the (US) ELCA, a Lutheran church body. I can continue that analogy with PDK: In the 2000s and 2010s, some congregations tried defecting from the ELCA and setting up small, new church-bodies. This is a tough task and none of the ELCA-bolters have ever quite panned out, even if a strong and committed base is there. Political-inertia, name-recognition, and lingering personal and emotional ties tend to remain with the established organization.

On the Dissident-Right and overlapping into the Lutheran-Right in Norway in summer 2021 there are those saying: "If you are leaning toward a vote for the PDK, vote for the *Demokratene*

instead; the *Demokratene* have a real chance for seats and the PDK doesn't. The *Demokratene* are also Christians, for traditional-Christian values, and against Islamization.”

Having been unable to get a fuller exodus from the KrF, and with its natural constituency unconvinced it can win, the PDK will again be too small to hope for a *Storting* seat in 2021, but its rhetoric still gets news coverage, and it is a legitimate fourth-tier party in Norwegian politics today and among the most-serious of the fourth tier for it presents a full ideological position.

Here are some PDK people on a campaign stop, August 4, 2021, at Balsfjord, a town of 5,500 people in far northern Norway above the Arctic Circle.



A characteristic election poster from the PDK:

Stem PDK - Stortingsvalget 2021

**Fosteret er et menneske –
uavhengig av vekt og
lengde**

PDK er det eneste partiet med
listetopper som vil verne fosteret
fra unnfangelsen.

Maren Anne Krüger
1. kandidat Vestfold og Telemark

 **PARTIET DE KRISTNE**
Frihet og trygghet for alle.

It says: “Vote PDK – *Storting* election 2021. The fetus is a human, regardless of weight and size. The PDK is the only party which will protect the fetus from conception.”

At least PDK campaign car is cruising around Norway this summer, painting up with the party name and logo. Here is party leader *Erik Selles* (b.1966) (with cap) on a brief pit stop:



Erik Selles was ordained a pastor in 1996 but within a few years (2001) had formed an independent church with pentecostal influences. The church still exists in the town of Bærum, Akershus (Akershus being the region around Oslo, effectively “Oslo County” vs. “Oslo City” in US terms).

One could dismiss the PDK as just the promotional efforts of a longtime right-wing Christian pastor, but it may be they really think that if they keep an army in the field they can eventually break through when the KrF falls apart, as PDK is the obvious successor of the KrF if it were to go down — as, for example, by being wiped out of the *Storting* this year.

The CAPITALISTS (*Liberalistene*): Purist libertarians of a sort common in the US but marginal in Norway.

Most of the parties of the non-Left in Norway are pro-freemarket. Some, naturally, think the big parties are not strong enough on the matter of classic-liberal economics (freemarketism) and that there have been all too many concessions to the economic-Left.

The party's name in Norwegian is literally "The Liberals" but they choose to use the English name "Capitalists." One problem with "Liberal" is that another party, *Venstre*, uses it for its own English name. The other problem is the long shadow of confusion related to FDR's repurposing of the word "liberal" and distorting its meaning in American-English, and therefore, to some extent, now in Global-English. We have partly solved this with the term "Classic Liberal," and classic-liberal which applies to this party.

Party of their 2021 platform has this wording:

[We demand] politicians not stand in the way of...innovation that will create jobs, create more value, and increase knowledge and competence.

It warns of dark days ahead for Norway if the Left succeeds in "abolishing the oil industry in Norway."

The *Liberalistene*, as an ideological party, have coherent and unambiguous policy ideas. This should be to their credit, be one for or against them at least it's all very clear. Here is one which they stress in their party platform:



“Yes to nuclear power. Storting platform for 2021-2025. *Liberalistene*. Your life. Your team!”

This is pitched as a solution to the energy problem and a way to get away from wind-power and fossil fuels both. Some other parties just say “no to symbolic green measures,” which is a slogan that might motivate some to cast a vote, but the *Liberalistene*, as a purist lean-and-mean small party can make a positive statement which risks putting some off.

Norway has never used nuclear power so this would be a genuinely new path. Ironically, this also puts the “Capitalist Party” (*Liberalistene*) on the same team as the Green Party (MDG). They break the strange-bedfellow relationship with the Greens on this one:



“Yes to the oil industry.”

Disgruntled high-profile members or supporters of other parties of the Right, in some cases figures who had fallings-out with their parties, have sometimes washed up on Capitalist Party (*Liberalistene*) shores, which increases this fourth-tier party’s profile. But as there seems no hope of breaking the 4%-barrier, they remain stuck in an electoral ghetto, at least for now.

So much for the fourth-tier parties of note on the Right.

The political flux on the Right and Populist-Right in Norway, late 2010s and early 2020s: Decline of Progress Party (FrP) and potential breakthrough by Democrats (DEMs)

The Norwegian election is unlikely to get much attention abroad and what post-vote simplified narratives or story-line do filter out to world-media are predictable enough. One likely to end up in the one- or several-line synopses in international news is: “*Norway’s once-mighty, right-wing Progress Party (FrP) suffers a historic defeat,*” far off its previous highs. A likely short-version headline: “Norway voters reject right-wing party.”

The FrP’s problems deserve a closer look as they relate to the shake-up on the Right or Populist-Right.

Oslo journalist Andreas Slettholm wrote the following in early December 2020 (machine-translated from the original and cleaned up):

In 2013, Per Sandberg warned that the Progress Party [FrP] would only consist of “smooth-polished billiard balls”. He fears that the party would cultivate groomed, boring types of politicians in its pursuit of power. FrP still had to be a bit messy, he thought.

No danger, one might say, seven years later.

There could hardly have been more scandals and quirks. Travel expenses and metoo. The party in Bergen was forcibly closed down. The continuous noise machine that is Sylvi Listhaug. Sandberg’s own Iran adventure. The case against Bertheussen. And Carl I. Hagen still squeaks in this horn that man-made climate change is nonsense.

A more groomed protest party

That the party has become too groomed is hardly the main concern of the day. The lack of support is far worse for Siv Jensen.

And the voters have largely disappeared to less messy parties. Like the Center Party, for example. [...]

(“[Et oppgjør med «gærningene»](#),” by Andres Slettholm, *Aftenposten* [Norway], Dec. 3, 2020.)

The political personality first mentioned, Per Sandberg, is another who left the FrP in 2020 to join the *Liberalistene* (the Capitalist Party). He had had high-ranking positions within the FrP back to 2006, even serving as a government minister between 2013 and 2018 under the FrP. The departure of a figure of such a high profile is a sign something is up.

The second political personality, whom the writer calls a “continuous noise machine,” is Sylvi Listhaug, now leader of the FrP but at the time of writing merely one of the top lieutenants in the top ranks of the FrP, as she had been throughout the 2010s. She took over party itself in May 2021, five months after the article was published, and is steering the ship in this election season. She is on several-month tour of all corners of Norway in the party’s RV decorated with slogans.

Listhaug’s predecessor **Siv Jensen** (b.1969) led the FrP during its best showings. She took the important Minister of Finance position after she negotiated the FrP into a governing coalition with the *Høyre* Party after another strong showing in 2013. The FrP’s then-leader Siv Jensen led the Finance Ministry (as Finance Minister) from late 2013 to January 2020, at which time she withdrew the FrP from the government in protest over a *Høyre* refugee policy.

(It’s funny, but the recent leaders of the most right-wing party in the *Storting* have both been women, as is the [nominally-]Right-leaning Prime Minister, Erna Solberg. The FrP’s vote-base traditionally tilted male while some other parties, KrF on the Right and SV on the Left, tilted noticeably female.)

In 2019 and 2020 Siv Jensen started coming under pressure from some in her own party to resign, and in the commotion the [FrP expelled one of its major regional figures, FrP Oslo party head Geir Ugland Jacobsen, who joined the minor party “Democrats in Norway” party](#) after his expulsion. So energized was the party that they rebranded to the “Democrats” (*Demokratene*) and elected the expelled Oslo FrP head to head their entire party. All indications are the DEMS

went from a negligible fourth-tier party of the dissident-Right to a party of the third-tier (those competitive to get *Storting* seats), a changeover within a few months.

Norway's DEMs are one of the many dissident-Right political outfits one finds across Europe which have popular ideas but never quite get anywhere. Local "establishments," academics, etc. are hostile to such parties' existence and often enforce political "*cordons sanitaire*" (as a well-known political-science term terms it), refusing to deal with them and excluding them from the normal process where possible. The ideas of such parties have broken through in many cases, but often only when co-opted by a charismatic-type demagogue or wealthy-celebrity-type demagogue, or in some cases by larger parties with flexible ideologies (i.e., "populists"). The "co-opters" have had mixed results in terms of influencing policy in a consistent way, often because they just used the issues without necessarily believing in them.

The FrP was subject to the *cordon sanitaire* treatment for a long while, but slipped past it somewhere back there in Norwegian political history, both racking up consistent vote totals (1989, 1997, and all through the 2000s and most of the 2010s), and then entering government outright (2013). Eventually the political *cordon sanitaire* as practiced in Western Europe cannot hold if a stable party with a large and firm voter-base operates in a fair system. The Left would be willing to continue to enforce an exclusion policy against the FrP, but the Right — specifically *Høyre* (Conservative Party) — could not after the FrP took more seats *Høyre* itself in two straight *Storting* elections (2005 and 2009). By the early 2010s, *Høyre* was ready to work with the FrP to finally dislodge the Left from power, and so it happened in 2013, inaugurating the Erna Solberg era.

As for the DEMs, the party only took 0.1% of the national vote in 2017 and had about the same level of support in the previous few elections back to 2005. Signs point to the same few thousand people voting for them since 2005, making this outfit more like a "political club" than a "political party." This changed overnight, in political time, within a few months between December 2020 and spring 2021. Thousands of politically active Norwegians found their way to the party under Geir Ugland Jacobsen.

Who is Geir Ugland Jacobsen? He seems like an archetypal character of the European national-populist Right of our time. His expulsion and follow-on events signals an identity-crisis within the FrP by which he doesn't quite know what its identity is, or what it's supposed to be.

Participating in government may have been the source of the FrP's own unraveling of late, something I guessed on my own and only later saw Norwegian observers say the same, a "call" which boosts my confidence on some of these other judgement calls. "Heavy is the head that wears the crown"?

Here is an election campaign graphic showing the *Demokratene* party leader himself and the slogans he chooses to attach to himself:



"Geir Ugland Jacobsen, *Storting* candidate. *Demokratene* [Democrats]. "Join the wave — vote for Reason — vote for the Democrats!" (May 2021).

An interesting choice to pose with his motorcycle and leather riding jacket for his campaign poster.

Here is Geir interviewed by a Norwegian media personality after he made national political news for his expulsion from the FrP (Dec. 2020):



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sduNSdg6UME>

This is all probably rather interesting to Norwegians who closely follow party-politics in the way devoted sports fans follow the ins-and-outs of their teams.

Of more general interest might be one of the alleged (stated) reasons for why the FrP took the dramatic step of expelling Geir Ugland Jacobsen, its own Oslo chairman. In November and into December 2020, Geir had been speaking publicly to Norwegian media on his view on the November 2020 US presidential election. He said it looked to him like that election had involved fraud in some US states. The then-national-level FrP leader Siv Jensen disavowed his statements on the US election. The subtext, though, was that Geir had been critical of Siv Jensen's leadership. Geir had been saying he wanted to steer the FrP to (re)embrace a "national-conservative" politics. The comments on the US election were a good pretext to get rid of him.

(The whole thing shows how much Norway is influenced by US politics and US-centric news. Even Norway's supposedly most-right-wing major party felt bold enough to conduct a purge for one of its most popular regional figures for saying the US election looked fishy — with midnight ballot dumps, the reports of mystery-ballots, rule-changes, slow counting, and other abnormalities. That it looked "fishy" was a common position at the time on the US Right. From a Norwegian perspective it must look even stranger because none of the big problems are possible in Norway's elections, which are generally wrapped up on the night of the election and not

subject ballots showing up days later and a tentative result only declared about four days after election day, as happened in the US in 2020.)

This internal purge didn't end Siv Jensen's problems, for she resigned as party leader a few months later. Of the host of political headaches she faced was a determined group, of which Jacobsen was one adherent, who wanted to push FrP back towards a national-conservative or national-populist positioning and reverse its supposed drift in the direction of consensus-centrism.

That the Oslo FrP elected a clear advocate of the national-conservative position, Geir Ugland Jacobsen proves (as if it needs to be proved) that this brand of politics had a natural home in the FrP's base. The FrP insurgents of 2020 had mixed success at best, and a lot of longtime FrP loyalists in 2019-20-21 were tempted to walk away. Hence the possible *Demokratene* surge which is an unexpected development not widely expected at mid-year 2018, mid-year 2019 or even mid-year 2020 yet.

The big Norwegian political-watchers have so far made little comment on this, I suppose many of them hoping it's not true and also rightly sensing that any talk of its possibility risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the DEMs get seats in the *Storting*, they suddenly catapult to a position of prestige and privilege, as a national party, from which they can only grow.

The whole affair amounts to a crumbling of the FrP's right, or "populist," flank. In competitive multi-party systems, other parties are naturally going to exploit the FrP's crumbled flank. A new challenger like the DEMs was possible but also possible was a bigger, established player like the Center Party (Sp), the latter having the advantage of not only being a sure-thing to be in the *Storting* but also being a major power player in the next four years at least.

Could the DEMs really gain seats? Most would say "Definitely Not." The people who run the polling aggregator PollofPolls.no don't even include the DEMs anywhere but have extensive polling-based profiles on each other party, even some who may not make the 4%-cutoff.

A surprise on this front came in an early July 2021 poll, ten weeks ahead of the election. It put the DEMs at 3% national support. (Caveat: beware a 3% result if the margin-of-error is +/-3.) If

accurate, that ranks as an enormous shifts in support from 2017, from 0.1% of votes cast to this (polled) 3.0%, a thirty-fold increase. The big target is the 4%-threshold, and crossing it is their best-case-scenario as ut us for all the “third-tier” parties. The lesser target, still achievable, is to squeak in with a direct-mandate seat somewhere and get at least one member in the *Storting*, even if failing to clear the 4% hurdle nationally.

If the Right-flank of Norwegian national-level, politics opens up and a new actor (DEMs) takes seats in the *Storting* (when the newly elected members meet, on the morning of October 1, 2021 — 17.5 days after election-day voting stops), we must assume it was *in part* because the FrP shifted away from its traditionally dissident, critical, and populist positioning (in addition to being hurt by its various scandals), and did not give centrist voters a reason to support it and replace the defectors.

If the once-mighty FrP has fallen, it’s worth a look back on why they rose up in the first place. Most Norwegians agree that government and certain political forces went overboard with immigration and asylum (always with good intentions, they’ll promise you to the very end).

By about the end of the 1980s, some in Norway were showing off a shiny new immigration-*apparatus* state bureaucracy devoted to bringing in people from exotic places who were willing to say they needed Asylum for (reasons). Numbers were too small at first for reasonable people to object. Norway, small and generally rural with no tradition of racial politics, did not immediately object. A new political Normal slid down upon the land, one which guaranteed future political strife. It would have been a surprise if an FrP-like party had *not* emerged.

By the mid-2000s, Oslo Public Schools were already reduced to a bare majority of Norwegian students. Some neighborhoods in Greater Oslo had started to be hit with White Flight on the US model. When non-Westerners (immigrants, asylum-seekers, and the chain-migrants they brought in from back home) began to “tip” a particular neighborhood, the remaining White Norwegians relatively quickly decamped, soon creating immigrant-majority and in some cases localized immigrant-supermajority enclaves. This is a well-studied phenomenon in Sweden. It is considerably less present in Norway than in Sweden, but it’s a difference in degree not of kind.

This is all like other big Northwest European countries in which a Diversity Consensus, roughly on the US model again, formed and then hardened. (A difference is that the entire immigration debate is more focused on the concept of Asylum and Asylum-Seekers in Norway than in the US.) There was no way to “turn it off” after a point.

I am reminded of this line:

“One moves swiftly and imperceptibly from a world in which affirmative action can’t be ended because its beneficiaries are too weak to a world in which it can’t be ended because its beneficiaries are too strong.”

(from Reflections on the Revolution in Europe, by Christopher Caldwell, 2009.)

The good people in Norway, back in the 1980s and into the 1990s, did not dare criticize the new consensus. Norway had/has a moral obligation to take in asylum-seekers from places with trouble in the world. Africa, the Mideast, Afghanistan, whatever. Some of the very earliest cases were Vietnamese in the late 1960s and 1970s (a story now directly affecting Norwegian politics in the 2020s via Lan Marie Berg, a leading figure of the Green Party and the daughter of a Vietnamese admitted as a refugee during the US Vietnam War).

Was it some kind of moral good? It seemed persuasive to say “Yes” at the time and be done with it, and in any case the numbers were at first so tiny — hey, don’t worry about it, ski season is coming up and we have vacation-time saved up. This is still something of a “baseline” attitude even today, especially with the older generations now living who grew up in a stable, mono-ethnic and essentially mono-cultural environment (by which regional differences within Norway seemed a big deal), and who first encountered the issue as younger adults in the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s.

Some took it all to heart. A contingent really believes the highest possible moral level a European-Christian can attain is this life a firm and unwavering support for migrants and asylum-seekers, and in political-policy terms a loyal maintenance of a finely tuned government-apparatus to keep it rolling along. A parallel apparatus is to function as a wealth-transfer mechanism to support the new people, while not killing the golden goose. The machine requires

a balanced approach. Most of the Left stresses the moral imperative of bringing in Asylum-Seekers and let the machine whirr along as it was built to do, whereas most of the Right stresses the need to keep the machine well-tuned and balanced to let it run better. Both operate within the consensus that such a machine is a positive-good.

