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Ripples in the Periphery of the European Jihadi Milieu: Examining Jihadism's Developmental Trajectory in Finland, 2012–2020

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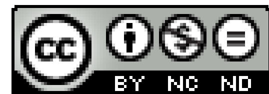

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Abstract

Jihadism in Finland has followed a developmental trajectory, which differs somewhat from most Western European countries. Before the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011, Finland was one of the least exposed countries to the phenomenon in Europe. Contrarily, in the 2010s the country's jihadi milieu has experienced a significant shift from consisting primarily of small, ethnically homogenous first-generation Muslim immigrant networks with a low capacity for outreach and activism to the current situation where larger and looser, multi-ethnic, and homegrown networks have emerged and demonstrated a significantly better capacity for activism, leading to higher levels of jihadist activity in the country. Indeed, Finland has experienced one of the largest – if not the largest – mobilisation to Syria and Iraq relative to Muslim population size. Yet, thus far Finland has been largely exempt from scholarly scrutiny. *This thesis addresses this gap in the literature by examining how jihadism has manifested itself and developed in Finland between 2012 and 2020, and why.* The overall purpose and primary contribution of the thesis is to provide the first systemic, empirically strong, and theoretically sound academic study of the phenomenon and its evolution in Finland.

The thesis is an empirical case study, primarily combining qualitative analysis with few quantitative assessments. It will draw relevant data from several open sources. These include official reports and documents from various governmental agencies in Finland; official reports and documents from various international agencies; relevant journalistic articles from Finland and abroad; relevant pre-existing academic literature; and various online accounts belonging to Finnish extremists and militants. Despite being an empirical study, the thesis will situate in its

analysis in social movement theory, and particularly resource mobilisation approach. Further, it will adopt a peripheral perspective, which will allow the thesis to better understand how jihadism takes root in Europe's periphery and what the variations of jihadist activism are in regions where attacks occur rarely if at all. By adopting this analytical framework the thesis offers an empirically strong and theoretically grounded assessment of how jihadism has manifested itself and developed in Finland, and what the underlying causes behind its developmental trajectory are.

Between 2012 and 2020 jihadism in Finland has developed significantly in several ways, facilitated by the Syrian conflict and the rise of the IS and its caliphate project, and further aided by the jihadi digital empowerment revolution. Its milieu grew, the quality of its domestic activists increased, and collective activism has become more commonplace and effective, particularly due to the emergence of multi-ethnic and multigenerational extremist networks, which have significant international connections to jihadist actors abroad. While Finland has only experienced one jihadist terror attack to date, foreign fighting has become a common form of activism, almost solely in the context of the conflict in Syria and Iraq. As a consequence of the mobilisation, the Finnish profile in jihadist propaganda has strengthened and various jihadist actors have better knowledge about Finland and the Finnish jihadi milieu. This has already attracted external attention and activism targeting the country. Indeed, Finland is now more integrated to the global phenomenon, and regional trends are likely to be reflected in Finland to a greater degree than previously. The significance of these developments should not be exaggerated, however. Finland is still a peripheral and remote country in the broader European

jihadi milieu. It still lacks radicalisation hubs, and its levels of jihadist radicalisation, activism, and violence are still low.

Jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland can be best understood from a resource mobilisation perspective. This perspective views surges of activism as a function of the ability of entrepreneurs to craft activist networks and exploit protest technologies. Indeed, in the Finnish case recruitment in the 2010s, particularly in the context of foreign fighting, has become much more common and effective than in the previous decade. The Syrian conflict, the IS caliphate project, and later the western-led military intervention against the group have all provided emotionally resonant causes and grievances. Domestic activists and networks as well as armed jihadist groups in the conflict zone have framed them in a way to suit their narratives of Islam under siege from infidels and disbelievers to amplify their recruitment activities, particularly online. The recruitment activities of key activists and networks were further improved by online freedom provided to them by the jihadi digital empowerment revolution.

Introduction[1]

On a warm summer afternoon on August 18th, 2017 in the city of Turku in southwestern Finland, a young Moroccan asylum-seeker was filming himself on his mobile phone in the courtyard of a local tourist destination, the Turku Cathedral. He spoke in Arabic the words he had written down earlier that morning on his notepad in a friend's apartment. He ended his speech by expressing his desire to achieve martyrdom and saying the *shahada*, the Islamic declaration of faith. After, he boarded a bus to Turku bus station around three o'clock in the afternoon. Approximately an hour later, he – later identified as twenty-year-old Abderrahman Bouanane – begun what would be the country's first even jihadist terror attack in the city's Market Square. Armed with two kitchen knives, he stabbed to death two people and non-fatally injured eight others in the space of only a few minutes before he was shot and arrested by the police.[2] While Bouanane distributed his manifesto to a few pro-Islamic State (IS) channels on Telegram,[3] and explicitly stated his attack was inspired by the group in the subsequent trial,[4] the IS never claimed his attack in any of its official publications.

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[1] The author would like to sincerely thank Suomalainen strategisen tutkimuksen ja seurannan tukisäätiö for their generous support for this research over the years. Additionally, the author would like to thank Dr. Emmanuel Karagiannis for his invaluable support and advice throughout the project.

[2] See e.g. "Puukotukset Turussa 18.8.2017." Tutkintaselostus 7/2018, Onnettomuustutkintakeskus, (2018), pp. 5–7, https://turvallisuustutkinta.fi/material/attachments/otkes/tutkintaselostukset/fi/poikkeuksellisettapahtumat/nuxEHJjYF/P2017-01_Turku.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

[3] "Uhrin vierestä löytyi Turun puukottajan manifesti: Syyttää länttä sodan julistamisesta muslimeja vastaan – poliisi: teksti oli Youtube-saarnan kopio." MTV3, 20.3.2018.

[4] Teppo Ovaskainen, "Tuomio: Turun puukottaja elinkautiseen vankeuteen terroriteosta – puukotukset olivat terrorismia." Uusi Suomi, 29.1.2019.

The events of August 18th put into concrete terms what the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (Suojelupoliisi, henceforth Supo) had consistently highlighted in its statements and reports for several years. According to the organisation, the Finnish jihadi milieu had become larger, more complex, structured, and active than ever before, and that the threat it constituted to Finland and Finnish citizens had concurrently become more acute.[5] In fact, in June 2017, just two months before the attack, Supo stated for the third time in the space of four years that the terrorist threat facing Finland had increased.[6] Bouanane's attack was not the only manifestation of Finland's increasingly active jihadi milieu. For instance, in the previous five years (2012-2016), at least 80 adults and 30 children had made their way from Finland to Syria and Iraq, majority seeking to join jihadist groups– and the IS in particular – taking part in the conflict.[7] According to one academic study, Finland has experienced the largest foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq from any western country relative to Muslim population size.[8]

The Finnish case presents an intriguing puzzle. Jihadism in Finland has followed a developmental trajectory, which differs somewhat from most Western European countries. Before the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011, Finland was one of the least exposed countries to the phenomenon in the region.[9] Throughout the 2000s, when most countries in the

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[5] Juha Saarinen, "Finland Raises Terror Alert as Jihadist Scene Grows More Complex." Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 14 Issue 7 (2016).
[6] The first and second instances were in June 2014 and November 2015. Ibid.
[7] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018." Sisäministeriö, Sisäministeriön julkaisuja 13/2018, Sisäministeriö (2018), p. 24, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160777/SM_13_2018.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[8] See Efraim Benmelech & Esteban F. Klor: "What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?" Political Violence and Terrorism, Volume 32 Issue 7 (2020), pp. 1458–1481.
[9] See e.g. "TE-SAT: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007." Europol (2007), p. 17, https://data.europa.eu/euodp/fi/data/dataset/te-sat-2007-eu-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report/resource/21c45d63-b2ff-4abf-9885-24e93f07f9e2. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

region were confronted by and reacted to various challenges emanating from the local jihadi milieus, the situation in Finland was relatively quiet.[10] In fact, in the first national counter-terrorism strategy adopted by Finland in 2010, "radical Islamism" in Finland was estimated to be limited to a small number of individuals and small groups from certain ethnic backgrounds, who support and maintain contact with armed jihadist groups abroad – mainly in their countries of origin – and who could seek to radicalise and recruit others in Finland to join in their support activism.[11] Contrarily, in the 2010s jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland has followed broader regional trends. The country's jihadi milieu has experienced a significant shift from consisting primarily of small, ethnically homogenous networks – consisting largely of first-generation Muslim immigrants – with a low capacity for outreach and activism to the current situation where larger and looser, multi-ethnic, and homegrown networks have emerged and demonstrated a significantly better capacity for activism, leading to higher levels of jihadist activity in the country, and more attention being paid to Finland by external actors. These developments, however, have thus far largely escaped closer scholarly scrutiny.

Research questions

How has jihadism manifested itself and developed in Finland between 2012 and 2020, and why? While these primary research questions appear relatively straightforward at first, they raise a

[10] For example, see Juha Saarinen, The History of Jihadism in Finland and An Early Assessment of Finnish Foreign Fighters in Syria." Jihadology.net, 21.11.2013.
[11] "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia." Sisäinen turvallisuus | Sisäasiainministeriön julkaisuja 21/2010, Sisäasiainministeriö (2010), p. 5–6, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/80485/sm_212010.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

plethora of relevant and complex secondary research questions that require in-depth examination to produce empirically strong findings and generalizable insights to the primary questions. These questions include, but are not limited to the following: How, why, and where did jihadism initially emerge in Finland? How did the Finnish jihadi milieu emerge? How was it structured throughout the 2000s? What were its internal dynamics? How did the phenomenon manifest itself? In what types of activism did Finnish extremists take part? What explains the relatively low levels of jihadist activity in Finland during this decade? How have the Finnish jihadi milieu and patterns of activism evolved over time, particularly in the 2010s, and why? How have the Syrian-Iraqi conflict and the emergence of IS from 2012-2013 onwards impacted the phenomenon in Finland? To what extent have external actors – jihadist entrepreneurs, extremist networks and armed groups based in the conflict zone or elsewhere in Europe – affected the emergence of jihadism in Finland, and its subsequent evolution?

The primary and secondary research questions are complex because they are located at the crossroads of two distinct and broad fields of academic inquiry: the study of Finnish politics and society, and the study of political violence and violent extremism – particularly jihadism studies. The general purpose of this thesis is to contribute to these fields of study by analysing the Finnish jihadi milieu and its evolution, and to provide answers to the abovementioned research questions through thorough and nuanced empirical analysis.

Research aims, focus, and scope

The aim of the thesis is to examine jihadism in Finland, primarily between 2012 and 2020. More specifically, it will examine how the size, internal structures, and external connections of the Finnish jihadi milieu have evolved over time; and in what kinds of activism this milieu and its key constituents and collectives have participated in, and how these activism patterns have evolved over time. Hence, the thesis' primary focus of this thesis is on the phenomenon of jihadism: the various Finland-based actors who promote it through their activism; the jihadi milieu's internal structures, which facilitate collective socio-political activism; the forms of activisms practiced by Finnish and Finland-based extremists – individually and collectively; and the transnational contexts and connections of these actors and their activities.

It should be highlighted that this study only examines a miniscule minority within the Sunni Muslim population in Finland. This thesis is not a study of Islam, Finland's Muslim population, its Muslim societies, or Muslim socio-political activism in the country. While the study may shed some light on more general issues relating to the history of Islam and Muslims in Finland, and especially those connected to Finland's Salafi milieus, the primary focus of the thesis is that of jihadi extremists and militants, and their activism. Additionally, it is worth noting that as this thesis focuses on Sunni jihadism, it will exclude Shia Islamist militancy. Shia militancy constitutes a separate political phenomenon, and while it is possible that support and possibly even support activity for various armed Shia groups is present in Finland, particularly during the 2010s, there is not enough available data to conduct an empirical analysis on the phenomenon. Nor is this thesis a study on the causes of and pathways to violent radicalisation among Finnish Muslims or Muslims residing in Finland. While such analysis would greatly benefit this thesis and academic literature on jihadism studies more broadly, the lack of available biographic data

on individuals participating in jihadist activities makes it exceedingly difficult if not practically impossible to produce strong empirical analysis on the topic.

While the geographical focus of the thesis is predominantly on Finland, it is necessary to note that jihadism is a transnational phenomenon. Contacts, networks, and activism within the broader European jihadi milieu regularly cross state boundaries. Additionally, international events, particularly persistent conflicts in Muslim majority countries and western military interventions, and often serve as key drivers of the phenomenon. External factors appear particularly important in peripheral states, where the phenomenon is underdeveloped and levels of jihadist radicalisation, activism, and violence remain low. Hence, it is necessary to include the impact of external actors and events in the analysis. Additionally, as the activities and activism Finnish jihadist foreign fighters often directly and indirectly impact the Finnish jihadi milieu and national security, it is pertinent to also include this dimension in the analysis, especially in the context of the conflict in and foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq in the 2010s.

Chronologically, the thesis predominantly focuses on the period between 2012 and 2020. However, to provide a more nuanced and enriched analysis, it will also examine the early history of jihadism in Finland between 2001 and 2011 and contextualise latter developments between 2012 and 2020 with earlier developments where relevant. The thesis does this for two reasons. First, from an academic perspective, the low levels of jihadist radicalisation, activity and violence in Finland are equally interesting as their later development.[12] Indeed, the Finnish case provides a particularly interesting case study, in which it is possible to identify underlying causes

[12] See e.g. Leena Malkki, "Learning from the Lack of Political Violence: Conceptual Issues and Research Designs." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 14 Issue 6 (2020), pp. 27–36.

that can explain both the relative underdevelopment of jihadism in Finland before 2012 and its subsequent evolution since. And second, it is impossible to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of jihadism's developmental trajectory and their underlying causes behind without including earlier manifestations, which often are relevant to later developments.

Methodology

The thesis is an empirical case study, primarily combining qualitative analysis with few quantitative assessments. It will draw relevant data from several open sources. These include official reports and documents from various governmental agencies in Finland, particularly from Supo and the Ministry of the Interior; official reports and documents from various international agencies, including Europol and Radicalisation Awareness Network; relevant journalistic articles from Finland and abroad; relevant pre-existing academic literature; and various online accounts (particularly in various social media platforms) belonging to Finnish extremists and militants, who have participated in the conflict in Syria and Iraq in the ranks of various jihadist groups operating there (predominantly in the IS).

Despite being an empirical study, the thesis will situate in its analysis in social movement theory, and particularly resource mobilisation approach, which "views surges of activism less as a response to broader socio-political strains and more as a function of the ability of entrepreneurs to craft activist networks and exploit protest technologies."[13] Further, it will adopt a peripheral perspective, which will allow the thesis to better understand how jihadism "takes root in

[13] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 10 Issue 6 (2016), p. 158, pp. 156–170.

Europe's periphery" and what "the variations of militant Islamist activism" are in regions where attacks occur rarely.[14] By adopting this analytical framework this thesis offers an empirically strong and theoretically grounded assessment of how jihadism has manifested itself and developed in Finland, and what the underlying causes behind its developmental trajectory are.

Justification, relevance, and contribution

With jihadism's growth and evolution in Finland, as most visibly exemplified by its disproportionately large mobilisations to Syria and Iraq, there is an increasing need to understand causes and dynamics of the phenomenon in the country. Yet, it has been virtually exempted from scholarly scrutiny. To date, no academic case or comparative studies examining jihadism in Finland have been published. While the lack of academic interest in Finland has been in the past can be partly explained by the lack of jihadist activity, this has clearly not been the case since 2012. Indeed, the main justification for this thesis is that there exists almost no literature on issues relating to jihadist activity or militancy – particularly but not limited to foreign fighting – in Finland, and the country remains among the least analysed regions within the broader European jihadi milieu. While this thesis is partly built upon previous research of the author,[15] the overall purpose and primary contribution of the thesis is to address this regrettable gap by providing the first systemic, empirically strong, and theoretically sound academic study of the phenomenon and its evolution in Finland. Additionally, it contributes more broadly to the study

[14] Brynjar Lia & Petter Nesser, "Jihadism in Norway: a typology of Militant Networks in a Peripheral European country." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 10 Number 6 (2016), p. 121, pp. 121–134.
[15] Leena Malkki & Juha Saarinen, "Jihadistinen liikehdintä Suomessa." Sisäinen turvallisuus | Sisäministeriön julkaisuja 2019:14, Sisäministeriö (2019).

of the phenomenon in peripheral countries by providing data, information, and analysis on jihadism in Finland, which can be used in future comparative studies.

Addressing this gap is relevant as the existing literature generally focuses on countries which has strong and vibrant jihadi milieus, and which have experiences multiple jihadist terror attacks and other forms of violent activism. There is a clear empirical gap in the literature with respect to peripheral countries with smaller jihadi milieus, and where jihadi activism has not manifested itself in plots and attacks. This may lead to distortions regarding the broader European jihadi milieu and activism as only the worst cases are studied. As stated by Iztok Prezelj & Klemen Kocjancic, "[t]his gap is problematic because the threat brought by Islamist radicalisation and terrorism is a global phenomenon that is able to migrate from places with tougher counter-radicalisation and counterterrorism measures to places with fewer obstacles."[16] Indeed, Finland has been somewhat hesitant to develop its counter-terrorism policy in the 2000s and early 2010s, with international pressure being a key driver of its evolution.[17] This has raised fears in the past among Finnish counter-terrorism officials that the country's relatively lax counter-terrorism legislation could be exploited and Finland could be used an area for support activity for armed groups operating elsewhere.[18] Another issue is that such countries might be less prepared to face threats from jihadism as the phenomenon evolves and its manifestations become more common. Indeed, the lack of convictions for terrorist offences in Finland suggests the country has

[16] Iztok Prezelj & Klemen Kocjancic, "A Broad Spectrum of Signs of Islamist Radicalisation and Extremism in a Country without a Single Terrorist Attack: The Case of Slovenia." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 14 Issue 3 (2020), p. 29, pp. 29–45.
[17]See e.g. Leena Malkki, "International Pressure to Perform: Counterterrorism Policy Development in Finland." Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Volume 39 Issue 4 (2016), pp. 342–362.
[18] "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia," (2010), p. 5.

struggled to effectively address terrorism-related activism and criminal offenses, which is an important part – and a missing piece – of a comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategy.[19]

Outline

This thesis will proceed in three sections. After the introduction, the first section provides the theoretical and historical background necessary for the core analysis. Chapter 1 thus introduces the key concepts and definitions deployed throughout the thesis, reviews relevant literature, identifies the knowledge gap the thesis addresses, and outlines the thesis' chosen research design. Chapter 2 provides the necessary historical background by offering an overview of jihadism in Finland by examining how the phenomenon initially emerged and evolved in the country between 2001 and 2011. It focuses both on examining the country's jihadi milieu – its size, internal structures, and external connections – and types and patterns of jihadi activism, which have been present in the country throughout the decade.