The older-adult-age and retiree-age age-cohort, whose political and social attitudes and views largely became fixed in an era when the asylum and immigration systems (there is hardly a practical difference in Norway) had a handful of beneficiaries “far too weak” to worry about. This group is now complemented by three groups:

- An ever-larger bloc of the descendants of asylum-seeker immigrants themselves, commonly on the “Ilhan Omar” model. In many cases they don’t have voting rights (citizenship) but they do have influence in other ways: Numbers (i.e., street-presence and street-power), powerful allies and protectors to whom the savvy among them know well how to appeal. When they *do* have the vote, this group block-votes for the Left, traditionally for the Labor Party (Ap) according to government opinion surveys posted to Statistis Noway. This time they will likely split between Labor (Ap), Socialist Left (SV), and the surging Red party (R).
- An element of native-Norwegians (those with four Norwegian grandparents) of approximately my generation who grew up under the emerging new order of things and, by circumstance or choice, absorbed or embraced the neo-morality during their formative years. I recognize this type well, because I recognize myself in it.
- A large share of the remainder of people are managed within a “carrot, stick, couch” model. One, it’s appealing to feel like you are on the morally just side — the carrot. Much of the time the carrot-grabbers don’t critically examine things much and just roll with the emotions of it all. The carrot is emotional self-satisfaction and accolades from above, social approval, important for self-esteem no matter who you are. Would-be dissenters, on the other hand, are socially (at least) punished — the stick. They are smart enough not to expose their necks when a stick is hanging over it. Others are made politically inert by relative comfort, the couch. I’ve known many young men in my life

who, by instinct or temperament or experience or something else, are against the new order but are near-neutralized or fully-neutralized by a combination of the carrot-stick-couch model, and in proportions roughly ascertainable if you talk to them.

A shaky immigration consensus in Norway therefore works under four-part system. (1.) Decisions made and attitudes taken by establishment “68ers,” long in senior positions all over though many are now retired; their earlier decisions (and those of the generation before them) represent a powerful political inertia. (2.) The immigrants themselves, often among the young now second-generation. (3.) An influential group of native young Norwegians who embrace the new order proactively as its zealots (see comments below about the Red Party). (4.) The remainder who are managed within a carrot-stick-couch system, with carrot-grabbers being the socially aspirant and stick-avoiders being most anyone else. People outside any of these categories exist but are too collectively weak and disorganized to do much, but elements of those within group (4.) ended up successfully pushing the FrP to major success in the past thirty years.

The bully-pulpit of Perceived Consensus keeps things running. It is said that possession is nine-tenths of the law. Perceived Consensus must hold a similar share of political power in Scandinavia. If so, the FrP’s rise, in its time, was all the more surprising and impressive from a political perspective. Breakthroughs by a party like the FrP in a country like Norway are simply not supposed to happen. But it did happen. Now that the FrP has been in decline a few years, we might wonder what comes next, for the political terrain it held is still there.

This is the kind of thing that makes electoral systems like Norway’s so interesting to observe.

Political fluxes happen in all systems, including even one-party systems, and also in two-party duopolies (like the USA’s). But they are usually more obscure in one- or two-party systems because they (necessarily) involve unseen and un-voted-for factions of parties. The parties themselves don’t change and retain the same names and outward appearances. In systems like Norway’s, it’s all more in the open because it involves openness — more often parties and less often unseen factions within the a one-party monopoly or a two-party duopoly system. What You See is What You Get. It is easier in Norway than in the USA to break ranks if a party ends up

drifting, or betrays specific promises upon which basis you had supported them, or gets hijacked by some individual or interest group not to your approval. And large-scale vote-shifts matter. In any European system, the 1992/96 Ross Perot phenomenon would have been a major political event, but in the USA it was quickly forgotten.

In Norway's system, the changes *can* be of the unseen kind too, but will in time involve one ascendant party displacing another, the new entrant onto the scene carrying a new agenda, or at least carrying new emphases, energy, personalities, or intensity, or perhaps reacting to a new development. The whole system feels nimbler than the two-party duopoly model.

Returning to the question of defectors from the FrP: Where did they go?

Polled support was down already by the late 2010s, even though years of voting results showed that its signature issues have a firm place in Norwegian politics. Something was going on. Polling data was borne out when the FrP did poorly in local elections in 2019.

The FrP's right-flank, having been lightly guarded, wavered in the constant low-level melee of political discourse and could not hold, and elements of its center also began drifting away, unconfident that the fight was worth it under the present commanders. To extend the metaphor, seven years in government may have meant the FrP's field commanders, battalion commanders, and staffs had all fattened up a bit and consequently were less able to compel loyalty of the ranks as they had in the leaner years and the wilderness years. In come the *Demokratene*.

Here come the *Demokratene*

What do we make of the new party on Norway's Populist-Right? Democrats / DEMs / *Demokratene*, formerly known as *Demokratene i Norge* (Democrats in Norway). Previously touched on before but now sketched out more.

Demokratene leader and FrP-expellee Geir Ugland Jacobsen recently (July 23) [wrote](#) on [Facebook](#)/Twitter (auto-translated):

Support for the *Demokratene* is rising sharply! We have never had so many new members per day, as now. The probability that we will cross the barrier limit [i.e., the 4% threshold] is therefore high.

This Facebook post got 895 “Likes,” about the number comparable posts would get for other small parties which have good shots at taking *Storting* seats.

Another *Demokratene* figure, Tommy Tufte, says this ([July 24](#)) on the growth in the past few months:

We’re getting votes from the following, put in order of importance (completely unofficially):

- FrP [Progress Party]
- Sp [Center Party]
- Others (small parties)
- *Høyre* [Conservative Party]
- Venstre [Liberal Party].

The top three probably account for about 90% [of new members].

In addition, we have picked up “sofa sitters” [*sofasittere*, i.e., disengaged nonvoters]. Several have told me that they have never voted or had a membership [of any party].

Geir Ugland Jacobsen himself has said the rate of new members has been steady in the hundreds per week in spring and summer 2021. Party membership was at 300 the day Jacobsen was expelled from the FrP (Dec. 2020) and is now said to have recently broken 4000, [according to news-commentary website Resett.no](#). A membership level in the 4000 range is also comparable

to established third-tier parties (those with several-percent support who could break the 4% threshold) like *Venstre*.

It's an open question whether these signs of the DEMs' newfound strength (Facebook likes, party membership totals) *necessarily* translates a strong vote totals at the election, or whether the surge is limited to those most politically engaged or "activists."

Geir Ugland Jacobsen also recently described his party as follows (cleaned-up machine-translation):

"The *Demokratene* is an anti-globalist people's party operating on a horizontal upper- and lower-class axis. We take the side of Norwegian citizens against the EU elite and against big-business and globalists in the other parties ranging from Red Party to the FrP, all of whom want more supranational governance of our country. We are the voters' only real alternative."

"We will vote 'No' on all climate-related and globalist proposals, regardless of party or government. We want a change of course, not a job in the EU or running errands for other nations or power structures."

(from statement by Geir Ugland Jacobsen, [Aug. 2, 2021](#).)

They DEMs in mid-2021 were in the process of scooping up some big names in the world of political-dissident types willing to stick their necks out against the taboos. One of the new additions is a professor of anthropology and psychology, [Øyvind Eikrem](#) (b.1973), who came to national headlines when Norway's prestigious NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) fired him for what some say are political reasons.

Professor Eikrem had made comments he made to the press after an asylum-seeker, said to be from Afghanistan, killed two people and grievously wounded a third. The asylum-seeker had arrived in Norway during the Merkel Wave (the impact of which on Norway and Norwegian politics is discussed above in the *Høyre* section). On arrival he claimed to be age 16 and from Afghanistan. Authorities allowed him to stay. The population of Trondheim ended up two less

for the decision. While it is true Norwegians too can commit murder, Trondheim rarely gets any, maybe one in a typical year.

Professor Eikrem had made comments to the press, which contacted him seeking expert comment on the subject of the cultural problems of integrating people from such places as Afghanistan. The murders not only applied to Professor Eikrem's own field (anthropology and sociology) but to his home, for the university where he taught (until fired), NTNU, is also in Trondheim. By Eikrem's telling, certain university administrators up his chain-of-command were angered, moved to try to discipline him, and scolded him personally, saying he had humiliated the department and the university. They finally terminated his contract in June 2021. After the controversy it will be hard for Eikrem to work again in his field, and certainly hard at a place so prestigious as NTNU.

In July 2021, the purged professor [was elected local leader for Trondheim for the *Demokratene*](#). Trondheim the university-town anchors the South-Trøndelag (Sør-Trøndelag) electoral region which leans decisively to the Left by about a two-to-one margin, probably because so many of its voters are associated with the university.

In addition to Eikrem's career in academia throughout the 2000s and 2010s, he had previously been active with the Pirate Party, a dissident, all-purpose, semi-ironic protest party, and was even a *Storting* candidate for the Pirate Party in 2017.

The local establishment parties won't take much notice of this. Most likely Labor (Ap) and Center (Sp) will take 5 of the 9 direct-mandate seats in the region between them, continuing to oil the gears of the careers of several figures including *Ola Borten Moe* (lead-candidate for the Sp in the region, guaranteed a seat), whose grandfather was Prime Minister of Norway from 1965 to 1971, the rare non-Labor Prime Minister in mid-20th-century Norway. (His grandfather was also of the Center Party, Sp.)

Also perhaps likely to get back in is *Sivert Bjornstad*, one-time *wunderkind* of the Right in Norway, first elected as an FrP man to the *Storting* in 2013 somewhat before his 23rd birthday. Another is a left-wing environmentalist named Lars Haltbrekken (of the Socialist Left party, SV) whose star has risen with the rise of Green politics. Neither of these seats are assured, for the

Green Party could have a surprisingly strong showing and knock the lowest of the two (FrP'er or the SV'er) out and snatch the seat.

The field is crowded and there is little space for an insurgent party of the Populist-Right in South-Trondelag to make any headway. There will probably be a one-seat shift from Ap to Sp locally and an outside possibility of the Greens snatching a seat from whichever of the two performs more poorly, local second-tier parties FrP or SV. It would be ironic if the Greens knock out the SV's lead candidate, a leading environmentalist. On the other hand, he could yet be saved if the SV national-level party has bonus seats to allot and wants him in.

It is said you do not really understand something unless you can write coherently on it, which is why I've written a few thousands words on this, as an investigative matter. This "flux on the Right" story-line in Norway's coming election is something below-surface that may not make international headlines, even if the *Demokratene* defy expectations and get over 4% and take a number of seats. A story-line that may make headlines is the Center Party (Sp), on whom more below, and it stealing lots of votes from all across the spectrum, and one interpretation of the Sp's rise is also along the lines of the "flux on the Right" narrative.

If the DEMs are really pilfering voters from the FrP and others, and activating nonvoters/disengaged, it indicates the DEMs in Norway are exactly the kind of recognizable protest party with which we became relatively familiar in Europe in the 2010s. The phenomenon either came late to Norway or very early to Norway, depending on whether you see the 1990s-2000s-2010s-era FrP as such a party or not.

Whatever happens with the DEMs, it will be a story taking place outside government, for I doubt any government formed in the *Storting* would accept support from this party in any governing coalition. Then again, we just don't know *what* the Center Party (Sp) would do if they do wiggle their way into (narrowly) taking the largest number of seats, which is a possible outcome of the election. Everyone has a pet theory on what the Sp will do, but no one knows.

Geir Ugland Jacobsen says the *Demokratene* party’s goal is “at least one seat” in the *Storting*, but a national showing above 4% would net the party several seats and suddenly make it a surprise player.

Some “scenes” of the *Demokratene* in action.

A *Demokratene* campaign event, [July 2021](#):



(Geir Ugland Jacobsen at right, hands clasped, chatting with a passerby, town center of Stjørdal, Norway, July 2021.)

The town of Stjørdal falls in the rural North-Trøndelag electoral region, not far by distance but very far by culture from the university-town that anchors its southern neighbor (the above-discussed South-Trøndelag). But its voting patterns are similarly on the Left.

Stjørdal is the largest town in the region of North-Trøndelag but has only 21,000 people. North-Trøndelag as a region is larger than the state of New Jersey but has a (permanent) population of only 134,000, making for a population density equal to Idaho's. The small size of this electoral-campaign booth should be interpreted in that light.

As might be guessed from the way things look, from the way people are dressed and present themselves, North-Trøndelag is Norway's poorest region. The economy is based on farming and fishing. Typical incomes are only one third of Oslo's. There are also almost no foreigners. While I expect a small handful of foreigners can be found in the big towns, I'd expect none once heading into the countryside and among the fjords — of which North-Trøndelag has many.

North-Trøndelag elects four direct seats and (like every other region) one bonus or “adjustment seat” split between parties which clear the 4%-hurdle nationally. There is no chance that Geir Ugland Jacobsen's *Demokratene* win any of these four seats, but they must think they can flip votes fairly easily in a place like this, anyway, hence the campaigning.

In the 2017 election in North-Trøndelag, Labor (Ap) took two seats, Center (Sp) got one, and Conservatives (*Høyre*, H) got one. Polling suggests H's vote-total in the region will not be enough to hold its seat and that enough of its voters may shift to the Center Party (Sp) for a 2021 split of two Ap and two Sp sent to the *Storting*, which is in line with its historical voting pattern, firmly leaning Left. The Sp here is led by longtime leading Sp figure [Marit Arnstad](#), who holds a leading parliamentary role for the party in the *Storting* for eight years now, and will likely be some kind of important government minister if Sp enters government.

Demokratene leader Geir Ugland Jacobsen has recently (July 24, 2021) pointed to an opinion poll taken in northern Norway — the electoral districts of Finnmark, Troms, and Nordland — which purports to show 12% of voters expressing party-preference for “Other,” double the rate from 2017 in the same poll. Geir Ugland Jacobsen (naturally) claims this doubling of “Other” is mostly due to people shifting to the DEMs. He sure hopes it is so, for such a result might even be the DEMs best shot at a seat, if they come up short of the 4%-threshold.

Here is some more *Demokratene* campaigning, probably typical of how small but hungry parties of the second-tier and third-tier will make their moves, needing so much to get their word out and often not counting on inertia or name-recognition or political-heavyweight status:



The banner says:

“*Demokratene*. For Norway’s Best. Guaranteed Anti-Globalist. Yes to the welfare-state. No to wind-power and monopoly-profits on electricity. We will preserve, build, and re-build.”

If all the stars line up for the *Demokratene*, they could snatch a direct-mandate elected for their lead candidate from Nordland, which sends 8 direct-seats to the *Storting*. One direct seat can reflect as little as a 10%-vote in Nordland (in calculating seats the denominator changes based on which parties locally qualify for seats, and is not 100% based on all votes — in other words, if small-parties who fall below the threshold to take seats locally make up 20% of all votes cast, the denominator drops to 80%, which means the 8 seats are divided by 80%, or 1 seat per 10% vote-block).

If the DEMs did have a 3%-nationwide support level in early July, they could well have a support-level more like 10% in a natural stronghold and surprise everyone by snatching a direct seat up in Nordland, which previously had strong vote totals for the FrP.

The real prize, and surprise, will be if the DEMs, not even being discussed much in Norwegian election commentary, manage to take 4% nationally. The smart money still bets against it.

Even if the *Demokratene* don't clear the 4%-hurdle, their vigorous activity in 2021 after the FrP's problems in 2020 is a big story in its own right. Life goes on and there are local elections in which they will continue to compete, even perhaps under a changed name.

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The Parties of the Center-Left and Left

Now the political parties of Norway which are (supposedly or arguably) **of the Left**, considered in order of size or importance and not ideology.

First Tier

- (1.) **Labor Party** [*Arbeiderpartiet, Ap*];
- (2.) **Center Party** [*Senterpartiet, Sp*];

Second Tier

- (3.) **Socialist Left** [*Sosialistisk Venstreparti, SV*];
- (4.) **Red** [*Rødt, R*];

Third Tier

- (5.) **Green Party** [*Miljøpartiet De Grønne, MDR*];

Fourth Tier

- (6.) Minor parties including “Sentrum,” the “Norwegian Communist Party,” “Feminist Initiative,” and (arguably) the “Pirate Party.”

The LABOR Party [*Arbeiderpartiet, Ap*]: A typical social-democratic political party in Europe, and long Norway’s dominant party with much accumulated prestige to show for it.

The Ap party dominated Norwegian politics for decades starting in the mid-1930s and in many ways really made Norway what it is today in terms of norm-creation, agenda-setting, and institution-building, or at the least oversaw all those things.

The same kind of party became ascendant in the USA with the New Deal Democratic Party at about the same time as Norway's Ap rose to the top in Norway.

In Norway's case, the power and prestige of this social-democratic wave that broke through in the 1930s lasted rather longer than the USA's. The US New Deal Coalition showed signs of imminent fracturing by the mid-1960s and in the 1968 presidential election looked broken apart; Nixon's big second-term win (1972) seemed to confirm it was over, even if the fumes lasted years yet to come. In Norway it never quite ended. In the USA's case, the full defection of the US White "Solid South" away from the New Deal Coalition Democratic Party was decisive (if not the sole cause, but did electorally tip the scales). Norway, with no domestic racial politics whatsoever at the time (except maybe if counting the Lapps/Saami), kept its social-democratic ruling party, and a reliable voting coalition behind it, somewhat longer. The Labor Party (Ap) was the face and guiding hand of Norwegian politics and government.

The Labor Party even came to be Norway's default political party, the natural ruling party. It may still today feel like the default ruling party in popular political psychology, regardless of who's actually in charge. So powerful is its legacy.

(In like manner, Koreans claim to [still] think that the main right-wing party, currently under the silly-sounding name of "The People Power Party," is the default and eternal ruling party, and that the left-wing party, usually under the name Democratic Party or a close variant, is the default and eternal opposition — despite the latter holding the presidency and/or legislative majorities.)

The world which today's Norwegian working-age adults and youth have inherited is more the Ap's world than any other party's, and one plank in Norwegian pride and patriotism is that they have run what is seen to be a successful social-welfare state. This is also key to Ap's long-enjoyed prestige in Norway, its quasi-status as the default party, and the widely held expectation that the Ap's leader (**Jonas Gahr Støre**) will become the next prime minister.

The 20th-century prestige may remain, but Norway's Ap as a party has been in decline for years. Like all the big social-democratic parties of Western Europe, there is a secular decline trend and it no longer dominates Norway's politics in a formal sense.

In a graduate school seminar on European politics I realized that the social-democratic parties' decline — observed everywhere, usually starting sometime in the 2000s and really unmistakable and sustained in the 2010s — has been a matter of great academic interest for some time. No one knows what the cause is, exactly. People have lots of little ideas. Thousands of words have been written on the matter. The general idea: these parties moved towards the political “center,” they lost some traditional bases of support. This explains some of the vote-losses in some cases, but not all. Something more general is going on. These parties seem generally less appealing, less *relevant* somehow, to the b.1970s, b.1980s, and b.1990s age-cohorts than they did to their parents' and grandparents' generations.

Just as Norway's conservative party (*Høyre*) moved from the Center-Right towards the political Center, Norway's social-democratic party (Ap) has moved from the Center-Left towards the Center. The two classic, biggest parties of Norway (H and Ap), therefore, overlap more than ever. A consensus-based politics good for stability but sometimes unappealing to those who want agendas pushed rather than status quo.

The Ap has held only 49 national-parliament seats since 2017 (=29% of the *Storting*), which continues its long-term decline trend. In its peak years (decades), Ap often held outright-majorities or near-majorities in the *Storting*, usually able to govern via a powerful majority-government and able to do most anything it wanted, and most of the rest of the time able to govern with a minor coalition partner to prop them up.

In 2021 the Ap is on track to take somewhere between 37 and 48 seats in the new *Storting* (22% and 28% of total seats). All told this is not so bad. It could be a lot worse: Ap in Norway has not sunk as far as Germany's SPD, which may take as few as 15-20% of seats in the German Bundestag election this year (which occurs the same week as Norway's election). The collapse of the social-democratic party in France is even worse still, its presidential candidate receiving a laughably low share of the vote in 2017 (under 10%).

A four-point campaign platform for 2021 which the Ap recently put out includes a vow to *lower* taxes on the non-rich, defining the “rich — non-rich” line as those making below 750,000 Norwegian Kroner (NOK) (= \$85,000 USD) per year. This may be politi-speak for raising taxes on the rich, and certainly at least is so in relative terms. A second campaign promise was to cut greenhouse-gas emissions by 55% by 2030. Some of this emission-cuts talk is getting ush-back from lots of parties of the Right so the election will partly be a referendum on it. An Ap prime minister, very likely Jonas Gahr Stør, especially with left-wing governing partners, would push ever-forward with it.

Critics will say that the Ap’s traditional reason for existence has faded, and that it has long since drifted away from real ties to the “Socialism” of its origin-days. With wealth at such high levels, there is also a tendency to drift into boutique politics of (micro-)grievance and away from the (macro-)economic with broad appeal. The insinuation that the Ap has somehow outlived its usefulness, in one way or other, gives energy to its two major left-wing challengers, SV and R, both of which will take seats in 2021. Ap prefers SV, which is a natural partner that will seldom majorly break with the Ap — and SV openly positions itself, advertises itself, as a force-multiplier for the Ap, loyal but keeping pressure from the Left on the Ap itself. As for the new entrant Red Party, for now it is seen as too radical for Ap to ever work with it.

In the **Hedmark** region, the source of my own Norwegian ancestry, Ap has long done well. It still does well, along with the Center Party (Sp).

Hedmark is to elect six direct seats to the *Storting* in 2021, and current polling suggests Ap will take only two of these. In normal times it would likely take three, but this time the Sp will take three on the basis of its party-leader being a Hedmark man. This may be the Sp’s best-ever result in Hedmark. The sixth direct seat is expected to go to the Conservatives (H). A low-probability outcome is that enough voters defect from H to the locally surging Sp that H’s vote-total slips below that of the Socialist Left Party (SV). If so, SV steals the seat from H, and Hedmark becomes a clean-sweep for the Left in 2021.

The Ap's two direct-representatives from Hedmark will be *Anette Trettebergstuen* (b.1981) and *Nils Kristen Sandtrøen* (b.1989), both contemporaries of my and my cousins' age range. The latter is an interesting case of transatlantic ties (US-Norway) as they exist today. After graduating from the top level achievable in the Norwegian high school system in June 2008, Nils Kristen Sandtrøen went over to the University of Alaska, from which he received "a ski scholarship and competed for the university team in cross-country skiing." He spent one or two years in Alaska before transferring back to Norway and graduating from the prestigious NTNU (previously mentioned above).

The third on the Ap's party-list in Hedmark, who will likely be shut out because of the vote-shift to Sp locally, is *Lise Selnes* (b.1976). Selnes is the longtime mayor of [Nord-Odal](#), a town of 5000 in Hedmark which has had nothing but Ap mayors since the position was established in 1925. Lise Selnes will presumably be happy to continue on with [the mayor job](#), to which she has been elected thrice already (2011, 2015, 2019).

Labor Party [Ap] seats won, 2017:

49 (of 169)

Expected to win in **2021:**

37 to 48

The Ap will definitely lose seats in 2021, but the combined Ap-SV total may hold steady. In other words, a net shift from Ap to SV but no change to the two-party coalition is possible.

The most 'vanilla' prediction possible on the election is that Ap and SV form a government with the Center Party (Sp). A big question is how the Ap will look against the Sp after the smoke clears. The exact seat counts will matter. If Sp performs at the upper end of its range and Ap at the lower end, Sp could have more seats, a big psychological boost towards the Sp leader's bid for

the prime ministership on his own, which would be a terrible blow for the Ap, seeming to confirm it is unable to command the heights of Norwegian politics anymore.

The odds and the experts favor the Ap candidate, Støre, to be next prime minister, few heeding the doctum about chicken-counting before the hatching process begins. But if the Ap's first-tier rival, Sp, has more seats than the Ap, it *could* be a different game — but the smart money is that even then the Sp would just get more concessions and more important government ministries. Norwegians looking to vote strategically and who identify with the “non-Socialist” camp (a term current in Norwegian politics) have an inducement to vote Sp, a strategic vote to possibly stop Ap.

Here is some of the Ap's campaign material in 2021:



It says: “Full VAT-compensation for volunteer organizations.” The attached explanation: “Children and young people must be able to participate in leisure activities regardless of family finances. Among other things, we will institute a full VAT compensation for volunteer organizations and ensure that volunteers can spend more time on activities.”

This is a pretty tame and safe slogan but does sound serious and sober enough to trust; no open demagoguery, no airy blue-sky sloganeering, just a firm policy proposal.

Another on a similar theme:



It says: “Cheaper kindergarten [*barnehage*] and free SFO [after-school programs] for first-graders.”

These highly specific and nonoffensive, if unambitious, proposals contrast with the sloganeering by some of the other parties. You can tell the kind of centrist or center-left voter the Ap is pitching to.

Here is a recent (July 30, 2021) campaign event, said to be in (South?)-Trøndelag, an Ap stronghold:



There are fourteen activists pictured together here, two of visible foreign-origin and the others either Norwegian or at least passable as such. The party fully embraces the historical color of the Left (another way the whim by someboy at NBC News in or about year 2000 to assign “red” to “Republicans” confuses the color scheme of politics from a US perspective today). Many of them are holding roses, the party’s symbol.

Finally, keeping with the theme that Ap is Norway’s “default” party, we find a simple-seeming campaign poster, showing the party leader Jonas Gahr Støre, the prime-minitser candidate with the simple slogan: “*Most want Jonas as prime minister.*”



It says: “*Most* want Jonas as Prime Minister!” (i.e., Jonas Gahr Støre).

As far as campaign material meant to persuade, this kind of poster is interesting to analyze. Does it not feel like an *argumentum ad populum* fallacy? Maybe it does get encourage people to get into the Ap’s camp, at least for the action of voting, not by any argument but by stating that its leader is (naturally?) most popular, and by implication (again) that the Ap is Norway’s default ruling party, the cool kid’s party, at least among the big-players. So get on board before we leave you behind.

I’d interpret this as a “reminder” to centrist Norwegians and fence-sitters who want to participate in the civic ritual of voting but aren’t sure whom to vote for. The reminder is of the

Ap's long prestige and status as quasi-default ruling party. That is the subtext to this highly simple poster of just six words and one cropped image of one man.

This simple slogan also mirrors some of *Høyre*'s material, such as [the poster showing Erna Solberg with the words "Most Trusted."](#) When you are a first-tier party like Ap or H, you get to do things like this and little else need be said.

Much other material from the Ap seems specifically aimed at smearing Erna Solberg. The Ap political gurus must think is a winning strategy. For some voters in the middle, it might as well be a US-style presidential election after all, Jonas vs. Erna.

As to the other big rival among the first-tier parties, the Center Party (Sp), I see not one trace in Ap material related to the election. Not one mention in the Ap's top-line material, slogan-level. Given how important Sp will be towards government formation, this seems a calculated neutrality and contrasts with the anti-Erna attacks.

The anti-Erna attacks are also I think the only such ads I've seen from any party attacking a named opponent directly, rather than pushing some specific policy point or issue.

The CENTER PARTY [*Senterpartiet*, Sp]: Sp today is like the Rorschach Test of Norwegian politics. Ideologically difficult to pin down or make statements with certainty.

It's clear it doesn't fit as some kind of notch on a Right-to-Left number-line. A lot of parties claim to be "neither Right nor Left," but with Sp it seems more true. In this sense, their name is kind of a case where the name *does* reflect the party's stance, for Norwegian politics has many counter-examples.

Sp is, anyway, grouped with the Left in many cases, and here for convenience's sake. It is in opposition to the Conservative-led government.

Sp is also the clearest, direct-line descendant among any of the first- or second-tier parties, of the old agrarianist political tradition traceable to the late 19th century. (Arguably active far earlier, in the pre-mass-democracy era, and picked up when mass-democracy came on the scene rather than being created by mass-democracy).

Agrarianist politics carried on strongly into the 20th century and still today, and retains a prestige in Scandinavia beyond what it does in most other rich countries.

I do not have a handy analog in today's US politics for Norway's Sp party. The best analog will work for those who know US political history well and recall the agrarian progressives of the late 19th century. The "agrarianists" were never properly classifiable as Right or Left. They of course lived in a different world. The concepts of these two things always change anyway, with both the big two parties in the US of the day having Right and Left elements to them. But the Agrarian Progressive movement was something unique. Thought-experiment: What if a much stronger core of the US Agrarianists' political line came down to us today, and some large share of US Congress members were member of an Agrarian Party of America? That's Sp. (I don't know if that clarifies much or not.)

Sp is the main advocate of protective tariffs in Norway among the big parties. These tariffs are popular with farmers and rural people in today's Norway, and also specifically *un*-popular with the “transatlantic consensus” crowd, a breach of the doctrine of free trade and against the European-integrationist project under NATO protection. Sp's big first-tier-party rivals, H and Ap, are both reliable free-trade advocates. On the tariff issue, Sp finds some common cause with the Socialist Left party (SV).

The modern-day Center Party (Sp) is also popular with semi-dissidents, disgruntled people, and those distrustful of big-party machines (though Sp itself is a fairly big party in itself). This may define the 2010s-/2020s-era Sp more than some nostalgia-toned notion of direct descent from the agrarianism of a century ago.

Right about now the Sp is also the vehicle of one charismatic political figure, **Trygve Slagsvold Vedum** (b.1978), who has high ambitions and made waves last year by declaring he would run for prime minister in the new *Storting*. Vedum is also of Hedmark, as mentioned in a section above, and Hedmark is conveniently enough a sub-theme of this entire analysis (being of interest to me as the origin of some of my ancestors), so he fits right in.

The traditional candidates for prime minister are the Labor Party (Ap) leader and the Conservative (H) leader, the former who leads a “red” coalition and the latter who lead a “blue” coalition. The blue coalition is now led by Erna Solberg (the woman who apologized to the nation for doing a panic-lockdown in March 2020 over a flu-virus and by June 2020 vowed to the nation she would not repeat the mistake), and Sp has positioned itself as opposed to her. The traditional role for Sp and others was to pick a side between Ap or H, red or blue.

The Center Party's popularity in (rural) Hedmark comes from the continuing strength of the agrarian political tradition there, and is boosted by the head of the party, Vedum, being a Hedmark man. The favorite-son effect, seems likely to tip the vote locally enough to give Sp half the seats from Hedmark itself, and other similar places.

Here is a campaign video of Sp leader **Trygve Slagsvold Vedum** speaking. The tone is hardly what one expects a politician to look or sound like. I would guess this partly reflects Norwegian

political culture in general, and is partly a persona which Vedum thinks will help attract a specific kind of voter:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqT2_RJJEAg

I cannot understand the words he is saying, but Vedum looks and sounds like an Iowan to me.

When my father's Norwegian ancestors left Norway for Iowa in the 1880s/90s, they carried with them the political orientation, outlook, and attitudes from which Sp also partly descends (as does Ap). It's not a direct relation, and there is about 140 years now of separation, but the relationship between a traditional kind of Upper-Midwest-farmer politics and the Sp is comparable to a cousin-like relationship — descended on somewhat different paths from the same ancestor but often still visibly of the same family.

My father, growing up in rural Iowa, inherited this political tradition along with his genetics. All political parties change over time, either drifting at semi-random because of chance events, single personalities, small cabals that gain influence within the party, or because of changes around them to which they adapt. Transferring one political tradition onto another place can also cause distortions. This can apply *intra*-nationally and *inter*-nationally, and inter-generationally. Knowing both ends, you can see how one ends up as the other somewhat more clearly. I think this applies to most or all these parties in some way. All seem to have parallels in the USA, either in the past or the present.

The Center Party (Sp)'s stances on specific issues can sometimes be hard to sort out from the other parties' stances. Sp's most salient characteristic today may be more of an *attitude*, by which it is more ready, even eager, to stretch consensus opinions, or even appear to break entirely with consensus thinking. To challenge sacred cows (which, in our time, are all political and not religious) while still being respectable. To say certain things many are thinking but which few dare say. This attitude, positioning, and image are said to have attracted some right-wing Progress Party (FrP) supporters to the Sp for their (Sp's) willingness to break with PC for its own sake. Comparisons to an important aspect of the Trump movement of 2015-16 in the USA present themselves for the taking, and there are people making them.

A Norwegian named Mette Wiggen (born ca. 1965?), active in academia in the UK, earlier this year wrote something like what I've attempted here but much shorter and with a narrower focus. [Mette Wiggen described the Center Party \(Sp\) as:](#)

“...centrist, populist, anti-EU, nationalist...led by the charismatic and talkative Trygve Slagsvold Vedum, who travels the country joking and talking with ‘ordinary’ people and promising to help them to stand up to the ‘elites’...”

Sp is much more “populist” than Ap, its big rival to the Left, to be sure.

Some observers or partisans almost want to position Sp on the Right. Doing so risks pigeonholing “populism,” as a concept, as somehow inherently of the Right, which cheapens the purpose of using the word at all.

The people who want to imply Sp is now almost something like a right-wing party includes Mette Wiggen, the author of the above-linked election commentary. Someone who reads Professor Wiggen's overview of the election, and who reads it with few or no preconceptions about the political parties of Norway, may mentally place the Sp as at, or near, or potentially *secretly* on, the kind of populist-nationalist Right, the kind of political element over which some love to drum up fear.

A “Red Party” spokeswoman is regularly making the same allegations, warning that a conspiracy is afoot by the Sp to hand back power to the Right on the back of non-Right votes.

I get the feeling the alarmism doesn’t quite work. We could be so bold as to take the Sp at their word. In their rhetoric they are primarily hitting *Høyre* (Conservatives) and the FrP (the right-wing support party, in government 2013-2020 until breaking with *Høyre*).

We do see at least some actors on the Right floating the idea of an H-Sp-FrP government for an Erna Solberg third term, or possibly an Sp-H-FrP government under a Prime Minister Vedum (an FrP official floated this idea to the press at the end of July 2021).

But Sp *says* it wants to form a government with the Ap.

If the Sp takes over the government as the leading party under a Prime Minister Vedum, it’ll most likely be something near business-as-usual, just more colorful and slightly less in the predictable-safe-zone, for better or worse.

Even if Vedum abandons the PM bid and keeps his word on cooperating with the Ap, the Sp delegation in the *Storting* will not be traditional establishment-center-left types, but no one ever thought they were that.