The second section forms the first part of the thesis' core analysis by examining jihadism in Finland between 2012 and 2020 and provides an answer to how the phenomenon has manifested itself and evolved over chosen the time period. Chapter 3 focuses on the key characteristics of the Finnish jihadi milieu. It examines how its size, internal structures, and external connections have evolved over the decade. Chapter 4 will focus on types and patterns of domestic jihadi activism. It examines a broad spectrum of domestic jihadi activism present in Finland during 2010s, covering recruitment, fundraising, incitement and threatening, and threatening or plotting

[19] Christian Jokinen, "'Terrorist Intent': How Finland's Justice System Struggles to Tackle Terrorism Offenders." Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor, Volume 16 Issue 14 (2018).

to commit domestic terror attacks. Chapter 5 focuses on jihadi activism of Finnish citizens and residents abroad in the context of the foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq. It looks at the causes and dynamics behind Finland's mobilisation, the key characteristics of the Finnish contingent in Syria and Iraq, the varied roles and activities of individual Finnish foreign fighters have had in the conflict zone, and the current status of the Finnish foreign fighter contingent (as of December 18th, 2020).

The third section forms the second part of the thesis' core analysis. It examines the broader causes behind jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland between 2012 and 2020, and answers why the phenomenon has evolved the way described in earlier. In chapter 6 the thesis identifies and analyses the key factors that have impacted the phenomenon's development in Finland. After chapter 6, the thesis concludes by summarising its key findings, discussing their broader relevance for the field of jihadism studies. And lastly, it will discuss potential avenues for further research.

Chapter 1: Terminology, literature review and research design

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the key terms and their definitions used throughout the thesis. The second part reviews key literature relating to the thesis overall topic of study and identifies the gap the study addresses. And the last part outlines the thesis' research design.

Key terms and definitions

It is beneficial to outline and define the key concepts and terms deployed throughout the thesis. Many terms will be featured prominently throughout the thesis, and thus need to be clearly defined. It must be noted that none of the terms deployed in this thesis have universally accepted definitions, but rather are contiguously contested and debated.

Jihadism and Salafism

This study adopts the term jihadism, which is defined here as a subset of violent Islamist extremism. As stated by Magnus Ranstorp, violent Islamist extremism is an umbrella concept for different forms of violence-promoting extremist groups within both Sunni and Shia Islam."[20] Jihadism is a sub-current within violent Sunni Islamist extremism. It mainly refers to al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and like-minded armed jihadist groups. These groups reject the existence of the nation-state and the international order and seek to overthrow both through the use of violence, which they justify through religious texts and traditions.[21] Theologically jihadists are often described as Salafi-jihadists. As stated by Petter Nesser, the Salafi dimension of jihadism is ideologically (and theologically) relevant for the study of jihadism in Europe as acts of jihadi violence – and activism more broadly – "must find justification and precedent in the traditions,

[20] Magnus Ranstorp, "Islamist Extremism: A Practical Introduction." Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence (2019), p. 5, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_factbook_islamist_extremism_december_2019_en.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[21] Petter Nesser, "Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History." London: Hurst & Co (2015), p. 6; Shiraz Maher, Salafi-Jihadism: The History an Idea." London: Hurst & Co (2016), p. 11.

or hadith, of the Prophet Mohammed."[22] Further, they share a "conviction that contemporary circumstances make violent struggle an individual [religious] duty incumbent on all Muslims."[23]

Extremists, militants, and foreign fighters

The primary focus of this study is jihadism in Finland and the individuals who take part in jihadi activism. In this context, this thesis separates extremists and militants. Both hold jihadist views, but extremists only take part in non-violent forms of activism, for instance by seeking to radicalise others, raise funds for jihadist groups abroad, or incite and glorify jihadist violence. Militants, also referred to as jihadists in this study, take the additional step of engaging in violent activism, either through foreign fighting or participating in attack plots.

One context in which the line between militants and extremists blurs is foreign fighting, i.e. joining "insurgencies during civil conflicts" abroad.[24] While many travel abroad to take part in violent conflicts, not all of the individuals end up participating in the hostilities.[25] However, as argued by Magnus Ranstorp and Linus Gustafsson, "[t] he armed groups in Syria and Iraq are dependent on logistics and other utilities to be able to function."[26] Indeed, these activities often exist primarily to support the military efforts of armed jihadist groups and waging prolonged

[22] Nesser (2015), p. 6.
[23] Peter Mandaville, "Global Political Islam." London: Routledge (2007), p. 249.
[24] David Malet, "Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts." New York: Oxford University Press (2017), p. 9.
[25] See e.g. Peter R. Neumann, "Radicalized: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West." London: I.B. Tauris (2016), p. 101.
[26] Linus Gustafsson & Magnus Ranstorp, "Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: An Analysis of open-source intelligence and statistical data." Center for Asymmetrical Threats (CATS), Swedish Defence University (2017), p. 21, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1110355/FULLTEXT01.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

insurgencies would be impossible without supportive non-military functions, which these individuals have performed.[27] Therefore, this thesis defines a jihadist foreign fighter as an individual who (1) has travelled to the conflict zone and with the intent of joining or living under the rule of a jihadist group opposed to the central governments of Syria and/or Iraq; (2) actively supports or participates in the groups' activities either through violent or non-violent activism, or both; and (3) was not motivated to participate in the conflict by payment or profit-seeking. While at least few Finnish citizens have travelled or tried to travel to Syria and Iraq from other countries, only individuals who were domiciled in Finland before travelling will be included in this study.

Jihadist entrepreneurs, social setworks, and organisations

There are three types of actors that are particularly relevant in researching jihadism in Finland in the domestic context. These are jihadist entrepreneurs, (extremist) social networks, and more formal organisations. Jihadist entrepreneurs are religious-political activists, who embrace jihadi ideology (and are attracted to its action-oriented approach), promote it actively, and seek out and draw inspiration from militant ideologues. They recruit, radicalise, and socialise individuals into jihadism often from their own social networks.[28] They generally possess charismatic personality types, and are skilful in bringing people into their immediate social circles, and subsequently

[27] Peter Neumann, ”Radicalized: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West.” London: I.B. Tauris (2016), p. 101–102.
[28] Marc Sageman, "Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century." Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press (2008), pp. 66–69. See also, Edwin Bakker, "Jihadi Terrorists in Europe: Their Characteristics and the Circumstances in which they Joined the Jihad: an Exploratory Study." Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingdael (2006), https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20061200_cscp_csp_bakker.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

influencing and manipulating them.[29] Jihadist entrepreneurs have played a crucial role in forming and maintaining small extremist cells or larger, more informal and social networks (some of which may develop a transnational character and reach) in Europe.[30] As the individuals who are in charge of external relations, many entrepreneurs have been key figures in the region-wide foreign fighters mobilisations, e.g. to Syria and Iraq.[31]

Much of the research into jihadism in Europe, and more broadly, suggests social networks play a key role in the phenomenon, for instance in the formation of terrorist attack cells and foreign fighter mobilisations.[32] In most general terms, social networks can be defined as "any set of at least two interconnected nodes," which can consist of "individuals, cells, groups, organizations, or states."[33] Social networks typically lack the formal structures or bureaucratic processes typical of classical terrorist organisations, or to a lesser extent more formal activist organisations, such as al-Muhajiroun.[34] Instead, as noted by Phil Williams, "*[t]hey are simultaneously pervasive and intangible, ubiquitous and invisible, everywhere and nowhere… Networks vary in size, shape, membership, cohesion, and purpose. Networks can be large or small, local or global, domestic or transnational, cohesive or diffuse, centrally directed or highly decentralized, purposeful or directionless. A specific network can be narrowly and tightly focused on no goal or broadly*

[29] Nesser (2015), p. 199.
[30] Peter R. Neumann, "Joining al-Qaeda: Jihadist Recruitment in Europe (Adelphi Series)." London: Routledge (2009), pp. 40–41; Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 33 Issue 9 (2010), p. 807, pp. 797–814.
[31] Nesser (2015), pp. 269–271.
[32] E.g. Bakker, (2006); Sageman (2008); Neumann (2009); Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010), pp. 801–806; Nesser (2015); Lia & Nesser (2016); Assaf Moghaddam, "Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation Among Terrorist Actors." New York: Columbia University Press (2016); Neumann (2016); Sean C. Reynolds & Mohammed M. Hafez, "Social Network Analysis of German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq." Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 31 Issue 4 (2017).
[33] Moghaddam (2016), pp. 55–56.
[34] Ibid., pp. 57–59.

oriented toward many goals, and it can be either exclusive or encompassing in its membership."[35] Informal social networks tend to arise around jihadist entrepreneurs. or small groups consisting of "self-starters" – who maintain no ties to other jihadist organisations or armed groups[36] – through pre-existing social ties, e.g. through friendship, kinship, marriage, and familial relationships.