Center Party [Sp] seats in 2017:

19 (of 169)

Expected to win in **2021:**

30 to 40

The Sp will likely be the biggest single winner in terms of net seat gain in 2021. With a big enough net gain in seats, it could turn bolder. A Vedum as prime ministership is possible.

They could more than double their seat total from 19 to about 40. With 40, they'd hold nearly a quarter of the Storting's total seats and possibly exceed Labor (Ap)'s, opening the door to "talkative" Mr. Vedum talking his way into the prime ministership. What he and they (Sp) would do with the prime ministership is unclear. What effect on Norway, its politics, its world-position, or its party-system and trajectory in the 2020s, 2030s, and beyond, is not clear to me.

Here is some of the Sp's campaign promotional material in 2021:



 **Senterpartiet** ✓
August 3 at 5:29 AM · 🌐

Hvilken sak gjorde at Trygve Slagsvold Vedum ble interessert i politikk?
Og hva ville han bli da han var liten?

Bli bedre kjent med vår statsministerkandidat her 🍀👉



SETERPARTIET.NO
Bli bedre kjent med Trygve
Nær folk i hele Norge!

The Sp characteristically here shows itself as close to the land. Sp leader and aspiring prime minister is shown on a tractor and clad in flannel. It gets the point across.

The accompanying text says:

“What made Trygve Slagsvold Vedum interested in politics? And when he was a boy what did he want to be when he grew up? Get to know our prime minister candidate here [link]!”

Next, some scenes from a late-July 2021 live-stream in which Sp party leader meets and chats with regular(-looking) people at some scenic site. It is well-produced with several cameras cutting live between shots.

The first is the opening shot, also live, showing people milling around this scenic overlook point. The Sp party’s slogan, “*naer folk*” means “near people,” i.e., “close to the people” (“*naer folk*” is one of the easy examples of how close the language is to English).



It says: “Sp — *naer folk* (near people). The broadcast starts soon.”





I assume the several people they bring out are Sp activists, and maybe this is stated openly, if it's not obvious from the ordinary people wearing matching jackets with the Sp logo on them. But the way the event *looks*, it seems like they are just ordinary people passing by who have a

friendly chat with the gregarious Sp leader, Trygve Slagsvold Vedum (bald, at left), about life and their hopes and dreams. One chat with Trygve and one surely realizes the slogan on how *naer folk* the Sp is was right after all!

Looking at Center Party's three top candidates for Hedmark, the party leader's home-region, the first two of whom will definitely be (directly) elected and the third very likely to be elected:

(1.) Party leader ***Trygve Slagsvold Vedum***, set to become one of Norway's most important political figures and possibly even prime minister;

(2.) ***Emilie Enger Mehl*** (b.1993) who entered the Storting in 2017 at age 24, previously of the Hedmark Regional Parliament (*Hedmark Fylkesting*) (2015-17), which means she immediately entered politics after graduating with a law degree from the University of Oslo (2015?); and

(3.) ***Per Martin Sandtrøen*** (b.1985), a lower-profile local figure, originally of Tynset in the interior, north of Hedmark. If the Sp's luck holds, he'll be in.

Emilie Enger Mehl, as one the Sp's nineteen *Storting* members, had outsized influence on some of its policy lines for her age, and was one of those urging a slow-down on a 2010s-era push by the Sp to get Norway out of the EEA (EUropean Economic Area) — a form of “Norwexit.” The party was full-steam-ahead on it, but then in mid-2020 backed down, saying they needed a better idea of what kind of agreement would replace the EEA framework regulating trade. In 2021 she made headlines for calling to cut some or all of the aid Norway sends abroad via the EEA (5.7 billion NOK, or \$655 million USD).

A recent (Aug. 6) video of Emilie Enger Mehl pitching the Sp's platform in video format, in which she calls for national ownership over certain strategic resources, a strong *national* democracy (i.e. not supranational), and independence from Brussels bureaucrats:



🍀 Emilie Enger Mehl 🍀 2.kandidat Hedmark



Senterpartiet

<https://www.facebook.com/senterpartiet/videos/157499813073381/>

The other Hedmark Sp figure who is going to be sent to the Storting, Per Martin Sandtroen has a political career which began much more steadily and traditionally than the instant-*Storting*‘er Emilie Enger Mehl’s, now an Sp party celebrity still in her twenties.

For the last four years, Per Sandtroen has been a “*Vararepresentant*” for the Sp in the *Storting*, a position effectively meaning a second-string or backup *Storting* member who comes if the main elected representative is unavailable, is away, is sick or incapacitated and cannot come, or who dies. Also, if a given *Storting* member is promoted to government minister, the backup member

(*Vararepresentant*) holds the seat indefinitely until either a new election or the end of the original member's tenure as minister.

The Norwegian constitution mandates that government ministerships (i.e., cabinet positions except with more power) must be taken by an elected *Storting* member, but when that happens the person also must vacate his or her seat for as long as he or she holds the minister post, which is a common way these *Vararepresentant* people get to be (temporarily) full *Storting* members, sitting in for them in the *Storting* as long as needed. Hence the concept of "seat" as distinguished from "person." A seat is permanent, but people shift in and out.

This system of *Storting* members held "in reserve" is a clever system, another way their system has safeguards to keep things above board and as a way to guarantee the *Storting* is always in full session, using backup people if needed. The Sp in 2017-21 has 19 members and by law is allocated the same number plus 3, for 22 backup members. I don't know how often Per Martin Sandtrøen was able to swoop down due to somebody's absence and sit in. His time to be a "starting" player and not a "bench" player likely approaches.

Per Martin Sandtroen was first active with Sp in the 2010s, in his twenties, and appeared low down on the Sp party-list for some elections. That is how he got this "reserve" status (*Vararepresentant*). During the 2015-16 Merkel Migrant Crisis era, Per Martin Sandtroen publicly rallied support to keep Norway clear of entanglements with the EU which he warned would only bring bad news to Norway, which is in line with the Sp's long-term position of opposing EU membership.

The **SOCIALIST LEFT** Party [*Sosialistisk Venstreparti, SV*]: A socially left-wing party.

SV is of the the type of party which inherited an old-line, economically-left-wing political tradition from past generations but which, in the late 20th and early 21st century largely drifted into a position as something else, socially left-wing. They seem more interested in cultural causes, in that set of shifting issues commonly called social justice.

Some of the old slogans about economics may still be there (SV still declares allegiance to doctrinaire economic Marxism), but their hearts are not in them. Their hearts *are* in endless struggle for any available group which they can plausibly claim is oppressed in some way, and which, being oppressed, is in need of noble protectors. Arriving on the scene, on horseback, to a heroic musical score, is the SV.

In today's Norway, this means immigrants, religious minorities (read: Muslims) — and actually any racial-religious minority, anywhere in the West — and feminism, gay rights, and since a few years ago Transgender rights. In a few years something else no one has thought of yet.

Some of the positions Socialist Left takes seem to be almost parodies of the general type. Easily parodied it may be, but its outlook has a lot of cultural cachet in our world today. Many go along to get along, but the SV base are the kind of people who declare themselves as the purest of the good, and while of course they are against the Bad People they are also in the field to pressure the shy or weak-willed among the other Good People. In political-party terms, as a pressure on the Ap to not drift too much away from the Left.

One case in the news in August 2021 is that of SV political figure *Karin Andersen* (b.1952), who has started a (headline-making) campaign to pressure the government to repatriate [an illegal immigrant from Djibouti who was deported in 2019](#) after many years residence in the Oslo area. He had entered the system via a claim of political asylum and his application was found to be fraudulent. After much delay he was finally deported/repatriated to Djibouti. Karin Andersen demands he be returned from Djibouti and implies he should even get Norwegian citizenship by dint of the length of residence.

Vil ha tilbake utvist innvandrere: – Mahad er norsk, akkurat som meg, og han bør få tilbake statsborgerskapet

Av Redaksjonen - 5. august 2021 | 15:53



SV-politiker Karin Andersen poserer med utvist innvandrere Mahad Mahumud. Torstein Bøe / NTB scanpix

([Source.](#))

We can ask: Why is a leading SV political figure championing the precedent-setting case of a deported Djibouti man? If this is representative of the SV's priorities today, what do we make of the party's purpose?

The Socialist Left (SV) in Norway seems comparable to the Green Party of Germany in that each exist in an overlapping, Venn-diagram-like relationship with a longer-lineage, softer, establishment, social-democratic party within their respective national politics. In Germany's case, the SPD; in Norway's case, the Ap. In other words, the SV and Ap largely share a common voter pool (same for the SPD and Greens in Germany). For for the one to do well, the other must go down. That will probably happen in 2021 with SV, probably making a small net set gain at the expense of Ap taking a small net seat loss.

In Hedmark, the region of the interior to which I keep returning as an example, the SV is polling well in 2021 for some reason. If it holds, they could even squeak past the Conservatives (*Høyre*, H), locking any party of the Right out of direct seats from Hedmark. It could require enough traditional H voters bolt to the Sp (Center Party) on behalf of their favorite-son candidate — the affable, shaved-head-wearing Sp-leader Trygve Slagsvold Vedum — and the SV to retain its upper-range in polling, to squeak a direct seat in Hedmark.

The previously mentioned Karin Andersen, SV *Storting* member, happens to also be of Hedmark. In fact she is Hedmark's leading SV figure. Elected several times to the *Storting*, Hedmark people did not provide enough votes to secure her a direct seat in 2017, but so prominent is she in the SV party that party bosses put her back in anyway via the 4%-proportional mechanism's bonus seats.

SV has now clearly positioned itself as a force-multiplier for the Labor Party (Ap). Everyone understands that a vote for SV is a more a vote for the Ap-led coalition. Similarly, if in the US there were a small Bernie Sanders Party with many setas in state or national legislature(s), everyone knows such a party would support the Democratic Party and caucus with them.

SV being a natural partner for Ap has always been true, but is probably more true now that there a hard-Left party is on the scene (The Red Party, or R). The SV wants to govern in coalition under the Ap and the feeling is reciprocal. Their radical cousin the Red Party does not share the feeling.

The SV also distinguishes itself by being the only party in which more of its *Storting* representatives specifically declare themselves to be “of no religious affiliation” than of Church of Norway affiliation. (If the Red Party gets seats in 2021, it will certainly be the same.)

Socialist Left [SV] seats in 2017:

11

Expected to win in **2021:**

10 to 18 seats

SV will likely have more seats before and will be consequently be more influential. They did well in 2019 local elections and 2021 may confirm the SV's staying power.

Here is a campaign ad in which SV declares openly that they want to form the left-flank of a Labor Party (Ap) government:



It says: *“A fair Norway. A fair green shift. A red-green government.”*

The SV's own logo is rendered in both green and red here. The accompanying text says:

“A strong SV will bind a new majority to the Left in Norwegian politics. Only in this way do we give Norway the chance to reduce inequality and reach the climate goals!”

The “green” in the “red-green government” slogan they use there seems to mean that the SV itself is a green party and is not in reference to the (so-named) Green Party (or MDG, its acronym in Norwegian). Maybe it could be interpreted as referring to the MDG, it's ambiguous, but the idea is “SV” is Red+Green in and of itself already. Message: “Hey, you, sympathizer with the ‘green’ movement. You might as well vote SV because we're just as good on the green stuff, and better on other things.”

The previously discussed Karin Andersen — lately in the news for pushing for the repatriation of a deported Djibouti man — remains the SV candidate for Hedmark. Here she is (near the top right) among all the top-line SV candidates, the leading candidates for each of the nineteen regional party-lists.



Those among these nineteen who fail to gain a direct-seat can still get into the *Storting* via the proportional-mechanism if SV clears the 4% hurdle, which all polling says they will in 2021.

The text on the poster says: “The summer’s hottest *STORTING*-CANDIDATES. Environment and justice for all.”

Two observations on this group of the leading SV candidates, who will probably form all or almost all of the SV’s *Storting* delegation. (1) The gender ratio: Of the 19, 14 are women and 5 are men; (2) The lack of obvious racial diversity. The latter is a mismatch with the party’s own positioning and rhetoric.

Norway’s *Storting* has been composed of 35-40% women ever since the 1985 election. In 2017, it bumped up to 41% (69 of 169). The parties of the Left often have some kind of quota to keep women numbers up. Is this needed in our time? With the SV fielding 14 women of 19 lead-candidates, the SV might rather need a “male quota,” if balance is the idea...

Finally, I see that 32 individuals who replied to the public Facebook post in which SV posted that graphic of its top-line candidates. Many more “Liked” the post or shared it, but 32 individuals wrote some kind of comment. Of these, 25 had Norwegian-sounding names and 7 had foreign names (surnames: Maroof, Hashimi, Karabulut, Kafia, Perez, Ghayori, Ullah). That is a 22% ratio of foreign names. It may be indicative of the SV voter base today. All the replies/comments were supportive, “SV is the best!”-type messages, so this can be a small “in the wild” sample of support. On the other hand, while all the commenters are (I assume) residents of Norway, some or many of the foreign-named individuals may be foreign citizens and not be eligible to vote in Norway. Even so, the sample is useful for understanding what SV is “about.”

Here is another late-July 2021 post on the SV’s facebook page characteristic of their positioning with the Norwegian political spectrum, dealing with another recent case of a deported illegal immigrant whose case became a *cause celebre*, the so-called Mustafa Case — previously here compared to the US “DACA” order controversially put through in the 2010s (whereby residents illegally [*sin papeles*] in the USA but who entered as minors were to be allowed to stay in the USA indefinitely.)



The news article says: “Mustafa Hasan (18) wins case against the Immigration Appeals Board.”

The SV’s accompanying text celebrates:

“We have been waiting for this! Mustafa gets to try his case again [celebratory emoticon]. Now the Immigration Appeals Board must let him stay in Norway where he belongs.”

The mini-DACA-like result on the horizon here is the SV’s preferred outcome, and the Red party is all-in for Mustafa. If Mustafa *is* allowed to stay — presumably indefinitely, for life if he wants to(?), presumably eventually being given a Norwegian passport (?) — on the basis of his having entered as a minor with a handful of people claiming to be close relatives, even though all of the adults associated with the case were later deported for fraud, that is a big precedent, with major potential consequences.

One wonders if the SV have fully thought this through.

I sense, in the whole thing, a spill-over from US politics (which Norwegians follow and are aware of), on thematic grounds. That the minor case of an unknown person (“Mustafa”) could ascend to the *cause celebre* it became in 2021, one especially championed by the SV party, seems like copycat-politics with the US to me, back even to the original DACA order by Obama about 2014. It’s a similar case except on the micro scale.

The precedent: entering Norway with a minor child might guarantee you the right to stay. Also, one wonders, if Mustafa is given citizenship (as the SV seems to call for), whether the newly minted Norwegian citizen could just chain-migrate the same deported relatives right back into their old Oslo life, despite their deportations and bannings from Norway. Is this the immigration “philosopher’s stone”? This also seems relevant to the various border crises in the US, of late, by which children get smuggled and dumped at the border as a foot-in-the-door for adults, a tactic to achieve the goal of getting in.

What is the SV’s vision of Norway in mid-century and late-century if the Mustafa case is settled with a full-victory for the “Mustafa Must Stay” people, and it becomes precedent? I’m sorry, SV, but I don’t think you’ve thought this through very well. I understand why you’re doing it in the moment. Maybe you think it’s just a one-off. But in any case, why would an ostensible pro-worker party side with potential foreign competitors for domestic labor market?

Here is the SV marking the anniversary of the signing of a UN convention on refugees:

 **SV - Sosialistisk Venstreparti** ✓
July 28 at 5:25 AM · 🌐

Flyktningkonvensjonen fyller 70 år! 🥳 Retten til å søke asyl er nedfelt i menneskerettighetene, men er under stadig press. SV mener at Norge skal føre en solidarisk, rettferdig og raus asyl- og flyktningpolitikk, som følger FNs anbefalinger. Norge må gjøre sin del for verdens flyktninger! ❤️



  288

51 Comments 48 Shares

It says:

The Refugee Convention turns 70! The right to seek asylum is enshrined as a human right, but is under constant pressure. SV believes that Norway should pursue a solidarisk, fair, and generous asylum and refugee policy, which follows the UN's recommendations. Norway must do its part for the world's refugees!

The party is not just signaling here. It really does push migrants and refugees to the top. In another of its recent promotional materials we see SV Oslo member *Marian Hussein* (b.1986) mentioned and celebrated:



Marian Hussein arrived from Somalia in the late 1990s and by the 2010s was closely involved with the SV. She was a low-ranking party-list candidate for the SV on Oslo in 2017. The party arranged for her to be a *Vararepresentant* for the party in the *Storting* (a substitute or backup *Storting* member; see also the case of the Center Party's Per Martin Sandtroen).

Her t-shirt says:

“*Straight Outta Groruddalen.*”

The reference is to famous early hip-hop album “Straight Outta Compton” (1987). An intertwining of Black US hip-hop culture with Norwegian politics. Does that sound like some kind of surrealist joke?

One could also say that a Somali refugee in Norway has no organic connection to Black US hip-hop culture, except racial paragon and continent of ancestral origin, but the “Straight Outta Compton” slogan is appropriated anyway. A good example of the power of US culture. For better or worse, it’s there.

Groruddalen does have one thing in common with Los Angeles’ Compton of the 1980s: It has a large racial majority *not* of the majority-race of the society around it. Groruddalen is one of the areas of Oslo that “flipped,” and hard. Many of its neighborhoods are today Muslim-majority outright and have been for some years. The entire district was immigrant-supermajority by the 2010s, the “flipping” process (including White Flight) having been completed in the 2000s after early steps in the 1990s. The process didn’t move linearly, but began to tilt hard in the late 2000s, and very few White-Norwegians were left after a few years.

A snapshot of Groruddalen in the 2010s:

In 2015, sociologist Halvor Fosli published *Fremmed i eget land* (A Stranger in One’s Own Country), a book based on interviews with 20 ethnic Norwegian residents of Groruddalen. Fosli deliberately chose people who had some level of involvement in their communities—those who had kids in school, for example, or who sat on their co-op boards.

What was it like, he asked them, to become a minority in one’s own corner of the world?

Their answers were disturbing.

Non-Muslim boys in secondary school were leery of coming into the crosshairs of Muslim gangs—but they couldn’t be sure what to avoid doing or saying, because

Muslim classmates judged their conduct according to a set of codes entirely alien to Norwegian society.

As for non-Muslim girls and women, simply going outside alone—to the mall, for instance—earned them the angry stares of long-bearded Muslim men who believed that they should not leave their homes unescorted by males and with their heads uncovered.

(by Bruce Bawer, “The Islamization of Oslo,” City Journal, January 2018.)

Someone (Tore Engen) in the comments to the “Straight Outta Groruddalen” post was critical and got enough “Likes” of his own that his comment is now auto-displayed at the top, funny because it is so critical of the SV. He wrote in part (auto-translated and cleaned up):

1/3 of Oslo’s population are immigrants, and they understand where they can find politicians who want to shovel tax money to them and not ask questions! SV is the prototype of such a party!

I don’t think the SV was always a party like this. I don’t know enough to guess at when or how it changed.

The RED Party [*Rødt*, R]: Much of the same general description as for SV (above) applies to the Red Party, as regards the drift from an economic-Left of yester-century into a cultural-Left of today.

The Red Party (R) is more radical and anti-establishment than SV. Unlike SV, Red is also rhetorically hostile to the Labor Party (Ap).

To use a sweeping generalization, R seems like the electoral arm of a kind of radical politics which I first noticed in Germany in 2007 and which, in recent years, has become a cliché in US politics: “Antifa.”

R in Norway was brought into the world only in 2007 as something closer to a blank slate than SV had been, without the direct historical ties to old-line Marxism, therefore reflecting a recent politics of something like left-anarchism, radical defense of all minority groups, and a forever-war against what they call the Far Right, or perhaps against all the Right, including parties like *Høyre*.

The Red Party was founded right when I was in Germany, my first time ever abroad anywhere. In 2007-08 I was making daily and effortless observations of European people, culture, attitudes, politics, and youth-trends. I myself was not a blank slate in 2007, as I would have been (more) had I been there in, say, 1997 as a child. I arrived with certain ideas on Europe, Europeans, and European politics, by then accumulated over several years from the distant vantage of America. I also with a set of my own preconceptions accumulated up to then in my life, some specific to my background, family, experiences (for one, I had tried to study German in high school with mixed success at best — but made stunning and rapid progress on the ground in Berlin within weeks), some the luck of the draw of time/place/whatever. One way or another, I soon learned my way around the scene.

I expect Norway’s Red Party is like a provincial branch of an informal, supra-national sub-culture in the West, especially strong in parts of Western Europe.

A century ago, in the 1920s, there was a certain buffoon and would-be strongman in Italy who was once asked to describe the political platform, or program, of his new party, which he was

calling the Fascist Party. “Oh, you want to to know our program? Our program is to smash the skulls of the socialists,” replied he. The mirror-image of the attitude of that statement by Mr. Mussolini can be understood to be the “Antifa” program. A forever-war against the Right, the definition of which is flexible as needed.

The political-policy goals of the Fascist Party were always vague. A political-mythos was more important for the whole operation than any specifics. I think this applies to the hard-Left and Antifa-adjacent groups in Europe, and now common in North America (perhaps first seen in this form in 1999 at the Seattle anti-WTO protest but mostly very quiet until the mid-2010s).

Therefore the same applies to Norway’s Red Party — specifics are less important than attitude, a hatred of the Right and a desire to fight the Right forever, to the extent that if they ever got full power they may not even know quite what to do with it, for their identity is entirely oppositional.

By the 2000s, among the relatively young age-cohorts — b.1970s and b.1980s age-cohorts, and by then among the emerging b.1990s cohort just starting to “age into” politics and early political awareness — there was an identifiable subset of internal-cultural crusaders. They generally had no organized political party but they did have a strong street presence (sometimes called “extra-parliamentary opposition”). Any youth-oriented movement is bound to have a heavy street presence. Sometimes when academics turn to these questions they can either miss things like this or be unable to prove them with data and hence back off of them, but this phenomenon, of a Hard-Left “Antifa” cultural-political phenotype, which had tinges of the Nihilist to it, was there for sure.

We, the Americans observing the scene in 2007-08 Germany whom I knew and discussed the matter with, came to see that street-activist politics was more conspicuous in Europe (or at least Germany) than in the USA, including the feverish activities of the left-wing radicals, and some street activism likewise by right-wing radicals, the two enjoying sniping at each other, politically-metaphorically speaking, for sport.

(I wrote on my blog about this years before the word “Antifa” entered US-mainstream discourse; you can use the now-well-functioning Search function to find it, if interested. I found deciphering the constant stream of political propaganda I found a great way of practicing

German, exactly the kind of engagement one *must* do to advance one's skills, and which one tends to do when on-the-ground without particular effort.)

So we can say left-wing, anarchist-type politics was an identifiable kind of youth-politics among White-Western young people in Europe. Common enough to be unable to be missed by any but someone doing an ostrich routine (head in the ground). In shorthand we can call this Antifa. It was not a shadowy political terror group, as some Fox News types using the term of late may think or (at least) be willing to imply.

A left-wing anarchist politics full of male-youth energy of the kind some cultures tend to direct more into team-sports (see also: UK soccer riots), even *with* some use of political violence by masked fanatics on its fringes, does not *automatically* mean the whole thing is some kind of mega Baader Meinhof Gang. These were not bad people. But they were hardened radicals, with the agenda-setting element fully committed to the whole forever-war-against-the-Right thing, as a kind of personal identity, which is a little puzzling and probably not very healthy, though for many of them it was basically a weekend thing and in their day-jobs or student-life they were reasonable and friendly people.

But the true-believer element really believed in the moral righteousness of it, of the need to suppress of the Right in all its forms, including stepping a legal grey zone and, on occasion and as need be, clearly past the grey zone.

Some of their cadres lived in communal arrangements and were occasionally you'd read of raids by police in connection with some kind of violent plot. There are a few good movies about this scene, and I think *The Edukators* (2004) (German title: *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*) basically gets it right, or at least as I encountered it in 2007-08 and when I returned for a time in December 2010, and it all looked much the same when I passed through in early 2017 (post-Merkel Migrant Crisis, some telltale signs of which were around).

This is all a lot of qualification and sidebar-ing, but I suspect Norway's "Red Party" is basically understandable as "The Antifa Party" in political terms, and that its base are people from that milieu.

An actual, competitive political party — which Norway’s Red Party is by now — would of course *not* be some kind of cartoonishly one-dimensional, black-clad, street-violence-ready, gaggle of anarchist cadres. The “Antifa Party” label is descriptive of the milieu.

There’s something else specific to Norway to mention with regard to the Red Party. Norway itself has a political mythos around the German occupation of 1940-45 which tends to naturally empower this element domestically, like slipping them a few extra trump cards, every hand. All Norwegians absorb this mythos by osmosis. As a country occupied for five full years, it’s understandable enough, but there are probably much bigger reasons that this mythos is so strong far beyond my scope here.

Some seek to be the moral guardians-of-virtue by being most fanatically and uncompromisingly against the Right. This doesn’t *necessarily* need the WWII occupation narrative, but it helps a lot. Those within any political culture who, by circumstance, have a guardians-of-virtue mythos around them get lots of bonus points. I expect this is a big structural reason why a party like the Red Party has been able to mobilize successfully and now is set to enter formal-level national politics via the prestige of the *Storting*, whereas a similar party of the hard-Right (the analog might be *Alliansen*, a fourth-tier party of the Right, discussed above) goes nowhere.

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The Red Party existed on the margins for several cycles in Norway, as might be expected given its radical origins and confrontationalism. It did have a committed core of supporters, though, in line with the presumable level of direct “Antifa” support among the voting public. Red’s vote-totals for the *Storting* were:

- 1% in 2009,
- 1% again in 2013, and
- 2.5% in Sept 2017.

In each case, the share of the youth vote was certainly considerably higher. Allowing a legal voting age of 16 (which some in Norway support) would boost Red even more, perhaps

effectively probably shifting a seat or two to Red each time? I myself might have voted for a party like this at age 16 or 17.

The boost in 2017, from a previous base of 1% to a new total of 2.5%, I interpret/guess to be a backlash against the swelling tide of Rightist national-populism across Europe, the characteristic political movements of the 2010s in the West: Brexit, the surprise emergence of Germany's AfD in the weeks after the Merkel Migrant Crisis, the rise of populist and right-wing parties in Italy, the biggest showing yet for a Le Pen in France, and many comparable cases elsewhere. It seemed like the Right was on the march everywhere (though its quality of leadership was often poor). And then there was the Orange Man Across the Sea, which I assume galvanized the Left and Hard-Left in Norway something like it did in the USA itself.

Polls suggest Red is likely to break the 4%-threshold in the September 2021 election and take several seats, a big breakthrough for the party. The latest polls all have it above 4%, so don't bet against them except on very long odds.

Red Party [R] seats in 2017:

1 (of 169) (Moxnes, directly elected from Oslo)

Expected to win in **2021:**

2 to 13 seats

Red's imminent entry into the *Storting* presents the big players with a dilemma, for if R performs at the top-end of its possible range and takes something as high as 13 seats, that is 13 which no one will work with (they say), making the electoral math more difficult all around.

Red got its first-ever *Storting* member in 2017 by scooping up a direct-mandate in Oslo City. The party leader, *Bjørnar Moxnes* (b.1981), took the seat as head candidate for Oslo.

Party leader Moxnes will definitely retain his seat in 2021. Polls suggest Oslo could give Red up to **9%** of its vote this time. In more rural regions, Red will do less well. (To touch on the region I have been using as a case study throughout, R in Hedmark is expected to take <2% of votes. Hedmark usually votes “red,” but will unlikely ever vote “Red.”)

Bjørnar Moxnes strikes me as a well-presenting but archetypal left-wing activist of the type of his age-cohort and which I remember well.

Anti-Left satirists in Norway depict him like this:



But that is not really an accurate caricature. I doubt he uses a Karl Marx mug or carries small notebooks with huge red stars on them, and he seems to be often clean-shaven and when not with a well-kempt beard. But the purpose of caricature is to exaggerate some supposed qualities, and the Hard-Left politics suggested by these things may get close.

This is how he often looks, though he is often also seen in a suit and tie with a hairstyle showing use of hair-gel sculpted into one kind of wavy shape or other. The leader of the most left-wing party in Norway looks more like a young capitalist dandy than the Center Party’s leader.



In the 2015-16 Bernie Sanders campaign, in another of the (not hard to find) cases of US politics influencing Norwegian politics, Red Party people started using the slogan “Feel the Bjorn” (or #FeelTheBjorn, in social-media-language), lifted from Sanders people’s “Feel The Bern / #FeelTheBern.” It doesn’t quite work because Bjorn doesn’t pun as well as “Bern” does. And *bjørn* means “bear” in Norwegian, so their slogan meant “Feel the Bear”...

Moxnes turned 26 the year I first encountered the type in Europe (2007). Moxnes claims that as a teenager in the 1990s, he was inspired to join the most left-wing groups he could find after noticing Neo-Nazis becoming more active in his area. The continuing influence of 1930s-40s narratives on Western culture explains it, I think. Some people of my generation have chosen to base their identities on role-playing the 1930s, on both sides. The cultural cachet of the Norwegian Resistance narrative clearly inspires or empowers this kind of person, which means his teenage foray into the Far-Left ended up having sticking power.

The Red Party will have hundreds of thousands of new voters over its former (pre-2017) base. I wonder if it is (1.) primarily taking hardliner votes previously unenthusiastically voting SV, Ap, or others (minor parties), *or* (2.) if Red is primarily activating previously disengaged persons, often young, often of the kind who took on a political identity in formative years similar to the one Bjørnar Moxnes embraced. They are today of the b.1980s and b.1990s cohorts, and now

getting well into the b.2000s cohort — of whom the Swedish moralist and scold Great Thunberg is one [born Jan. 2003]).

A third factor, besides peeling off some Ap and SV voters and activating a usually-young ‘Antifa’-sympathizing cultural voter (the latter being R’s true activist base), is the appeal to immigrants.

In the September 2021 election, [it is said](#) that 321,200 people of foreign origin have the right to vote, out of 3,876,200 total voters in Norway, or 8.3% of total. I expect most of those are of non-European origin, for EU passport holders or the like would be fine with keeping their birth citizenship in most cases. And I believe many more non-Westerners in Norway retain their original citizenship.

A limerick which never existed but could have, based on the medieval pitch used to sell indulgences: Once upon a time, every time an immigrant “springs” into possession of Norwegian papers, a coin in the Labor (Ap) Party’s coffer “rings.” It means non-European immigrants used to block-vote for the Labor Party — per election data from Statistics Norway. With the rise of viable left-wing parties, SV and as of this year also the Red Party, which side with immigrants as one of their core moral crusades upon which they base their existence, the non-Western immigrant vote might split Ap/SV/R.

The immigrant vote will boost both SV and Red. Given the tight possible margins, the immigrant vote could even be the difference between a sub-4% result and an over-4% result for R.

The Red Party could be a big winner of the coming election in net seat gain terms. It all depends on keeping above the 4%-threshold. As long as they can do that, and most recent polling makes it look like they will for sure, they’ll likely take around 10 seats in the *Storting*. If they perform at the very best of their polling range and get lucky consistently in marginal races for direct-mandate seats, they could take as many as 13.

The Red Party’s logo:



The choice of using a star as logo is possibly inherited directly from a predecessor the *Arbeidernes Kommunistparti*, a Maoist outfit founded in the early 1970s.

A political poster the Red Party released in early August 2021:



“Did you know: the *richest 1%* have over *20 times* the wealth of the average person?”

Accompanying text says the richest 10% have 58% of the private wealth in Norway. Implication: Time to seize fatcats' assets and redistribute?

Another one makes the implied point more explicit:



It says: “Yes to a higher wealth tax on billionaires.”

What is meant by billionaire? I assume it refers to those who have at least one billion NOK (Norwegian kroner), not billionaires in USD. One billion NOK is \$112,500,000 USD at the

current exchange rate. In USD terms this slogan may mean a higher wealth tax on hundred-millionaires. Granted that's still a lot of money.

For this one the accompanying text from the Red Party says:

Salmon billionaire Witzøe believes he should pay less wealth tax. But the truth is, he pays too little. Agree?

Norway now runs a system whereby all wealth-holdings above 1,500,000 NOK (\$170,000 USD) are taxed at 0.85% per year, separate from the yearly income-tax which is taxed a famously high rate of its own. This obviously incentivizes sending assets overseas for the really wealthy. I don't know how they deal with that problem. Someone well off but not super-rich, with a net-worth in the \$300k [USD] range, is on the hook for \$1,100 extra lump-sum the wealth tax per year (0.85% of assets above \$170k USD).

These threats of higher taxes on the wealthy has led some of the wealthy to consider emigrating, including some who control major companies like Witzøe. He is now only 28 years old but is Norway's ten richest people, after recently receiving control of the salmon-fishing company his father, who built the company and retired. It seems to be the son Witzøe who has made specific statements to the press threatening to leave Norway if a Red-Green government increases taxes, especially the wealth tax.

This is a dilemma for the Red Party, or any party which advocates big tax hikes hitting the non-idle rich. But Red Party people have [chosen to](#) double down, ignore the dilemma, and shout back: "There's the door! We don't need you. We'll nationalize your entire industry you are in and administer it publicly." This is what the Red Party said. They also say "state ownership that can be used to further develop industrial production." This is rhetoric you'll never hear in the USA.

Red is talking too of nationalizing the railway system in Norway and of public ownership of other industries, and on the need to break the "industry-consensus" by which Norwegian political parties have agreed to stay away from the "geese that lays the golden eggs."

Seizing assets of fatcats and running them in communal ownership is a consistent theme with the Red Party.

Like the SV, Red publicly celebrated the “Mustafa” case in late July 2021, the possibly-precedent-setting, “Norwegian DACA”-like case involving a Mideast-origin migrant brought to Norway illegally while underage. They demand on principle that “Mustafa” stay in Norway. The USA’s DACA was ordered by a president (Obama); Norway’s mini-DACA (?) comes through a court.

On this front, Red is also boasting about how its Oslo City second candidate is of foreign origin: *Seher Aydar*. Born in Turkey to Kurdish parents in 1989, she arrived in Norway in the early 2000s. Already by the late 2000s she had become active with the Red Party’s youth wing. That was during Red’s wilderness period when it was in the 1%-electoral-ghetto, out of which it started to emerge in the end of the 2010s. So Seher Aydar has been around R a long time.

Rødt July 19 at 11:05 AM · 🌐

Gladnyhet: Det kan bli historisk mange kvinner på Stortinget etter valget i 2021. En av de som kan komme inn er Rødts 2. kandidat i Oslo, Seher Aydar.

DAGSAVISEN.NO
En plass blant århundrets kvinner
Etter årets valg håper Seher Aydar å kunne kjempe mot Forskjells-Norge...