Some studies have also highlighted the role of more formal extremist organisations in promoting jihadism in Europe.[37] Essentially, such organisations are not directly engaging in the pursuit of violence, but may nevertheless facilitate its members' movement towards militancy by glorifying violent ideologies and acts of violence committed by individuals belonging to the organisation or the broader jihadist social movement.[38] In practice, such organisations "*sustain the conditions of exclusion and separation in which violent extremism is likely to emerge*."[39] In practice, these types of organisations "*make it possible for individuals to socialise with radicals and become part of a milieu in which they will be exposed to violent extremists and where it will be easy to establish links to jihad*."[40] In the years before the Syrian civil war, such organisations have operated in the UK, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Norway, among others, and their

[35] Quoted in Moghaddam (2016), p. 64–65.
[36] Neumann (2009), p. 18.
[37] Nesser (2015); Lorenzo Vidino, "Sharia4: From Confrontational Activism to Militancy." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 9 Issue 2 (2015), pp. 2–16; Lia & Nesser (2016); Moghaddam (2016); Neumann (2016).
[38] Neumann (2009), pp. 31–32.
[39] Ibid., p. 32.
[40] Ibid.

broader influence was occasionally transnational.[41] Some authors have also suggested the existence of a Sharia4 organisation in Finland.[42]

Literature review[43]

Even before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the subsequent unprecedentedly large foreign fighter mobilisation there, jihadist militancy and the security threat from it posed to Europe and European countries received considerable academic attention. Much of the literature on the topic, especially from mid-2000s onwards, revolved around understanding the nature and characteristics of this threat. Indeed, one key area of research were jihadist terror cells. Several studies examined, for instance, how these cells formed,[44] what their internal dynamics and external connections – particularly to al-Qaeda – were,[45] how they planned and committed

[41] Raffaello Pantucci, "Al-Muhajiroun's European Recruiting Pipeline." CTC Sentinel, Volume 8 Issue 8 (2015); Vidino (2015); Daniel H. Heinke & Jan Raudszus, "German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq." CTC Sentinel, Volume 8 Issue 1 (2015); Lia & Nesser (2016); Moghaddam (2016); Marion van San, "Belgian and Dutch Young Men and Women Who Joined ISIS: Ethnographic Research among the Families They Left Behind." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 41 Issue 1 (2018), pp. 39–58.
[42] Pantucci (2015); Moghaddam (2016), p. 257.
[43] This review excludes all non-academic articles and reports examining the phenomenon in Finland, in which the author is either the sole author or a co-author. These include Saarinen (2013); Juha Saarinen, "The Finnish Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria." CTC Sentinel, Volume 7 Issue 3 (2014); Saarinen (2016); Marko Juntunen, Karin Creutz & Juha Saarinen, "Suomesta Syyrian ja Irakin taistelukentille suuntautuva liikkuvuus." Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 43/2016, Valtioneuvoston kanslia (2016); and Malkki & Saarinen (2019).
[44] Aidan Kirby, "The London Bombers as "Self-Starters": A Case Study in Indigenous Radicalization and the Emergence of Autonomous Cliques." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 30 Issue 5 (2007), pp. 415–428; Petter Nesser, "Joining jihadi terrorist cells in Europe: exploring motivational aspects of recruitment and radicalisation" in "Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe." Magnus Ranstorp (ed.), London: Routledge (2010).
[45] Lorenzo Vidino, "The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 30 Issue 7 (2007), pp. 579–592; Fernando Reinares, "The Madrid Bombings and Global Jihadism." Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, Volume 52 Issue 2 (2010), pp. 83–104; Eliane Tschaen Barbieri & Jytte Klausen, "Al Qaeda's London Branch: Patterns of Domestic and Transnational Network Integration." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 35 Issue 6 (2012), pp. 411–431. See also, Peter Neumann, Ryan Evans & Raffaello Pantucci, "Locating Al Qaeda's Center of

attacks,[46] and what the underlying motivations for the acts were.[47] Another key area for research were jihadist networks and milieus in Europe.[48] e.g. how jihadist networks formed and what their social dynamics were,[49] or how veteran foreign fighters affected local networks in Europe.[50] A third key area, connected to both areas mentioned above, were the individuals who had become involved in jihadist activities and their pathways to militancy.[51] In the context of the latter, for instance how they became radicalised,[52] how they were recruited,[53] or how they otherwise became engaged in jihadist collectives or activities.[54]

Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 34 Issue 11 (2011), pp. 825–842.

[46] See e.g. Petter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 31 Issue 10 (2008), pp. 924–946; Bruce Hoffman, "Radicalization and Subversion: Al Qaeda and the 7 July 2005 Bombings and the 2006 Airline Bombing Plot." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 32 Issue 12 (2009), pp. 1100–1116.

[47] For instance, see Petter Nesser, "Jihadism in Western Europe After the Invasion of Iraq: Tracing Motivational Influences from the Iraq War on Jihadist Terrorism in Western Europe." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 29 Issue 4 (2006), pp. 323–342.

[48] For instance, see Peter Neumann, "Europe's Jihadist Dilemma." Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, Volume 48 Issue 2 (2006), pp. 71–84.

[49] Simon Cottee, "Jihadism as a Subcultural Response to Social Strain: Extending Marc Sageman's "Bunch of Guys" Thesis." Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 23 Issue 5 (2011), pp. 730–751. See Sageman, (2008), pp. 66–69.

[50] Evan Kohlmann, "Al-Qaeda' Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network." Oxford: Berg (2004).

[51] Bakker (2006); Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010).

[52] Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010); Rem Korteweg et al., "Background contributing factors to terrorism: radicalization and recruitment" in Ranstorp (2010); Michael King & Donald Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence." Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 23 Issue 4 (2011), pp. 602–622; Daniela Pisoiu, "Islamist Radicalisation in Europe." London: Routledge (2012); Emmanuel Karagiannis, "European Converts to Islam: Mechanisms of Radicalization." Politics, Religion & Ideology, Volume 13 Issue 1 (2012), pp. 99–113.

[53] Michael Taarnby, "Understanding Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe" in "Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps, and Future Direction." Ed. Magnus Ranstorp, London: Routledge (2007); Neumann (2009).

[54] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West." Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2005); Bakker (2006). See also, Olivier Roy, "Globalised Islam, The Search for a New Ummah." London: Hurst & Co (2004).

Some literature also exists on other topics, such as ideological fault lines among European jihadists,[55] and foreign fighting and attending terrorist training camps,[56] although both topics were examined in the context of terror cells and plots, i.e. looking at the attitudes of individuals involved in jihadi activities in committing domestic attacks, and travelling abroad to gain skills that are necessary or beneficial in plotting and committing domestic attacks. These questions and themes were examined in the context of several countries in several studies. Much of the literature, however, focused on the key nexuses in the broader European jihadi milieus, where robust and active local milieus had emerged, e.g. Italy,[57] and Belgium,[58] or where high-profile plots or attacks had occurred, or both, e.g. Spain,[59] the Netherlands,[60] France,[61] and the United Kingdom.[62] Even peripheral countries where the phenomenon was though nearly if not entirely absent attracted limited attention, e.g. Denmark[63] and Portugal.[64]

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[55] Petter Nesser, "Ideologies of Jihad in Europe." Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 23 Issue 2 (2011), pp. 173–200.
[56] See e.g. Petter Nesser, "How did Europe's Global Jihadis Obtain Training for their Militant Causes?" Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 20 Issue 2 (2008).
[57] Carl Björkman, "Salafi-Jihadi Terrorism in Italy" in Ranstorp (2010).
[58] Rik Coolsaet, "The Rise and Demise of Jihadi Terrorism in Belgium" in "Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences." Rik Coolsaet (ed.), London: Ashgate, 2011.
[59] See e.g. Javier Jordan & Nicola Horsburgh, "Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 28 Issue 3 (2005), pp. 169–191; Rogelio Alonso, "Radicalisation and recruitment among jihadist terrorists in Spain: main patterns and subsequent counter-measures" in Ranstorp (2010).
[60] See e.g. Vidino (2007); Edwin Bakker, "Islamism, radicalisation and jihadism in the Netherlands: main developments and counter-measures" in Ranstorp (2010); Rudolph Peters, "Dutch Extremist Islamism: Van Gogh's Murderer and his Ideas" in Coolsaet (2011).
[61] Jean-Luc Marret, "The Jihadists and anti-terrorist challenges in France: an overview" in Ranstorp (2010).
[62] Wiktorowicz (2005); Kirby (2007); Hoffman (2009).
[63] Michael Taarnby, "Jihad in Denmark: An overview and analysis of Jihadi activity in Denmark." DIIS Working Paper 2006:35, Danish Institute for International Studies (2006); Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, "The attractions of Jihadism. An identity approach to three Danish terrorism cases and the gallery of characters around them." Doctoral Thesis, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen (2010).
[64] José Vegar, "The Gray Threat: The Presence of Jihadist Terrorism and Failings in the Portuguese National Security System." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 31 Issue 5 (2008), pp. 456–479; Maria do Céu Pinto, "An evaluation of the jihadist threat in Portugal." Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism, Volume 7 Issue 2 (2012), pp. 115–133.

However, there were several countries that were largely overlooked in the literature, where the phenomenon was present albeit in a limited fashion. Most relevant country in the context of this study was Finland. Although there is a growing literature focusing on various aspects of Islam, Muslim societies and socio-political activism, there were no empirical studies on the phenomenon in the country. However, Toby Archer's report titled *International Terrorism and Finland* provided a small exception. At the time it was published in 2004, there were still very few public indications of the presence of the phenomenon in Finland, and his study provided no empirical observations concerning the Finnish jihadi milieu and its activities. Rather the report examined how the transnational phenomenon could impact Finnish national security in terms of terrorism. His main finding about the local jihadi milieu was that "we do know that there are some people in the country who have connections to radical groups and we have also seen that modern European-based Islamist militancy is transnational."[65] Aside from the Finnish exemption, jihadism in similar "peripheral" countries in the broader European jihadi milieu, where the phenomenon is relatively underdeveloped and where there were low levels of jihadist activity, were largely understudied and poorly understood. However, the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq, which begun in 2012, would in large part expand research to previously un- or understudied regions in the European jihadi milieu.

Foreign fighters: studying jihadism in Europe in the context of the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq

[65] Toby Archer, "International Terrorism and Finland." The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, FIIA Report 7/2004 (2004), p. 66.

Even prior to the unprecedented mobilisation to Syria starting from late 2011, foreign fighting as a distinct mode of jihadist militancy and an emergent security threat had been receiving increasing attention.[66] Still, the mobilisation of young European Muslims – estimated between 4 000 and 7 000[67]) to the jihadist insurgencies to Syria and Iraq has launched a new wave of scholarly research dealing the phenomenon. Several questions focusing on various thematic aspects of foreign fighting have been examined, similar questions arising later again because of the historic flow of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq. These questions include the following: why, and how, do foreign fighters become involved in conflicts abroad,[68] why foreign fighting is more common among radicalised Muslims in western countries than participating in domestic terrorist attacks and plots,[69] what types of conflicts attract foreign fighters,[70] how do foreign fighters affect the conflicts in which they participate[71]; whether returning foreign fighters pose a

[66] For example, see Frank Cilluffo, Jeffrey Cozzens & Magnus Ranstorp, "Foreign Fighters: Trends, Trajectories & Conflict Zones." The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute Paper (2010); Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad." International Security, Volume 35 Issue 3 (2010/2011), pp. 53–94; Barak Mendelsohn, "Foreign Fighters–Recent Trends." Orbis, Volume 55 Issue 2 (2011), pp. 189–202.
[67] See e.g. Petter Nesser, "Military Interventions, Jihadi Networks, and Terrorist Entrepreneurs: How the Islamic State Terror Wave Rose so High in Europe." CTC Sentinel, Volume 12 Issue 3 (2019).
[68] Timothy Holman, "'Gonna Get Myself Connected': The Role of Facilitation in Foreign Fighter Mobilizations." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 10 Issue 2 (2016), pp. 2–23; Malet (2017).
[69] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting." American Political Science Review, Volume 107 Issue 1 (2013), pp. 1–15.
[70] Hegghammer (2010/2011); Duyvesteyn, Isabelle & Peeters, Bram: "Fickle Foreign Fighters? A Cross-Case Analysis of Seven Muslim Foreign Fighter Mobilisations (1980-2015)." ICCT Research Paper, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2015) http://icct.nl/app/uploads/2015/10/ICCT-Duyvesteyn-Peeters-Fickle-Foreign-Fighters-October2015.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]; Malet (2017).
[71] Kristin Bakke, "Help Wanted? The Mixed Record of Foreign Fighters in Domestic Insurgencies." International Security, Volume 38 Issue 4 (2014), pp. 150–187; Ben Rich & Dara Conduit, "The Impact of Jihadist Foreign Fighters on Indigenous Secular-Nationalist Causes: Contrasting Chechnya and Syria." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 38 Issue 2 (2015), pp. 113–131.

security threat to the societies from which they originated[72]; and how should the potential threat from returnees be reacted to by their respective governments.[73]

Additionally, the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq has also created new avenues for research. The most prominent avenue relates to the role of women in this phenomenon.[74] Women who have travelled to the conflict zone and lived under the IS rule – many also participating in its various activities – have also become a prominent political issue for many EU states from early 2019 onwards as several hundred Europe-originated women were captured by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – as a part of the international military intervention against the IS – in the last months of the IS's self-decalared caliphate and after it fell in early 2019 and left in limbo in "internment camps" run by the SDF, including al-Hol and Roj.[75] Women have become more active participants in jihadist activism outside the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq. For instance,

[72] Hegghammer (2013); Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn & Edwin Bakker, "Returning Western Foreign Fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Somalia." ICCT Background Note, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2014); Daniel Byman & Jeremy Shapiro, "Be Afraid. Be A Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq." Brookings Foreign Policy Paper 34, The Brookings Institution (2014), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/be-afraid-web.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[73] Alastair Reed, Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn & Edwin Bakker, "Pathways of Foreign Fighters: Policy Options and Their (Un)Intended Consequences." ICCT Policy Brief, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2015), http://icct.nl/app/uploads/2015/05/ICCT-Reed-De-Roy-Van-Zuijdewijn-Bakker-Pathways-Of-Foreign-Fighters-Policy-Options-And-Their-Un-Intended-Consequences-April2015.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[74] See e.g. Anita Perešin, "Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 9 Issue 3 (2015), pp. 21–38; Erin Saltman & Melanie Smith, "'Till Martyrdom Do Us Part': Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon." Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2015), https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]; Laura Huey, Rachel Inch & Hillary Peladeu, ""@ me if you need shoutout": Exploring Women's Roles in the Islamic State's Twitter Networks." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 42 Issue 5 (2019).
[75] See e.g. Gina Vale, "Women in Islamic State: From Caliphate to Camps." ICCT Policy Brief, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2019), https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/10/Women-in-Islamic-State-From-Caliphate-to-Camps.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

several women have participated in domestic attack plots. As Robin Simcox notes, the IS has inspired dozens of women to attempt terrorist attacks in its name in Europe between 2014 and 2018, and at least two plots involved all-female attack cells.[76]

Unsurprisingly, the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq has led to even more research focusing on jihadism, especially in the foreign fighter mobilisations from various countries to the conflict zone. Much of the research has focused on "core" countries with robust and active jihadi milieus, and relatively high levels of jihadist radicalization, activity, and violence.[77] However, there have been several studies focusing on the mobilisations originating from peripheral countries in the broader European jihadi milieu, which were largely overlooked in the literature published before

[76] See e.g. Robin Simcox, "The French Female Attack Cell: A Case Study." CTC Sentinel, Volume 11 Issue 6 (2018); Nadia Khomami, "How London teenager plotted attacks with all-female terror cell." The Guardian, 4.6.2018.

[77] See e.g. Edwin Bakker & Roel de Bont, "Belgian and Duch Jihadist Foreign Fighters (2012–2015): Characteristics, Motivations, and Roles in the War in Syria and Iraq." Small Wars & Insurgencies, Volume 27 Issue 5: Jihadist Insurgent Movements (2016), pp. 837–857; Reinier Bergema & Marion van San, "Waves of the Black Banner: An Exploratory Study on the Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria and Iraq." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 42 Issue 7 (2019), pp. 636–661; Francesco Marone & Lorenzo Vidino, "Destination Jihad: Italy's Foreign Fighters." ICCT Report, International Center for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, (2019), https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/03/Marone-Vidino-Italys-Foreign-Fighters-March2019.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]; Rik Coolsaet, "Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighter Wave: What Drives Europeans To Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case." Egmont Paper 81, Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations (2016); Reynolds & Hafez (2017); David Thomson, "The Returned: They Left to Wage Jihad, Now They're Back." London: Polity Press (2018).

2012. These include but are not limited to Switzerland,[78] Sweden,[79] Austria,[80] and Portugal.[81] Yet, despite disproportionately large – albeit still moderately sized – mobilisation, Finland has largely remained exempt from scholarly scrutiny focusing on the mobilisations – although an article on state responses to returning foreign fighters has been published in 2018.[82]

However, a study by Efraim Benmelech and Esteban F. Klor, which aims to provide "the first systematic analysis of the link between economic, political, and social conditions and the global phenomenon of ISIS foreign fighters" addresses the disproportionate size of the Finnish mobilisation. Their article suggests that "the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS is driven not by economic or political conditions but rather by ideology and the difficulty of assimilation into homogeneous Western countries."[83] Their analysis of the Finnish mobilisation suffers from two significant shortcomings. First, in discounting economic and political conditions, their analysis on economic performance relies on Finland's average GDP per capita ($46,205 in 2010 according to their study) rather than looking at the economic performance of the Finland's Muslim population.[84] This is particularly problematic as Finnish Muslim population – as Muslim

[78] Fabien Merz, "Switzerland and Jihadist Foreign Fighters." CSS Analyses in Security Policy 199, Center for Security Studies/ETH Zurich, (2016), https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse199-EN.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[79] Marco Nilsson, "Foreign Fighters and the Radicalization of Local Jihad: Interview Evidence from Swedish Jihadists." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 38 Issue 5 (2015), pp. 343–358; Gustafsson & Ranstorp (2017); Amir Rostami et al, "The Swedish Mujahideen: An Exploratory Study of 41 Swedish Foreign Fighters Deceased in Syria and Iraq." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 43 Issue 5 (2020), pp. 382–395.
[80] Veronika Hofinger & Thomas Schmidinger, "'Muhajirun' from Austria. Why they left to join ISIS and why they don't return." Journal for Deradicalization, Number 22 (2020), pp. 287–318.
[81] Maria do Céu Pinto Arena, "The Portuguese foreign fighters phenomenon: a preliminary assessment." Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, Volume 13 Issue 1 (2018), pp. 93–114.
[82] Teemu Tammikko, "The Threat of Returning Foreign Fighters: Finnish State Responses to the Volunteers in the Spanish and Syria-Iraq Civil Wars." Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 30 Issue 5: Terrorism in the Nordic Countries (2018), pp. 844–861.
[83] Benmelech & Klor (2020).
[84] Ibid.

populations elsewhere in Europe – tend to underperform socioeconomically, at least on average.[85] This erroneous assumption by Benmelech and Klor regarding the average income of Finnish Muslims would make it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to empirically examine the causal link between economic deprivation and radicalisation in the Finnish case, let alone the precise mechanisms through which it interacts with other factors, which is needed to advance academic research on the subject matter.[86]

And second, in highlighting the difficulties of Muslim assimilation in ethnically and linguistically homogenous countries, they do not take into consideration that Finland – while still significantly more homogenous than most western European countries – has become less linguistically and ethnically homogenous over time, not more. Its Muslim population has steadily grown from 1990s onwards, while radicalisation has remained a marginal issue, particularly before 2012 but also after. Hence, this assertion cannot account for why Finland has experienced a disproportionate mobilisation to Syria and Iraq but at the same it remains among the least affected countries to jihadist militancy in Europe. Additionally, if "inability to assimilate" was as significant a factor in explaining radicalisation within Finland's Muslim population, it would have experienced much higher levels of radicalisation before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war begun in 2011, which is clearly not the case as will be shown in this thesis.