441 Likes 25 Comments 4 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

Asbjørg Knutsen Da blir det mange pratemaskiner

Seher Aydar is probably characteristic of a fair portion of the Red Party's new base. And if Red performs slightly above expectations in Oslo, she could enter the *Storting* as a direct-mandate. Even if that comes up short, she will still remain a major party figure. Given that she has the trust of the party and leader Moxnes, she should be able to get into the *Storting* on one of the bonus seats.

A top comment ("Most Relevant") someone had on this story: "There will be a lot of *pratemasiner*." I take *prate* (chatting) + *maskiner* (machines) as used here to mean that a lot of people will make a lot of indignant noises about this.

A more typical member of the core of this party is *Storting* candidate *Marie Sneve Martinussen* (b.1985), apparently multi-generational Leftist and active throughout her adult life with the Red Party. She appeared as a candidate in the 2009 *Storting* election already, at age 23, but the Red party was never going to win a seat in 2009 so it was just for show. Now, though, twelve years later, Marie Sneve Martinussen will likely enter the *Storting*, and is guaranteed to do so if Red clears the 4%-hurdle.

Here is Marie Sneve Martinussen doing a regular livestream, a brief chat about political issues.



She was talking about housing inaffordability.

She appears in more Facebook-posted videos for Red Party than the party's own head, Moxnes.

But more interesting is her own biography and "political ancestry":

Marie Sneve Martinussen's wikipedia page identifies her as the granddaughter of a certain Norwegian "partisan" in the 1940s, Iver Håkon Sneve (1916-2002), a Communist Party activist, trained in the USSR to conduct clandestine operations and espionage against the Germans in occupied Norway. He later (1944) broadcast propaganda in Norwegian via Radio Moscow.

In the Cold War, people suspected Grandpa Sneve of spying for the USSR given his wartime ties and politics, and into mid-life and beyond his choices in the 1940s dogged him. By the end of his life, though, he was presumably a celebrated figure on the Left.

I would here call back again to my point regarding an institutional pressure within Norwegian (political-)culture, the national-mythos of the Resistance. It clearly boosts parties like this one (Red) also and deflates parties of the Right anywhere to the right of *Høyre* to below perhaps their natural level.

Popular novels are often published celebrating the Resistance and so on. (I presume the novels/movies produced and consumed in Norway in recent decades are *sans* the parts about any training in, or ties to, the USSR; I presume they present the partisans as *sui generis*).

Here we have upcoming *Storting* member Marie Sneve Martinussen, a living link to the celebrated Norwegian Resistance of 1940-45! The whole thing is as if written for a movie script, it fits so perfectly.



The **GREEN PARTY** [*Miljøpartiet*, MDG]: An environmentalist party pushing climate-change policies. It has tried to resist being tossed into a “left-wing Green” stereotype bucket.

They claim to be neutral on most things and that their only demand is action on climate, environment, renewable energy, and things like that.

Is the MDG really a party of centrist Greens? What does that mean? For convenience’s sake, and because they have said directly that they would much prefer to work under a Labor Party (Ap) government, MDG are grouped with the Left for these purposes.

Like the Red Party, the MDG is also quite new, at least in national profile. It emerged beyond the fringe only in the 2010s. By the time of their emergence into a major-profile party, Norway was one of a few countries that had attained a level of international prestige for sustainable energy, and many in Norway are hot on keeping the lead. It makes Norway look like a moral superpower on the Climate issue, which is an attractive position to many.

You would think this means Norway would have a strong Green Party, but in fact it never has. Prime Minister Erna Solberg recently addressed the question:



Solberg: - We do not need the Greens in Norway

By “we do not need the Greens in Norway” what she meant was that the other parties were green enough and a specific Green Party is superfluous. That is one way of explaining why Norway never had a Green Party of note, until now.

MDG has never gotten above the 4%-threshold, but it did take one seat in 2017 in one electoral region — Oslo City. Opinion polls this time consistently show MDG above 4% nationally, which ensures them a fair number of seats.

MDF will probably be a third-tier party in the early 2020s. Their big test is coming up. It is easier to build a party and an agenda when on the outside than successfully manage the same from the inside.

As for whether MDG are Left or Right, this is what an MDG spokesman wrote in response to a commenter on Youtube [last month](#) (machine-translated):

“We no longer distinguish between red and blue politics [Red = Ap/Labor; Blue = Høyre/Conservative]. Red and blue politics, or the Left and the Right, were created in response to the problems that came with industrialization in the 19th century. [...] But we have made it clear that it is the Left we will cooperate with after the election, as the Right has not been able to implement real climate policy in the eight years they have ruled the country.”

I also have [a long discussion on MDG \(Green Party\) figure Lan Marie Berg](#) (b.1987) below in comments 6 and 7. She is of the MDG’s leading figures now and her case was interesting enough for a long aside about her and about what’s going on with her.

The long story short: Lan Marie Berg is set to enter the *Storting* at the head of the MDG party-list for Oslo after six years on the Oslo City Council, but she fell into a local scandal in 2020-21 for which she was expelled from the Oslo City Council. The council found, after investigation, that Lan had mismanaged funds. Lan may recover from the whole thing by the time of the *Storting* election in September, or perhaps she was never hurt by it among would-be MDG voters anyway.

Here is Lan in 2019 with Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg:



Something else about the Lan intrigues me. Besides her background (on which, see comments). It is the type of power-play which she used to counter the scandal after it hit. It was one almost calculated to be guaranteed to work in today's West ([see comment](#)), and shows again a parallel between Norway and the USA, in this case through both evolving the same kinds of things in very recent times along a parallel track.

The MDG's Lan Marie Berg may well be a national-level (*Storting*-level) political figure in the 2020s and beyond, and is unlikely to make the same kind of stupid mistakes she made in the mismanagement and fund-wasting scandals for which she was expelled from the Oslo City Council.

Legally, morally, and politically, Lan was responsible, but it may have been shabby work or corruption by aides or hangers-on, people she was not properly supervising. In that sense she

should have chosen better people and should choose better people next time, or if she must have the corner-cutters or cloppy-workers, she'd better hire a second set to monitor the first set.

The critics say this kind of graft is inherent in big-spending Green politics. But the mystique of being on the leading edge of renewable-energy, etc., remains.

Green Party [MDG] seats in 2017:

1

Expected to win in **2021:**

2 to 10, certain to include Lan Marie Berg.

The Green Party (MG) may be a minor player in an Ap-led government, if they need a boost to make a majority. There is no real chance MDG will work with H and definitely not with FrP.

MDG's overall position in Norwegian politics will considerably firm up when it enters the *Storting* in 2021. Like all the third-tier parties, its exact seat total will depend on whether it can keep above the 4%-threshold, which is not guaranteed.

After the Lan Marie Berg scandal, the MDG dipped below 4% in a few polls, but I have a feeling they will cross the finish line safely above the 4%-hurdle.

OTHERS. There are several minor (“fourth-tier”) left-wing parties, none of which have any chance of getting *Storting* seats but all still have at least some role in the political system simply by showing their banner in public.

The more significant of the minor parties are single-issue parties (like the Health Party [*Helsepartiet*] — head candidate [Anne-Lise Juul](#)), interest-group parties (like the Pensioners Party) and the occasional “joke” party or ironic protest party, all of which are problematic to group as Left or Right even stretching the definition.

There are three or four minor parties which are coherently ideological and of the Left:

- **The Communist Party of Norway** (*Norges Kommunistiske Parti*) – Old-line Marxist ideologues, I assume. Of the kind who print out treatises, often from public in Internet cafes, for distribution on street corners?
- **Feminist Initiative** (*Feministisk initiativ*) – Described as for “intersectional feminism and anti-racism.” Enough said.
- **Sentrum** (*Partiet Sentrum*) – It’s unclear what they’re for but they claim to be a coalition from across the spectrum. Only formed in September 2020, and the name they use is suspiciously similar to the first-tier Center Party (Sp, *Senterpartiet*). The main agenda seems to be to promote “Agenda 2030,” also known as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Pirate Party** – It’s not clear whether they should be grouped with the fourth-tier parties of the Left or not. The people who hang around this party are often freethinkers, free-speech activists, and sundry kinds of less- and even non-ideological eccentrics, I think. For a time in the 2010s, some Pirate parties in other countries looked to be doing surprisingly well, but that time is past.

None of these parties is likely to exceed 0.1% of the vote.

Summary of the Left-of-Center parties, of the third tier and up

The parties of the Left profiled here:

- Labor (Ap)
- Center Party (Sp)
- Socialist Left (SV)
- Red (R)
- Green (MDG)

In 2017, this set of parties took 81 of the 169 seats in the *Storting*. (Ap: 49 seats; Sp: 19 seats; SV: 11 seats; R: 1 seat, Green: 1 seat.)

The third-tier parties Red and MDG (Greens) each failed to breach the 4%-threshold which reduced their number of seats, but both will get over 4% this time.

In 2021, the core of a Center-Left government, Ap+SV, may get a combined seat total in the 50s, or as high as 60 with luck. Since a majority is 85 seats, they are far short. Tacking on the Greens will not be enough, and they (say that they) won't consider working with the Red Party. They could peel off some of the lesser parties of the Right, if they get in, but much easier would be to just work with the Center Party.

Despite the complicated situation when viewed up close, **Jonas Gahr Støre**, the Labor Party (Ap) leader, is still the bettors' favorite to be next prime minister.

Støre is like a consensus centrist, of a recognizable type across the West in the past (at least) twenty years than a true man of the Left, but he will have people on his left flank from forms a harder-Left — the SV, his inevitable coalition partner — and pressure from the radical Red Party. Perhaps there will be some relationship with the MDG (Greens), depending on how all the seats fall when the smoke clears and how negotiations go after the election.

Things may be looking better for the Left than they did in the 2010s, but less good for the Ap itself (and better for left-wing rivals SV and Red), even though it remains the most plausible government-leading party.

The cynic will say that it will not make much difference if it's Jonas Støre or if it continues to be Erna Solberg of the *Høyre* Party, the traditional big rival. Little change, they'll say, except for the shuffling of a few different faces in and out of different government ministries.

Both H and Ap are on board with (slightly different flavors of) the so-called “transatlantic consensus,” but either one may be beholden to ideological parties on their flanks.

Norway is a small, relatively rural, low-population-density country which follows the trends in European politics. None of these political forces or shifts are unique to Norway, though some have distinctly Scandinavian bents or traditions.

Oil drilling is a big issue which divides the broad Left. The two big players, Ap and Sp, both favor oil drilling and continued support for (non-interference with) the oil industry active in the North Sea. The smaller parties of the Left tend to be against Oil, as are of course the Greens. To bring the Greens into government may mean you have agreed to tacitly scale back drilling or some other kind of onerous restrictions, if not stop it outright.

The bigger uncertainty surrounds the Center Party (Sp) and its leader, **Trygve Slagsvold Vedum**, who announced he wants to seek the prime ministership this year. The Sp is getting confident from looking at its chances to be the biggest net-winner in seats, and it knows well that it is the kingmaker. But why settle for being “kingmaker” when you can be “king” (metaphorically, of course, for the King job is taken and not up for election).

In final analysis, there just doesn't seem to be any realistic way a new majority government gets formed without the Center Party. They could potentially even snatch the prime ministership, which would be a surprise development. The stage is set for such a turn. It would take Norway into slightly unknown waters — which is exactly the point, a typical supporter of Sp might say. Either way, they are in a good position. Their solid numbers are inspiring all kinds of theorizing on what they're really up to.

SUMMARY of the Right-of-Center parties, of the third tier and up

The parties of the Right profiled here:

- Conservative [*Høyre*, H],
- Progress [FrP],
- Christian Democratic [KrF],
- Liberal [*Venstre*, V],
- and the potential new entrant the Democrats [formerly DiN, now DEM].

In 2017, this set of parties took 88 of the 169 seats in the *Storting*. (H: 45 seats; FrP: 27 seats; KrF: 8 seats; V: 8 seats).

Without either *Venstre* or KrF, the total was only 80 seats, i.e., short of a majority. This meant that *Høyre* and the Erna Solberg people needed to juggle a four-party coalition (H, FrP, KrF, and V) for a majority, not a favorable position to be in, but it worked out, more or less, and Erna Solberg is still in power for an unbroken eight years.

In 2021, the H+FrP+KrF three-party bloc will almost certainly get *fewer* seats than the same three-party bloc had after the 2017 election (**80**), and will probably take around a combined **65 seats**, well short of the 85 needed for a majority. The net-loss of around 15 seats is enough to lead observers to predict the incumbent Prime Minister Erna Solberg will be out, especially because the Christian Democrats (KrF), a party with a traditionally Center-Right base but now almost of the Left, doesn't like working with the FrP, a party traditionally of the Populist-Right. The KrF would be tempted to defect if it got any kind of reasonable offer.

The Center Party (*Senterpartiet*, Sp) could be a partner for H and the two together might be able to form a governing coalition on their own, which would be a bold move and overturn some cherished apple-carts in the multi-layered (multi-tiered) Norwegian party system. If that happens, the role of the second-tier and third-tier parties of the Right (FrP, KrF, V, and DEMs) is, strictly speaking, superfluous.

The head of Sp is a relatively young man with ambitions of his own to be prime minister, and he might just pull it off when the smoke clears. No one quite knows which side he'll choose, or which side chooses *him* and offers him the better deal, though many seem to assume by default he will choose to work with Ap and hand back power to Norway's traditional governing party. Even the Sp's leader himself may not know what he wants to do until he sees what the lay of the land looks like. But Sp will likely have a *Storting* seat total in the 30s. Might H bow out of the prime ministership and gives it to Sp's man (Vedum) to try to form a non-Socialist coalition and exclude all the parties firmly of the Left from government? I can see a scenario in which that happens.

It's also still possible, if the cards fall in just the right way, that the FrP could stumble their way back into a governing coalition under H and Sp, an H-Sp-FrP government being the FrP's best hope — if they want back into government. Stranger things have happened and if the math works it is a possibility.

The FrP's eleventh-hour leadership change may not have inspired confidence and there has been no net change in polled support which it needs to come in with a strong negotiating hand, and it faces a serious problem of flank attack from the *Demokratene* led by the man they expelled in December 2020 ostensibly over US election comments, Geir Ugland Jacobsen. If the FrP gets a competitive rival to the Right (the *Demokratene*, or a successor to that party), that would be uncharted territory in Norwegian politics.

If you'd asked political observers in the 2000s and up to the mid-2010s or so, you'd have heard many say it was possible that the FrP could have supplied a plausible prime minister candidate, in its own right, by now. Now that we've arrived in the future, we see that is not the political landscape of the early-2020s Norway.

The Flu Virus Panic of 2020-21 and Norwegian politics

In March 2020, the Norwegian government — which in political-party terms really means *Høyre* (Conservative Party) — imposed an extreme lockdown on Norway, doing untold social and economic damage, imposing war-like deprivations on them, even prison-like conditions, plus an artificial recession, and the prospect of long disruptions to children's educations and socialization.

Those of us critical of the shutdowns recognize the pattern Norway followed — caving in to an international chain-reaction of Panic. But a closer look gives a different picture.

We have to give credit to Prime Minister Solberg because, at least for a time, she publicly stated she was wrong and apologized for the lockdowns. A few months after the Panic broke through in March 2020, she publicly apologized to the nation for ordering the shutdowns, in a televised address. She told the people that she had personally panicked and that after consideration of all the facts and expert opinion, she had been wrong to slavishly order a copycat lockdown, that they had not clearly weighed costs and benefits of extreme-Lockdown policies. She vowed not to make the same mistake again.

The apology, I think in early June 2020, was an amazing development. Sadly it didn't last, or at least it didn't augur what it seemed like it might — a full abandonment of Lockdownism and a full Re-Opening on the Swedish line.

Why did Norway return to some degree of managed, top-down Flu Virus Demagoguery? In one way, it looks to be because the international Panic Pandemic Coalition had held ranks, refused to admit the mega-error of embracing panic and extreme measures over a flu virus, inflating its threat by a factor of something like 50x or 100x, even when we knew early on it was in the high flu range (of the kind seen, and generally ignored, many times in the past and almost always only of interest to specialists and academics studying such things). In any case, since the international Panic lasted, Norway, as a loyal member of the international community and having already embraced Lockdownism once, was in no mood to break ranks. The lines were drawn. Its land neighbor Sweden fell on the no-overreaction side of the line early on and stayed there.

If a “flu virus panic” and lockdown had ever happened in the past, any time before 2020 for sure, I have a feeling more world leaders would have apologized. Not only would there be apologies, like Norway’s, but there could even have been prosecutions of the ringleaders of the “lockdown” policy, for arbitrary and unconstitutional rule by fiat of the kind we are supposed to fear and hate (i.e., “dictators”). This time, though, the energies of the global Covid Flu Panic swept back, and whenever anybody trying to defect they often got swept back in, like some evil rip-tide. This happened in Norway.

But — there are also domestic political factors behind Norway’s backsliding into a semi-permanent regime of Flu Virus Demagoguery. Disruptions persist to a great extent as I write (July 2021) but are felt most by anyone attempting any international travel, which Norwegians did frequently in the past.

A strange thing happened in 2020 in politics, which might not have been foreseen, but was respected once the political writing was on the wall:

The ruling party (H) had benefited greatly from the Corona Flu Virus Panic. Enough people were scared enough to cling to the governing party as the face of the government and its edicts — for safety. For the sense of safety. We might not have predicted it would go exactly like that, but it’s not a great surprise it did.