[85] Hegghammer, (2016), p. 159.

[86] Thomas Hegghammer, "Revisiting the poverty-terrorism link in European jihadism." Key Note Speech in the Society for Terrorism Research Annual Conference, Leiden, 8.11.2016b. See also, Alexander Lee, "Who Becomes a Terrorist? Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence." World Politics Volume 63 Issue 2 (2011), pp. 203–245.

Examining the developmental trajectory of jihadism in Finland: three potential approaches

In the burgeoning scholarly literature focusing on jihadism in Europe, there are several different types of approaches to case studies focusing on a particular country. One approach is a micro-level analysis, which examines in detail jihadists' biographies and demographic data, and tries to explain why, or how, individuals become involved in jihadist militancy. These studies often rely on interviews with current or former militants, e.g. foreign fighters, in addition to requiring access to government databases and court documents - which often include swathes of personal data necessary for empirical research.[87]

Additionally, another approach is a meso-level analysis, which examines the social context and dynamics as to why, and more importantly how, individuals become involved in jihadist militancy – whether domestically or in distant conflicts abroad. These studies normally focus on the role of social ties and networks, and possibly broader communities where involvement in jihadism occur. Such approaches often argue that pre-existing social ties and "block recruitment" play a key role in militant mobilisation.[88] The centrality of networks is often observable through "clustering", i.e. how mobilisation to militancy tends to cluster into specific social networks (and often in specific geographical areas) rather than being randomly diffused. In the context of the foreign fighter phenomenon, and the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq, the role of social networks is

[87] For example, see Bakker & de Bont (2015); Nilsson (2015); Jakob Sheikh, "I Just Said It. The State": Examining the Motivations for Danish Foreign Fighters in Syria." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 10 Issue 6 (2016), pp. 59–67; Lorne L. Dawson & Amarnath Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for Hijrah to Syria and Iraq." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 40 Issue 3 (2017), 191–210.
[88] Holman (2016); Reynolds & Hafez (2017).

well-researched in several different cases, including, for instance, Belgium and France[89], and Germany.[90]

And lastly, macro-level analyses examine structural “push” and ideological “pull” factors. Whereas the latter looks at why individuals (or collectives) are drawn towards involvement in jihadist activity,[91] the former focuses on societal issues and challenges – e.g. discrimination, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and socioeconomic marginalisation – which often confront European Muslim youth who participate in Islamist militancy.[92] Indeed, many studies suggest that the societal challenges Muslim youth face are a key factor contributing to their radicalisation in Europe.[93] In the context of the foreign fighter mobilisation, some studies have suggested that foreign fighters from several countries – including Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal – come predominantly from the margins of society, as evidenced by high unemployment rates, criminality, intermittent low wage employment, and lower levels of education.[94]

[89] Timothy Holman, “Belgian and French Foreign Fighters in Iraq, 2003-2005: A Comparative Case Study.” Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 38 Issue 8 (2015), pp. 603–621; Holman, 2016.
[90] Reynolds & Hafez (2017).
[91] Lorne L. Dawson, Amarnath Amarasingam & Alexandra Bain, “Talking to Foreign Fighters: Socio-Economic Push Factors versus Existential Pull Factors.” TSAS Working Paper Series No 16-14, Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (2016), p. 27, http://www.tsas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/TSASWP16-14_Dawson-Amarasingam-Bain.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[92] For example, see James A. Piazza, “Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism.” Journal of Peace Research, Volume 48 Issue 3 (2011), pp. 339–353; Jasper L. Bie, Christianne J. de Poot & Joanne P. van der Leun, “Shifting Modus Operandi of Jihadist Foreign Fighters from the Netherlands between 2000 and 2013: A Crime Script Analysis.” Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 27 Issue 3 (2015), pp. 416–440.
[93] See e.g. Robert Leiken, “Europe’s Angry Muslims.” New York: Oxford University Press (2011); Coolsaet (2016); Benmelech & Klor (2020).
[94] Daan Weggemans, Edwin Bakker & Peter Grol, “Who are They and Why do They Go? The Radicalisation and Preparatory Processes of Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters.” Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 8 Issue 4 (2014), pp. 100–110; do Céu Pinto Arena, (2018).

Many studies, however, combine two or more of these approaches – depending on their specific research topics and questions – as each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, and none can alone offer a comprehensive framework for answering to the *why*'s or the *how*'s of Muslim involvement in jihadist militancy. Individual-level studies offer in-depth and detailed insight on individual cases, but they may struggle to generate enough data to provide generalisable knowledge about national-level trends and patterns. Indeed, as argued by Rik Coolsaet, by solely relying on statements by combatants, analysts risk excessive generalization.[95] Meso-level studies often provide strong analyses on how individuals and social groups become involved in jihadism through social interaction, but they may struggle to include in their analysis, and offer insight on, the possible underlying push and pull factors. Lastly, macro-level studies can often provide important insight these push and pull factors, but they often suffer from two significant shortcomings. First is the specificity problem. Broad societal issues and challenges identified these studies affects "a much wider swath of youth in Europe than the tiny handful become involved in jihadist militancy or personally take part in a terrorist attack.[96] Another significant shortcoming of the studies focusing on structural "push" factors is that they tend to downplay the significance of factors which are difficult to measure, such as the role of religion as a motivating factor, in favour of socioeconomic and political factors.[97] Hence, it is beneficial to integrate all three approaches in the study.

[95] Coolsaet (2016), p.21.
[96] Dawson, Amarasingam & Bain (2016), p. 27.
[97] Dawson & Amarasingam (2017), p. 192.

Methodology

Before outlining the research methodology to study jihadism's evolution in Finland, it is necessary to justify the selection of Finland as the thesis' case study. There are three main justifications. First, as has been made clear previously, there is very little previous research focusing on jihadism in Finland. Second, the country has experienced disproportionately large mobilisation to Syria and Iraq, while simultaneously experiencing significant qualitative and quantitative developments – at least compared to the situation in Finland in the 2000s. Indeed, authorities in Finland (including domestic intelligence and law enforcement officials) in particular have encouraged academic research focusing on the phenomenon. Third, studying jihadism in Finland can contribute to the study of the phenomenon in more peripheral countries where jihadism rarely manifests itself in domestic attacks, which is somewhat scarce in the literature.

The thesis is an empirical case study, primarily combining qualitative analysis with few quantitative assessments. This study will collect primary and secondary data from several different sources that are independent from each other to minimise the possibility and impact of potential biases and distortions in the data. These include social media accounts belonging to individuals who have participated in jihadist militancy in the context of the conflict in Syria and Iraq; relevant jihadist content produced by the IS or other jihadist armed groups or other types of actors external to Finland; journalistic articles, particularly those containing primary data, from Finland and other countries; official reports and analyses from Finnish authorities, e.g. Supo and

the Ministry of the Interior; official reports and documents from international agencies, e.g. Europol; analytical reports; and academic literature.

Despite being an empirical study, the thesis will situate its analysis in social movement theory, and particularly resource mobilisation approach, which "views surges of activism less as a response to broader socio-political strains and more as a function of the ability of entrepreneurs to craft activist networks and exploit protest technologies."[98] Hence, the study adopts a meso-level approach, focusing mostly on individual actors and networks, contextualising it with macro- and micro-level analysis where beneficial and possible. More precisely, this thesis will adopt and adapt a typology created by Brynjar Lia and Petter Nesser in their study on jihadist networks in Norway to better understand how jihadism "takes root in Europe's periphery" – where violent activism is a rare occurrence – and what "the variations of militant Islamist activism" are in regions where attacks occur rarely.[99] The typology classifies jihadist actors are according to criteria such as organisational structure, activity, degree of overtness and outreach, and recruitment base.[100] This will make it easier to characterise and differentiate between various types of jihadist actors, and thus it can more easily capture the variations of jihadism activism and their evolution.

As data is scarcer in the Finnish case as it is in Norway, this thesis adopts a separate typology for activism as in many cases there is more information available on occurrences of jihadist activism than there is on the actors – e.g. activists or networks – behind these acts. The adoption of a

[98] Hegghammer (2016), p. 158.
[99] Lia & Nesser, (2016), p. 121.
[100] Ibid.

separate typology based on actions rather than actors allows the analysis to provide a more enriched analysis on jihadist activities in Finland. The types of activism are classified as follows: radicalisation, recruitment & facilitation; creation, translation and disseminating propaganda; fundraising and financing; incitement and threatening; foreign fighting; attending terrorist training camps abroad; and plotting and committing jihadist terror attacks. This typology is based on an earlier study of jihadism in Finland by Leena Malkki and the author.[101]

Lastly, when identifying and analysing the underlying macro-level causes of the phenomenon's evolution in Finland, this study adopts and adapts Thomas Hegghammer's framework on his analysis on the long-term future of jihadism in Europe.[102] The framework analyses all four macro-trends identified by Hegghammer. These are: a growing recruitment pool; a growing number of entrepreneurs; persistent armed conflict in Muslim countries, and operational freedom of local activists online. The study will expand on two of these macro trends. First, instead of just focusing on the number of available entrepreneurs, it looks at the increasing number and quality of both activists and networks. Second, instead of looking at operational freedom online only, it also looks at the activists' and networks' operational freedom in Finland more broadly. Lastly, it also looks at the profile of Finland in jihadist narratives. As noted by Hegghammer, these macro-trend concerns all the key aspects of resource mobilisation: the availability of recruits; the quantity – and quality – of domestic actors, who mobilise others for collective action; the availability of political grievances to exploit by jihadist actors for radicalisation and recruitment, and operational freedoms and capacity, both in Finland and abroad.

[101] Malkki & Saarinen, (2019), pp. 87–105.
[102] Hegghammer (2016).

Data gathering and related challenges

Due to the inbuilt challenges of researching a small-scale, largely clandestine phenomenon, it is important to thoroughly consider various potential sources of data, and acknowledge potential issues and challenges related to them. There are three distortions or biases from which this study suffers. First relates to available sources. As there is a significant lack of previous analytical and academic literature that examine the phenomenon in a Finnish context, this thesis has a bias of relying primarily on government reports and media sources. To minimise this distortion the study has tried to triangulate data from different sources where possible, and exclude information, which has been proven misleading, false, contradictory, or otherwise problematic by more reliable information from other sources. The second relates to chronological distortions in available data. There is simply significantly more information available about jihadism in Finland, its manifestations, and evolution in the 2010s than the 2000s. Hence, there are inevitable knowledge gaps in this thesis' analysis on the emergence and early evolution of the phenomenon. And the third relates to availability of data on different types of activism. There is vastly more information available on foreign fighting and foreign fighters than domestic activities and activists in the 2000s. While foreign fighting has certainly been an important – if not the most important – form of jihadi activism in Finland in the 2010, there is no comparable information available on domestic support activism, e.g. dissemination of propaganda or fundraising, or extremists taking part in these activities – even though Supo has stated there have been "significant" support activities, which have taken place in Finland during the decade.[103]

[103] "Supo Year Book 2019." Suojelupoliisi (2020), p. 12, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/40760242/2019_EN_Supo_yearbook.pdf/9be682cf-bfb6-50d6-d7b7-cc903d8e5802/2019_EN_Supo_yearbook.pdf?t=1602666410607. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

Research objective and contribution

The project's overall objective is to make an original and substantive contribution to the study of jihadism in Europe. It does this by producing an empirically detailed and nuanced, and theoretically well-founded study on jihadism and developmental trajectory in a previously overlooked country, Finland. While Finland is undoubtedly a peripheral country in the broader European jihadi milieu by any criteria, the thesis draws its relevance from the evolution of jihadism in Finland throughout the 2010s, including an unprecedented and disproportionately high number of foreign fighters from Finland travelling to Syria and Iraq. To date there are few – albeit an increasing number of – studies, which focus on and systematically examine jihadism in peripheral countries where the phenomenon is marginal, and rarely results in acts of violence. While the unprecedented wave of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq from the region has triggered a wave of new research into jihadism in the region, peripheral countries still remain largely understudied, and some cases unstudied. A study on post-2012 developments – both the disproportionately large mobilisations and significant increase in jihadist activists and activism domestically – in Finland, especially when contextualised with a study on the pre-2012 relative lack of jihadism, would benefit academic literature on jihadism in Europe by offering new empirical insights from a previously unexplored country.

Chapter 2: Emergence and early evolution – The Finnish jihadi milieu's first decade

This chapter examines the emergence and evolution of jihadism in Finland during the 2000s. Specifically, it looks at what is known about how the phenomenon arrived in Finland, evolved, and manifested itself throughout the 2000s. It argues the Finnish jihadi milieu remained largely small and atomised, largely limited to first-generation Muslims and ethnically homogenous small networks – from at least Somali and Iraqi Kurdish backgrounds – whose focus was mainly on conflicts and armed jihadist groups in their countries of origin. However, the phenomenon would also evolve to add a homegrown dimension in the latter half of the decade, partly impacted by Finnish converts' effort to self-organise. Despite internal developments, the milieu would remain largely remote and isolated, as the country or its jihadi milieu rarely received attention from jihadist actors abroad. While levels of activism in Finland remained low – and manifested itself predominantly in non-violent forms – a broad range of different types of activism were likely present, although confirmation from official sources remain rare outside few exceptions. The chapter ends by noting that this early evolution would in part lay the foundations for later developments in the 2010s, particularly in the context of the Finnish foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq from 2012 onwards.

Information about the early years of jihadism in Finland remains scarce, and there are only a few data sources other than occasional reports and media commentary from various governmental authorities which provide details on the phenomenon. Regrettably, even the official reports rarely include anything more than generic and ambiguous statements. Another hurdle is the lack of criminal investigations into jihadism-related activity in the 2000s. The first criminal investigation

only begun in 2011 (although the subjects of this investigation were the targets of intelligence gathering since 2009).[104] The lack of information, and the lack of criminal investigations is at least partly caused by the fact that the authorities likely lacked resources to form a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon and its manifestations until the later years in the decade. Indeed, before the 9/11 attacks in Washington D.C. and New York in 2001, as well as the early 2000s, the resources Finland had invested in counterterrorism could be described as modest at best. For instance, Supo did not have a dedicated counter-terrorism unit until 2004.[105] It took nearly until the turn of the decade before the authorities begun to publicly perceive Islamist militancy not only as an external and indirect threat to Finland and Finnish citizens abroad, but also a phenomenon that was present within the country and had implications to its national security.[106]

The emergence of jihadism in Finland

It is impossible to provide a detailed and comprehensive picture about how, when or where jihadism emerged in Finland. However, it appears to be the case that the phenomenon has followed general trends in the region, where it was imported by individuals involved in Islamist

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[104] Niko Ranta, "Suomen ensimmäinen terrorismitutkinta: Esitutkinta loppumetreillä." MTV3, 23.9.2013.
[105] Despite significant improvements in the 2010s, the resources given to counter-terrorism in Finland remained relatively small. As late as 2014, Supo had a personnel of 235 in total, and its entire budget 19 million euros, around 40 percent of which was spent on counter-terrorism. In terms of personnel, Supo was the second smallest organisation in intelligence, security and security police sectors in all of EU countries. "Suojelupoliisin hallinnollista asemaa ja tulosohjausta sekä valvonnan kehittämistä selvittäneen työryhmän loppuraportti: Raportti 24.9.2014." Sisäinen turvallisuus | Sisäministeriön julkaisu 28/2014, Sisäministeriö, September 2014, p. 9, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/78975/Suojelupoliisin%20hallinnollista%20asemaa.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[106] For instance, see "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia." (2010).

militancy and activism, who fled authoritarian states from the Middle East and North Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s.[107] Particularly impactful elsewhere in the region were radical preachers and charismatic activists, which Petter Nesser described as “jihadist entrepreneurs” in his study on the history of Islamist terrorism in Europe.[108] These entrepreneurs exploited the freedoms of democracies to operate and “created a subculture around radical mosques and social media.”[109] According to Nesser, jihadist entrepreneurs “are crucial for a terrorist cell to form and take action” as they seek to “recruit, socialize [sic] and train the other cell members.”[110] While Nesser’s analysis focused on the formation of terrorist cells, the same insight can be applied to other types of small networks with varying objectives.

The developmental trajectory of jihadism in Finland appears to have followed regional patterns, although the phenomenon emerged later and at a much smaller scale. It appears to have been imported by individuals from various conflict zones in Muslim countries in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa region by some time in the early 2000s. While very little is known about these early pioneers, it seems unlikely that among them were any entrepreneurs comparable to those in the regional key nexuses in the broader European jihadi milieu, such as Abu Hamza or Abdullah el-Faisal in the United Kingdom, Mohamed Moumou or Abu Omar in Sweden, or Mullah Krekar in Norway.[111] Indeed, the remote, cold, and ethnically homogenous country with a miniscule

[107] For instance, see Robin Simcox, “The Asylum-Terror Nexus: How Europe Should Respond.” Backgrounder No 3314, The Heritage Foundation (2018), https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/BG3314.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]; Nesser (2015), pp. 34–35; Sam Mullins, “’Home-Grown’ Jihad: Understanding Islamist Terrorism in the US and UK.” London: Imperial College Press (2016), pp. 2–3.
[108] On jihadist entrepreneurs, see Nesser (2015), pp. 13–14.
[109] Nesser (2015), p. 23.
[110] Nesser (2015), p. 13.
[111] On Moumou and Abu Omar, see Magnus Ranstorp et al., “Executive Summary: Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism: Influence and Challenges for Swedish Society.” Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies,

Muslim population was not a likely destination for any renowned extremists with established connections to bona fide militants or armed jihadist groups.