If Erna Solberg is reelected as prime minister, it may be because of the lingering poll-boost from the Panic. In the weeks and months before she dropped the March 2020 copycat Lockdown on Norway, her party (H) was noticeably sagging in the polls, as discussed in the H and FrP sections here.

Some form of major Flu Virus Panic restrictions returned to Norway and Norway got stuck in the demagogue’s trap—once one indulges in demagoguery, you are stuck with it and cannot easily backtrack lest another demagogue outflank you on the original demagoguery. (This is a basic reason why we do not want demagoguery, and the reason many say they are against “populism.”)

The government, led by the Høyre Party, became trapped in a three-sided vice of doom, (1.) from international pressure (the global Panic Pandemic spilling back into Norway), (2.) to being

trapped its own initial quasi-policy of Zero Covid (a bizarre policy of demanding no circulation of one flu virus, a policy of official hypochondria), (3.) because the Flu Virus Panic polled surprisingly well.

I think this political aspect to the “Covid” Flu Panic of 2020-to-?, applies everywhere but doesn’t map ideologically very well.

The supposed lesson out of the USA is “Left” people/leaders are supposedly “For Lockdowns” and other restrictions/disruptions/symbols of obedience to a (quasi-permanent-seeming) Flu Panic, and “Right” people/leaders are supposedly “Against Lockdowns” which supposedly means they do not care about the extra flu deaths and supposedly ignore “The Science.” (If they still do those “words of the year” things, the two-word phrase “The Science” should rank high on the 2020 list for the USA. For practical purposes The Science means something different from lower-case “science,” but it’s complicated...).

It turns out the USA’s specific case does NOT hold as a general principle. In Norway, it was the Conservatives (H) who pursued the crazy policy so associated with the US “blue state governors,” though the Prime Minister also apologized for overreacting, something I cannot even imagine in US political culture.

Of the H-led coalition’s lesser members of the political Right and Center, all declined to demand an end to Lockdownism.

It’s the same in many other countries. Take Australia, probably West’s *worst* virus-dictatorship by a wide margin, an which has embraced policies that make any Warsaw Pact country of the mid-20th century look like a politically open beacon of hope and freedom. Australia’s dystopian never-ending-Lockdownist nightmare-scenario, an open-ended, no-endgame politics that from where I set looks like an official policy of paranoia or quasi-state-enforced mass-delusion — their extreme Flu Panic and Lockdownism comes from a government of the Right!

Who has the courage to say: “Enough! Stop the Madness.” I don’t know why Australia fell into this but I’m interested and discuss [it in Post-413 on my blog](#). If we solve the Australia riddle, we might get insights onto the origins of the Panic and of Lockdownism across the West.

Hungary, famous for being Central Europe's most right-wing government, also embraced extreme Lockdownism.

In Germany, some of the most fanatical Lockdown-pushers are also of the Right. The whole *Corona Diktatur* semi-permanent lockdown regime there, which exceeds the USA's — and which the Bundestag illegally made permanent, sidestepping/ignoring/mockingly their own Constitution which is supposed to prevent arbitrary rule — has been led by Angela Merkel, who was once seen as of the Center-Right (but whose thinking is still a mystery even after 16 years in power). A potential future Chancellor, Markus Soeder (head of the Bavarian sister-party of Merkel's CDU) was known as the most right-wing figure on the national stage in the ruling party ([I wrote about him in early 2020](#) [post-383 of my blog; find it and search for "Söder"], before the Flu Virus Panic breakthrough), and was also the most fanatical Lockdown-pusher and Mask-enthusiast of all, basically on that most extreme type of "blue state governor"-level. The simplistic USA model just breaks down totally in many cases.

I conclude a few things:

(1) **Lockdownism was irresistible to demagogues;**

(2) it turned out that a sustained Flu Virus Panic played surprisingly well in the political center as well, and that **a sustained Safetyist drumbeat, led and stage-managed by the government, could really firm up support for ruling party**, if played right.

This became a disastrous vicious cycle, with the main losers most young people and anyone in any transition, and really almost all in some way, but for some it hurt bad.

Those who should have worked to *dismantle* the Flu-Panic — government officials — were instead incentivized to *feed* the beast. This seems to apply to Norway, and may apply to *all* multi-party electoral democracies.

(In some countries, and I am thinking mainly of the East Asians here, the authoritarian hammer came down much more easily and much harder still South Korea is one, with perhaps different

pressures for and against and an even-more-surprisingly easy victory for the Panic pushers, but I dare not go on that tangent now...).

In July 2021, Norway's *Høyre* Party, the party of the prime minister, released this campaign poster:



“Norway at the top of the list in Corona-rankings. *Høyre* [Conservative Party]. We believe in Norway.”

This looks like a clear case of trying to ride the wave of popularity which (surprise or not) came from triggering a Virus Panic. The Virus Panic netting the establishment/ruling parties extra support for as long as the crisis lasts, and with an election approaching, it seems there is a built-in domestic-political *dis*-incentive to end the restrictions.

Meanwhile, next door to Norway in Sweden, a left-wing government refused to join the lockdowns from the start. Few in Sweden ever wore masks (and almost as few wore masks in Norway). There were never any mandates, or shutdowns, or school-closures, or hardly *anything*, except for a ban for a time on events of over 1000 people. Everything stayed open, the Panic drumbeat that took over in other places was muted and absolutely not encouraged from above (as, frankly, it was in the USA).

Sweden had a severe flu wave, but then had a long period of below-average mortality, exactly as the our accumulated expertise on flu viruses tells us was going to happen. Sweden will have a three-year mortality rate (Jan. 1 2019 to Dec. 31, 2021) in line with about what another severe flu wave in 2012 caused; data as of this writing suggests they'll likely clock-in likely *below* the 2012 thirty-six-month total (Jan. 1 2011 to Dec. 31 2013). Longer-term data also suggests exactly this kind of flu comes about one-to-two times per decade, generally always in winter. By age 50, one has lived through at least five of them and maybe up to ten in some cases/places. In other words, Lockdownism was never necessary. We have great natural experiments on this.

Is politics the main reason Lockdownism persists? Norway gives a good example of one way that might be true. (The USA's toxic political culture is too depressing to analyze.) Any "rising cases"-type news, now the norm among the Panic Pandemic info-thugs and informational-well-poisoners, could and would be used to demagogue against *Høyre*.

In Norway itself, the Progress Party (FrP) could not resist a demagogic bid over the Flu Virus Panic and latched onto Lockdownism for stricter travel restrictions specifically to limit the intake of migrants and refugees. This is FrP's main issue especially since the Europe-wide shock of 2015-16 (the "Merkel Wave"). So the kind of party which the "USA model" expects to be the crazed anti-Lockdowners, namely a party of the populist-Right, *embraced* Lockdownism in Norway. When FrP party bosses made that decision, they probably expected H was going to loosen up and re-embrace the Swedish Model which the PM had abandoned overnight do impose her copycat-Lockdown in March 2020, but H backtracked and here were are. With flu season returning (fall 2021 to early spring 2022), I cannot imagine a full return until spring 2022, making for two largely lost years.

The three contenders to lead the next government — Solberg of the *Høyre* Party (the incumbent PM since 2013), center-left guy Jonas Gahr Støre of the Labor Party (Ap), and Center Party guy Trygve Slagsvold Vedum — none seem to be much talking about Lockdownism. It doesn't seem any party wants to push hard one way or another about it. Maybe they're all cautious about boat-rocking and prefer the familiar slogans than stepping into a swamp of unknown depth.

In the USA, by early May 2021, I began sensing a tacit consensus that embracing Lockdownism and the Panic generally had been a big mistake, perhaps even the policy blunder of our century so far, exceeding certainly the late-2000s recession in final-count effects, maybe several times over, and so on. Despite the squawking of some news-talk-type rhetoric, there were major strides to dismantle the whole Panic apparatus throughout May, and the whole thing seemed over by June, except for all the damage done and lingering disruptions, but the 'war' seemed over. The same might be true of Norway, but it's hard for me to say, but if so it went much slower than in the USA.

It seems Norway's ruling party saw the Panic as too good for itself to rapidly dismantle it lock-stock-and-barrel, certainly not before the election. Following the election (Sept. 13, 2021) the new *Storting* takes their seats (Oct. 1), and governing coalition negotiations go on, which is also subject to public opinion in part. And October is the start of flu season...

[End.]

[Contents updated several times up through morning August 13 and finalized on that day. Most work done in end of July and early August.]

[See also comments for several tangential, rolling updates.]

Comments

1. Peter

[July 24, 2021 at 11:04 pm](#)

Main post updated several times since original posting.

This has been a fun exercise for me, digging considerably deeper than I had before.

2. Peter

[July 25, 2021 at 12:40 pm](#)

Guy Kiddey writes in *The Independent* (UK) (“[Ten years on from the Utoya massacre, Norway still struggles to confront uncomfortable political truths](#)“), July 23 2021:

“The Labour Party will almost certainly form a governing coalition with the Centre Party in September, relying on additional parliamentary support from a number of smaller left-wing parties that support the call for a commission on extremism. It remains to be seen if the coming right-wing opposition will be able to face some hard truths.”

Guy Kiddey’s “almost certain[ty]” is an over-sell but it fits with the tone of his article.

Guy Kiddey is a Cambridge-graduate economist with ties to Oslo think tank CIVITA and thus to Norwegian politics, for there is always more to politics than the elected officials.

In principle, CIVITA distinguishes itself by being more firmly committed to free-market economics than much of the Norwegian intelligentsia (have historically been). It is said to be “center-right,” presumably aligned unofficially to the *Høyre* Party. From browsing through CIVITA’s offerings, though, I see little that would place it on the Right as it exists in Europe/Norway today.

I would rather classify it as for a transatlantic consensus-centrism, the language of which you have to be fluent in, if you want to function in elite or near-elite circles in Norway and other such countries. For example, there is a featured podcast interview at CIVITA when I checked their site in which they interview (in English, of course, after a Norwegian-language introduction) left-wing US journalist Anne Applebaum about supposed right-wing “threats to democracy.”

I assume Guy Kiddey is of British origin on both sides and his ties to Norway, whatever their origin, came in adulthood. I don’t know how well he understands Norwegian or how well he truly knows Norway’s politics but given his place in life I would expect he know them well.

But it is also easy for an English-speaker abroad to exist, for years, with only surface-level knowledge of the host country. (Also true is the reverse. I am reminded of the PhD candidate from a Central Asian country I once knew who had been in the US, on a major college campus, from sometime about mid-2008 until May 2010, but in 2011 claimed to have never heard the name “Sarah Palin,” the vice presidential candidate all over the news for various gaffes in 2008, one of the most prominent names in US news when this PhD student was [physically, at least] in America.)

Guy Kiddey’s political and election commentary is useful for a subtextual reason:

It probably reflects a consensus view of the Oslo elite — with whom, via CIVITA, Kiddey has some ties and to whom he must have much exposure — and/or of that portion of the transnational Western elite which pay relatively close attention to Norway. Their expectation is that the Labor Party WILL lead the new government including a coalition of left-wing parties and anchored to non-Left positions solely by the Center Party (Sp), with the Conservatives (H), Progress (FrP), and smaller centrist and other non-Left parties all shut out.

One purpose of Guy Kiddey’s article is to say this is the morally just thing to do because of a political attack ten years ago. This leans into the realm more of editorial than news reporting.

The *Independent* commenters were mostly hostile to Kiddey's views. By a margin of more than two-to-one, they reject his attempt to weave a Scarlet Letter onto the entire Norwegian Right before the election. I don't know how to interpret this particular author-commenter gap.

The Center Party (Sp) will have a large share of the seats in any new majority government (with the exception of a Labor-Conservative centrist megabloc, something so far without precedent in Norwegian politics), Kiddey says nothing about this party. Of the allegation that Sp, as it exists today, is a stalking-horse for the National-Populist Right, which means that even with the Progress Party (FrP)'s fading into second-tier status, the Populist-Right threat is still there. Guy Kiddey says nothing on this notion. The vanilla scenario of a return to Ap Party PM and passive coalition including the Sp is a possible outcome but "almost certain" it is not. What it *is*, is a traditional arrangement for Ap given its status as Norway's default party, and so naturally somewhat attractive for trans-atlantic (and trans-North Sea, in Kiddey's case) consensus-centrists.

I have one more thought on this (kind of) article: It seeds the ground of expectations and its target audience is an English-speaking elite or near-elite international audience, in this case especially in the UK. In the unlikely event of some major election dispute, expectations (seeding the ground with an expected result) matters. If it came down to international pressure, with whom does the London, Berlin, Washington, New York, etc., elite side?

Anyway this "expectation seeding" thing is only Kiddey's secondary purpose here, with the primary purpose, with the primary purpose a pan-European appeal regarding the July 2011 political violence, one of the few cases of major anti-Left political violence of our time. It's funny how it could be that the July 2011 attack in the Ap's summer camp for some of its core members' teenagers, as shocking as it seems, would be treated more politically outside Norway than inside it, but so it has been.

3. Peter

[July 25, 2021 at 1:55 pm](#)

Another UK press article. I find no real reporting on the Norwegian election in US media in July 2021, but several in UK press including this one:

Trailing in polls, Norway's prime minister says Oslo remains committed to oil and gas drilling

The reliance of Norway, western Europe's biggest petroleum producer, on oil and gas is likely to be a hot topic in national elections set for September 13.

Richard Milne

Financial Times

July 21, 2021

Norway's prime minister insisted the Scandinavian country would continue to drill for oil and gas, ahead of a re-election campaign in which the future of the fossil fuel industry will be intensely debated.

But she refused to back calls from the International Energy Agency, the oil watchdog previously much admired in Oslo, to stop all new petroleum projects to keep climate change in check. She insisted there was a continued need for Norwegian oil and gas, including to make hydrogen.

For some reason the article focuses on the Prime Minister (Solberg of the centrist or center-right *Høyre* or H Party), given that all three big parties — Labor (Ap), Center (Sp), and Conservative (H), support the oil industry and North Sea drilling.

The Green Party wants to shut it down. Some other of the smaller actors on the Left who will gain seats also want to scale it back, or shut it down entirely.

[Reply](#)

4. Peter

[July 25, 2021 at 2:30 pm](#)

More thoughts on oil drilling and Norway:

One way we must understand Norway, and its politics, is that while it is now among the world's wealthiest countries, in great part that comes from North Sea oil and is recent. Norway has a fairly strong and persisting folk-memory of being a relatively poor country.

Norway lost quite a large share of its population to emigration to, primarily, the US Midwest in the 1850s-1910s or so, half my father's ancestors among them. That was when Norway was poor.

(In the several generations since, despite relative prestige of Norwegian ancestral-identity in the USA and large numbers, we have really lost any meaningful connection to Norway directly. I see no evidence of any press interest in Norwegian politics, nothing even close to how US media's seemingly obligatory interest in Israeli politics.)

(I think there are about 2.5 million person-equivalents of Norwegian ancestry in the USA, e.g., 5.0 million people of exactly half-Norwegian and 10.0 million people exactly quarter-Norwegian, but in practice of course dispersed somewhat and heaviest in areas of settlement in the Upper Midwest and a few other areas. Given the same number in Norway is maybe 4.15 million, this is a truly huge share of population and testament to how poor Norway was in the 19th century, with emigration-momentum continuing into the early 20th century.)

The situation has now flipped. Norway was once poor and, it is said, sent away above one-third of its young people as emigrants to (primarily but not exclusively) settle the great opening of the north-central US interior. Today Norway is wealthy and takes in migrants from outside Europe, by policy, though the backlash has reduced the magnitude and stiffened up deportations to an extent.

That North Sea oil wealth. Substantial oil extraction dates to 1970s but really began expanding to major significance in the mid-1980s. By 1993, Norway's per-capita GDP at purchasing-power-parity surpassed Sweden's and has remained above Sweden's ever since. The oil money kept coming. Norway's GDP-PPP reached a level equal to the USA's in 2000, by which time no pretense to Norway being some kind of "poor country doing well right now" could be maintained; it was now a rich country. By 2005, its per-capita GDP had clearly surpassed the USA's and has done so every year since. Some years Norway has been substantially above the USA (e.g., 2014: Norway was at \$66,000 [PPP]; the USA was at \$55,000 by one count).

With the USA's artificial, major recession in 2020 (Virus-Panic-and-lockdown-induced), the gap could again open up to those former heights. I see the USA lost 3.5% of GDP in 2020 to the Flu-Panic lockdowns and presumably also from damage to prestige and business confidence from political riots and other such things, not to mention the very direct damage of the, mid-2020 post-Lockdown riots and the social losses such a cratered birthrate. Norway's loss is said to be -2.5% from its own Lockdown, but the oil-extraction industry cash-cow never locked down.

If, somehow, it comes to pass that a new government shuts it all down—oil, that is—Norway would presumably recede back to about Sweden's economic level, at best, which many of the Left might deny to be the case while also concurrently saying is just fine.

The moral good of leadership on climate etc. is worth it, they'll say. And I think this seems a powerful argument now. If b.1980s and b.1990s voters, having grown up with wealth unimagined by their grandparents or great-grandparents, have lost touch with the old baseline view that Norwegian view of themselves as a poor nation which by fortune and hard work got rich, this seems an inevitably future trend, perhaps already well underway.

5. Peter

[July 26, 2021 at 8:09 pm](#)

Since first resolving to tackle this (last week), I've been trying to read *Aftenposten*, via google-translate. I learn more every time I do which has helped me expand the main post here. *Aftenposten* is afaik Norway's largest and agenda-setting newspaper.

In conclude also that there is just no reliable news coverage or commentary in English. There is one nice little site ([NewsinEnglish.no](#)), which publishes some well-translated, original-Norwegian stories, but only occasionally and only those selected by the person or people behind the site.

Another English-language site is TheLocal.no; there seems to be an English-language *The Local* in every European country. It is entirely expat-oriented. Therefore it is of limited value for my purposes here. Most of its articles are "Intro to Norway 101"-type material and some "Helpful Tips to Live/Work/Study/etc. in Norway" and also generally apolitical or avoidant of real political discussion.

The only reliable way seems to be to wander through Norwegian-language media. Other content is limited, curated, and tends towards the shallow or cherry-picked. Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube can also be good sources, if finding the right accounts and I use some of them as sources in the main post here, especially useful for the smaller parties. On which, more soon...

6. Peter

[July 26, 2021 at 9:32 pm](#)

I saw a surprising story in *Aftenposten*:

I'll introduce it as my understanding of it evolved, starting with first impressions.

News of a Saami (f.k.a. Lapp) politician of some importance in the Green Party (MDG), who may end up a moderately important national-level political player in the 2020s/2030s. According to the article-blurbs I saw, she is appealing to stop racial harassment.

Thoughts: “Wow, are there (White) Norwegians racially harassing a Saami woman? Does that happen? And what are the chances there even is a woman who looks full-Saami on the national stage?”

The answer turns out to be either less interesting or more interesting, depending on your perspective or interests. The politician in question is no Saami. She has a Vietnamese father and a White-Norwegian mother. For some reason she uses her mother's surname. Her name is **LAN MARIE BERG** (b.1987).

I didn't immediately recognize that her given name, Lan, is Chinese/Vietnamese, and in the context of the moment I thought it must be some kind of Saami name I had never seen before. In how she presented in the photo published with the news story, and in the context of Norway, in other words with with her name and look and place and other context, it was my first thought that Saami is a possibility. Given the small number of full-Saami with this kind of phenotype today, it was into the realm of “surprise, but plausible.” It turns out she has no Saami ancestry. She is what is called a “Hapa” by some people of this background in the US.

here is a low, baseline level of Saami genetics in the Norwegian genepool. Some people even with four Norwegian (non-Saami) grandparents end up looking something like Saami, the occasional genetic recombination, a phenotype showing minor genotype

elements. US S TV personality David Bromstad is an example. The most famous example of the phenomenon is Icelandic singer Bjork, who is said to have had four ordinary Icelandic grandparents despite her almost Eskimo-like look.

This is just a commentary on the surprise to find someone like Lan Marie Berg prominent in Norwegian politics, and about to get more so but next I'll add some on the politics of her scandal, the context in which she has claimed racial harassment, and how she fits into Norway's party politics.

7. Peter

[July 27, 2021 at 7:56 pm](#)

Quote:

According to the article-blurbs I saw, [Lan Marie Berg] is appealing to stop racial harassment.

Thoughts: “Wow, are there (White) Norwegians racially harassing a Saami woman? Does that happen? And what are the chances there even is a woman who looks full-Saami on the national stage?”

The answer turns out to be either less interesting or more interesting, depending on your perspective or interests. The politician in question is no Saami. She has a Vietnamese father and a White-Norwegian mother. For some reason she uses her mother’s surname.

Some findings/comments on LAN MARIE BERG (b.1987) ([see comment above](#)) and her place in Norwegian politics:

Here she is in a Green Party (MDG) 2021 campaign poster. It has a simple slogan which, when written, gives away the game on how closely related English/German/Norwegian all are:



(“Yes to cheaper ebikes for all”)

(Re: Language. All you have to know is “sykkel” is “cycle” and “el” is “e-,” both of which are easy little puddle-jumps at most. The other words are basically exactly the same as in the brother-languages; German *billig* = inexpensive.)

Lan Marie Berg presumably got involved with the Greens in the 2000s. Perhaps she was first attracted that way a high school student, following the trend of the time. She had some involvement in a group-blog called *Gronne Jenter* (Green Girls) and a climate-change research institute at the University of Oslo in the mid-2010s.

As someone of her same age and with experience in Europe in the mid-2000s (as an outside observer but with a good inside track, having been on a parallel track some generations in the USA), I remember the “type.”

In the mid-2000s era there was a renewed push to “solve the climate crisis,” and such was trendy among upwardly mobile young people. It really proved a winning wave to have surfed since that time. (A zealot-to-be of the type, name Greta Thunberg, was just emerging into the first stages of social consciousness at the time, turning age 5 in Jan. 2008; children, by t his age, are picking up a lot, at Thunberg clearly absorbed the climate as moral crusade.)

(Tangentially, I fear some of the climate talk contributed to the disastrous Flu Virus Panic of 2020-21 or to '22?), perhaps in part seeding the ground for a major, global-scale panic.)

Lan Marie Berg’s mother (b.1960) was/is a longtime and loyal supporter of the Socialist Left (SV) party. SV still calls itself Marxist and was long the furthest-Left party in national-level politics in Norway. As of the early 2010s, Lan’s mother had a minor position with the party at a local level.

Another subtle signaling of the mother’s ethno-political positioning and outlook, besides the long loyalty and insider status with a Marxist political party is that Lan’s mother raised her two daughters Catholic, presumably the religion of the Vietnamese father.

The father was born ca.1953 and arrived in Norway, somehow, in 1968. At that time there was almost no mechanism yet in place to bring migrants or “asylum-seekers” to Norway, so absnet the US military intervention there, he never would have gotten in; a surprising little case of blowback from the US intervention felt far across the sea.

But that Lan and her sister were raised Catholic. Norway is traditionally “non-Catholic, leaning anti-Catholic.” The state church, Lutheran, is still in place. Tradtionally, for a Norwegian to come out as Catholic (a small handful did) would have practically been a renunciation of the ethnicity.

It’s something like in Malaysia whereby their ethnic system is balanced with handouts to Malays, but if the Malay converts away from Islam they lose “Malay” status and lose the cash benefits—except traditional Norway of course didn’t run some kind of crude cash

handout system to dissuade those so-tempted to defect to the Catholics, but the social pressure was still there and functionally similar.

Having a Norwegian mother, Lan Marie Berg must be a Norwegian citizen from birth, but I expect she sees herself more as a citizen of the world. I make that guess by what I can gather of her temperament, her inherited politics and outlook, her life experience, and her personal-identity an ancestry and even that trivia about religion / church-identity. All of these things matter.

Lan's Norwegian wiki page says: "She has lived in Tuvalu, Kenya, South Africa and Vietnam and now lives in Oslo." The time in Kenya must be related to her 2013 Master's thesis at the University of Oslo, which was on renewable energy in a Kenyan village.

After graduation in 2013 with an MA in hand, she drifted into a position in the then-small pond of the Norwegian Green Party (MDG), which then had political influence only in Oslo and a minor one at that. Formally speaking, at the elected level, that remains true as I write this. But the MDG is almost sure now to enter the *Storting* above the 4% threshold for the first time in 2021, probably taking around 8 seats (of 169).

Already by mid-2015, Lan Marie Berg chaired the Oslo City Council's Transport and Environment committee, a major milestone in any political career some someone then age 28.

By 2019 and into 2020 she was an important enough figure that the Green Party (MDG) gave her a lead slot on the Oslo electoral-region for the *Storting* election, in other word she was [set to head the party-list for the Greens in Oslo](#), and if MDG got enough votes to get seats, Lan was guaranteed to get in.

Her candidacy was announced in June 2020 but I am assuming she was a sure thing earlier, and that one just doesn't announce candidates too early by custom. She was all-but-guaranteed a *Storting* seat in the new session set to start in September 2021.

By late 2020, though, Lan was under a cloud of scandal. Opponents were calling for her expulsion from her position over the discoveries of people poking around in the records of what her committee had been up to over the past few years. She'd been highly negligent at best, and run the committee and its funds irresponsibly over the past several years, they said.

A council inquiry went on and finally concluded in June 2021. They found her guilty of misconduct, and the city council voted to expel Lan Marie Berg was expelled from her Oslo leadership role.

I haven't been able to find if she is still on track to proceed anyway up to the *Storting* (her opponents would claim this is "failing upwards"). Her sure-thing candidacy was announced before the scandals and expulsion process. It seems she is still on track to enter the *Storting*, and the MDG is sticking with her, the Oslo scandal did not dislodge her and the MDG is willing to bet it can toss off the baggage of the scandal. Lan will soon be Norway's first half-Vietnamese *Storting* member.

What was Lan Marie Berg's 2020-21 scandal or controversy? I found it hard to disentangle. It seems to come down to allegations of major mismanagement tinged with implied fraud and unethical practices, which she should have been aware of at the last. A typical politician's scandal in outline, though one less likely to be seen in Norway, which is probably one reason Lan's opponents went on the warpath, in addition to the obvious political advantage of trying to take over one of the leading figures of a rival party.

One article has this on the Lan Marie Berg scandal:

[T]he basis for the no-confidence motion:

– *Violation of the Working Environment Act for several years.*

– *[D]id not inform the city council about the breaches she knew about.*

– *Extensive illegal procurement in the agency.*

– *Managers were hired without the positions being advertised.*

– *NOK 18 million [\$2 million USD] was spent on a cloakroom that was never built.*

“If this had happened in the private business world, I have no doubt that the boss would have to leave,” Wilhelmsen says.

Bjørn Revil, group leader for FNB [a local political party], adds: “It’s just luck that there have been no serious accidents when people have had to work too long. If this is not a basis for mistrust, then what is?”

(from “Vil kaste Lan Marie Berg,” NRK.no, 18 November 2020.)

A Youtube commenter writing under “1005wiking” wrote this (in English) [in June 2021](#), alluding to the scandal for which Lan Marie Berg would later be expelled from her leadership role by council vote:

It’s just amazing, that this woman is allowed to sit in the position she is in. If she would have her own company and do like she is doing she would have to go to jail. If she would have a job somewhere she would loose her job. It’s very dangerous to have politicians like this.

Lan Marie Berg may yet land up on her feet, and the name may be a familiar one in Norway’s politics for some years to come.

On Lan Marie Berg’s counter-attack against critics: Claiming racial harassment.

Lan reminds me of a certain coworker I had in 2019 who had both a remarkably similar ancestral background to Lan and other traits also in common and pulled a power-play in the exact kind of calculated way which she knows would succeed.

The coworker: Vietnamese-Chinese father, White-Western mother; Western-raised (USA); elite education; ambitious. She even looked similar to and had a voice similar to Lan's.

My coworker, A., was born several years after Lan Marie Berg, and when I knew this coworker she she was roughly in the same life-situation as Lan had been in about 2014, at which time Lan was a relatively recent MA graduate with considerable international experience but before her ascent on the Green political ladder began.

The biggest difference between the two is the coworker did not necessarily display much interest in party-politics. In any case, as the USA don't have a multi-party system but rather a two-party duopoly, there is no direct comparison there.

But both Lan and my coworker were in a politics-adjacent, "policy" world of research institutes and think tanks, which is an outer-tier of the political world. Certainly that applied to where we worked. This puts even their (Lan's and my coworker's) professional-working lives on a similar course; almost all the aspects of their lives were closely comparable, even down to both having fathers displaced by the Vietnam War and who wound up in the West, in NW-European countries. In personality and life-trajectory, they seem just remarkably comparable.

The coworker was hired in part for being able to read Chinese while not being a native-English-speaking US citizen. She was also pretty clearly a PRC-China sympathizer, and had lived in China for a time, though I think it was under one year total (she talked as if it were many years). I noticed this sympathy. The coworker did not hide it, even if she did not go out of her way to stress it. Regular conversations of any kind with her would reveal it, and she occasionally said it outright.

I'm not sure the aloof higher-level figures in the workplace ever quite noticed. (The place I mention was editorially anti-PRC, as just about every such outfit in Washington is, but had certain leadership problems, as [I wrote about here once before](#). I wouldn't be surprised if they simply had no idea about this aspect of one of their employees.)

The negative experience I had with this coworker at the office leads me, I think, to “type-cast” Lan Marie Berg, to see the coworker and Kan as of the same general type who think and behave similarly. We all do this. It’s part of what interacting in the world necessarily involves. It’s generally unconscious. It applies even more to rarer types of people we only occasionally encounter, for when we do encounter them they can form an outsize influence on our impressions. Hence the advice to act well, always if possible, but especially abroad.

Lan Marie Berg’s outburst was a demand to end a campaign of supposed racial harassment against her.

I have to admit to being skeptical about this. Knowing nothing else of the matter, you notice the timing: It came right as her promising-looking career hit a potential derailing with the Oslo scandal. No doubt frustrating for her.

More important than the timing, a trivial observation, is this:

If I/we/she know how Western politics work today — which of course she does, having gotten as far as she has — she *knew* the public claim by someone like her would whip up sympathetic attention.

In other words, a power play, but a very specific kind almost guaranteed to have some success, in which an allegation is couched in racial language.

Maybe Lan did not consciously go this direction at first, that is to say maybe it was not calculated. But once the rubber hit the road, she ran with it, and she immediately knew donning the noble-victim cap would tip some scales in her favor, *ipso facto*, by the assertion alone.

Lan didn’t make the rules, but she did know how to exploit them. Her ego was fed and re-fed, I presume, by the small but swirling controversy, the sympathy-points racked up like a well-played and finessed game of Tetris or Pac-man. It is too tempting to grab play the Noble Victim “trump” card because so often it’s an easy ‘W’ for the player. Would it

benefit her in the long run? Maybe or maybe not, but it felt good to get attention. People thrive on this, some people more than others.

All that is a close-enough, narrative-level version of my experience in 2019, and frankly that of millions of others like me in recent years in the West. An outburst, a sympathy bid, digging in and escalating. The two big differences are: There was a specific targeted individual in my case (me) — where Lan made non-specific collective allegation of racial harassment. There was no kind of long-running campaign against the coworker that she would have felt to politically (office-politics-wise) counter-attack. The similarity is the nature of the allegation, the kind of person doing the allegation, the kind of people accused, and cruising into an easy “win” on sympathy (attention-seeking?) grounds.

People like me are the designated losers in these matters in our time. It’s just the way it is. We all know it. It’s not *fair*, of course. Some of us, among the designated-loser (designated ‘oppressor’) demographic, embrace the neo-morality. Others are profoundly uncomfortable with it but have no good option to escape it. Not many have the courage to openly dissent, for they simply get fired and potentially blacklisted. It really isn’t fair, and anyone outside the system looking into it will see the unfairness really clearly, even if some on the inside do not.

In talking with others in 2019, after my coworker pulled the Noble-Victim-card power-play out of nowhere targeting, at least one who was well-informed on the general situation (sitting next to the co-worker in question) sympathized with me, and implied heavily that the coworker was doing it for attention and had behaved similarly in the past, and indeed the coworker said more possibly-offensive things than I had said on a daily basis, usually multiple times a day. Besides this one sympathetic coworker (who had been at the same graduate school as I), others around the office said nothing and got quieter, sensing it was dangerous somehow now to associate with me. They were never out-of-their-way friendly, but now it was a changed game. This is how these things work.

In public I was quickly bereft of allies. The whole thing was rather humiliating for me and still stings to remember. The dreaded HR intervention, the fact that it happened near

the end of my yeyar contract after a great term in which I did great work, but the aloof supervisor, who quickly took on the role of champion of the accuser, would now never give me a positive letter of recommendation. The moral-jihadi female supervisor—who often spoke of the need to support women over men—never really spoke to me again after the incident, nor said goodbye to me when I left the office at the end of my contract a few weeks later, nor contacted me after I left. Basically, for a white male, one feels all is hopeless in that dynamic, bereft of allies except those who will whisper support or give you a sympathetic nod or glance of the eyes.

The damage done in little power-plays like this—when there is a specific, targeted individual—can be serious. Sometimes it is all over nothing, if not made up entirely at least exaggerated and distorted enough to be a distinction without a difference. All amounting to a child-like attention-seeking bid by one person, a (sometimes calculated) major overreaction over very little, which, if made a universal rule, would render most people completely helpless in the rough-and-tumble of daily life. If the targeted person is of an acceptable-to-target class and the targeting person has allies willing to pile on—as was true in this case—it’s all like a basketball fastbreak followed by an unguarded layup.

In Lan Marie Berg’s case, it was formal politics at the city/national level. In my case, in 2019, it was the office-politics level, if one can even call it that. I had no pre-existing dispute with the person. She seemed to pursue a vendetta out of nowhere, which I am certain are rooted in her own frustrations at not getting where she expected or hoped to be by that time. Lan’s case is similar here.

The dynamic that was triggered, once the prime-mover in a case like this decides to cross the Rubicon and push matter, is very similar.

It must be clear enough that I’m still sore about the injustice of it today. I recognize, well enough, that I have to live, effectively, at a lower-tier of rights and social-standing in any “Big Blue” area of the USA or any institution under sway of such, and sometimes it feels that means almost any institution at all in the USA, possibly excluding a plumber’s union. It doesn’t make me happy.

Maybe this deserved a full post back in 2019 and certainly friends got earfulls of it. I was in no mood to put it on these pages at the time.

8. **Peter**

[August 6, 2021 at 4:32 pm](#)

I continued updating this post on a rolling basis (to today) since first posting a much shorter version of it July 16.

Now included are real examples of their political sloganeering and campaign material with comments on them. This must be among the most detailed exploration of the Norwegian election of 2021 that exists in English, so I hope i did it justice.

The author