Among the early arrivals were likely activists, which Brynjar Lia and Petter Nesser call militant exiles and visitors in their study on jihadist networks in Norway. As Lia and Nesser explain, militant exiles "usually act as spokesmen, ambassadors, or leadership figures for a militant Islamist party, or guerrilla movement, operating in a Muslim majority country, or in a safe haven nearby." What militant exiles have in common is that they communicate with their native language and "their constituency was mostly limited to their country of origin and their countrymen in exile," and "their eyes were set on the political scene in the countries from which they had fled."[112] These types of extremists, in addition to radicalised self-starters within the Somali and Iraqi Kurdish diasporas would form the first-generation of the Finnish jihadi milieu. In 2010 the milieu was still described to consist mostly of first-generation immigrants – acting individually or in smaller networks – with close ties to armed Islamist and jihadist groups operating in their countries of origin. Their activism was either directed entirely abroad, or it also targeted their fellow diaspora members in Finland.[113]

Militant visitors on the other hand, are activists who enter their target countries for a temporary stay, possibly for a specific purpose, and who are not integrated into local jihadi milieus or networks. Instead, they operate on the periphery – or outer rings – of local milieus, but they also

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Swedish Defence University (2018), p. 19–21, http://fhs.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1313715/FULLTEXT01.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]. On Krekar, see Lia & Nesser (2016), pp. 122–123.

[112] Lia & Nesser (2016), p. 122.

[113] "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia." (2010), p. 6.

have contacts to militants and armed groups abroad.[114] One possible such example is an unnamed Finnish citizen of Moroccan origin, who had reportedly participated in the Afghan jihad in the 1980s and 1990s, and subsequently moved to Finland and became a citizen in 2000. He was a childhood friend and associate of Mohamed Moumou, a well-known Moroccan-Swedish militant activist. Moumou was reportedly trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and he travelled to Iraq to in the 2000s, becoming a senior figure in al-Qaeda in Iraq before he was killed in Mosul in 2008.[115] While very little is known of Moumou's Finnish-Moroccan compatriot's activities in Finland during his stay, at some point in the 2000s he moved to Sweden, and was subsequently deported back to Finland in 2008. Swedish domestic intelligence organisation Säpo (Säkerhetspolisen) believed he was a leading figure in the radical Islamist network around the Brandbergen mosque – where Moumou had been a key character before travelling to Iraq in mid-2000s – and a known figure in the broader Scandinavian jihadi milieu.[116]

The Finnish Jihadi milieu: early years

The Finnish jihadi milieu emerged in the 2000s, most likely partly around these early pioneers, some of whom were former members of armed jihadist groups, and around radicalised self-starters without any formal or direct ties to militants or armed jihadist groups abroad. The milieu included a wide range of individuals – some organised in small networks – whose roles and

[114] Lia & Nesser (2016), pp. 125–126.
[115] Bill Roggio, "US Forces Kill al Qaeda in Iraq's Deputy Commander." FDD's Long War Journal, 15.10.2008; Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda in Iraq's Second in Command Was a Swedish Citizen." FDD's Long War Journal, 16.10.2008.
[116] "Terroriepäilty suomalaismies karkotettiin Ruotsista." Kaleva, 18.11.2009.

activities within the milieu, as well as their impact in the development of the phenomenon varied greatly. Predominantly these individuals clustered in and around Helsinki metropolitan region and Turku, where majority of Finland's Muslim population resided.[117] By any criteria, the Finnish jihadi milieu could at best be described as embryonic. It was small, atomised and isolated, until the 2010s.[118]

Size

There are only few estimates from various authorities – predominantly police and Supo officials – exist regarding the milieu's size and its evolution during the 2000s. In fact, the first estimations are from the end of the decade. The first mentions regarding the number of relevant individuals were published in 2008-2009, when Supo stated in its Annual Reports in 2008 and 2009 that Islamist militancy mainly manifested itself in Finland through the presence of a few (former) members of armed terrorist groups residing in the country.[119] In 2010, a senior Supo official stated in a media interview that there was a "handful" of individuals in Finland "whose connections are worrying enough to merit closer observation and analysis."[120] A year later, Supo

[117] "Terrorist Threat Highest in the Capital Region." YLE News, 17.1.2011.
[118] See e.g. "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 1/2013." Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma, Sisäasiainministeriö (2013), pp. 5–6, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/3723676/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-1-2013.pdf/c153bd87-b4ff-4cb0-8843-0e0352be052c/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-1-2013.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[119] "Supo Annual Report 2008." Suojelupoliisi (2009); "Supo Annual Report 2009." Suojelupoliisi (2010).
[120] "Supo: Terrori-iskulla ei yhteyksiä Suomeen – tarkkailussa kourallinen henkilöitä." YLE, 12.12.2010.

was reportedly “keeping an eye on several dozen people who may have connections to al-Shabaab and other al-Qaida-style terror groups.”[121]

As the phenomenon also attracted individuals that were neither former members of armed groups nor had connections to them, for example among extremist converts, as will be discussed below, “several dozen” should be considered a minimum estimate. What is clear from the statements above is that the size of the Finnish jihadi milieu – while meagre – was constantly growing throughout the decade. Indeed, as stated by Supo’s Director Antti Pelttari in an interview in late 2012, the number of individuals with connections to terrorist groups abroad multiplied in Finland during the first decade of the 2000s.[122] However, this growth should be at least partly attributable to an increase in the authorities’ resources and information-gathering capacity related to counter-terrorism by the end of the decade.[123]

Internal structures

From the early 2000s onwards, jihadism existed in at least three different and separate contexts. The first two contexts are *diasporic support networks* within the Kurdish and Somali diasporas in Finland. As described by Lia and Nesser, “[d]iasporic support networks go beyond an individual spokesman or leadership figure. They share some common ground with the militant exile type since both have a specific ethno-national and geographic focus, but they differ in terms of

[121] “Police See Finnish Links to al-Shabaab.” YLE, 4.1.2011. See also, “Terrorist Threat Highest in the Capital Region” (2011).
[122] Annemari Anttila, “Supon päällikkö: terroristiyhteyksien määrä moninkertaistunut Suomessa.” YLE, 26.11.2012.
[123] ”Terrorist Threat Highest in the Capital Region” (2011).

scale."[124] Additionally, the authors state that these networks "represent social movements and often have significant capacities in terms of fund-raising, mobilization and propaganda outreach."[125] However, in the Finnish case, they appear to have been considerably smaller in size, and their capacity to fundraise, mobilise and outreach significantly more constrained than similar networks in Norway. Although not mentioned in the counter-terrorism strategy paper, the third context – homegrown extremists, in this case radicalised Finnish converts – had been identified as a phenomenon present in Finland by Supo in 2007.[126]

The Finnish cell of Ansar al-Islam's European support network

Ansar al-Islam was a predominantly Kurdish armed Salafi-Islamist group formed through a merger of local Islamist groups in Iraqi Kurdistan in the early 2000s. The group was co-founded by notable jihadist entrepreneur and formerly Norway-based militant exile Mullah Krekar.[127] The group participated in the Sunni insurgency in Iraq in the 2000s, maintained close ties and cooperated closely with al-Qaeda – and its Iraq branch, AQI – during the 2000s, and a conflicted relationship with the IS during the 2010s before merging with it in 2014.[128] The group's co-founder Krekar played a key role in how Ansar al-Islam created a transnational support network in Europe, which was embedded within Kurdish diasporas in various countries in Europe. The

[124] Lia & Nesser (2016), pp. 123–125.
[125] Ibid.
[126] "Supo Annual Report 2007." Suojelupoliisi (2008).
[127] On Krekar, see Lia & Nesser (2016), pp. 122–123. He was deported to Italy in March, 2020, where an Italian court sentenced him to 12 years behind bars for leading the Rawti Shax network. "Norway extradites jihadist preacher Mullah Krekar to Italy." BBC, 26.3.2020.
[128] On Ansar al-Islam, see "Ansar al-Islam." Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University (2018), https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/ansar-al-islam. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

support network's members engaged in various forms of support activism for Ansar al-Islam, including recruitment and fundraising, as well travelling to Iraq to join the group and fight in its ranks.[129] While significant progress was made by European authorities to dismantle these networks during the decade, particularly in Italy and Germany.[130]

The Finnish diasporic network within Ansar al-Islam's broader European network formed within the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora in the country, and more specifically among the Kurdish refugees who were resettled to Finland from Iraq in the mid-1990s.[131] The existence of Ansar al-Islam supporters and their activities in Finland were first reported in 2004 when the national public service broadcasting company, YLE reported – and Supo confirmed[132] – that approximately twenty to thirty Kurds residing in the city of Turku in Finland had connections to the armed group.[133] Most of the cell's alleged members in the 2000s resided in or near the city of Turku in southwestern Finland.[134] By early 2010s, some of his supporters reportedly also resided in the Helsinki metropolitan area.[135]

There is very little information available about the Finnish' cell's organizational structure, activity, degree of overtness and outreach, or its recruitment base. However, based on available information it appears the cell at the time was focused within its tightknit community of

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[129] Lorenzo Vidino, "Jihad from Europe." Journal of International Security Affairs, 27.9.2005; Lydia Khalil, "The Transformation of Ansar al-Islam," Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor, Volume 3 Issue 24 (2005).
[130] Vidino (2005).
[131] Khalil (2005).
[132] "Suomesta yhteyksiä terroriepäiltyyn?" YLE24, 15.10.2004.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Khalil (2005).
[135] Heikki Kauhanen, "Lue Mullah Krekarin erikoishaastattelu vuodelta 2011." Turun Sanomat, 12.11.2015.

supporters, although some indications of outward activism exists, it tended to be limited in number and largely covert. Hence, the group's outreach and capacity for support activism, e.g. foreign fighter recruitment and fundraising, appears to have been limited at best. However, several of its members have been suspected of raising funds for Ansar al-Islam and its short-lived offshoot, Ansar al-Sunna through donations and restaurant businesses around mid-2000s.[136] Interestingly, there have also been allegations that the Finnish members have received money from abroad, specifically from the network's leader, Norway-based Mullar Krekar.[137] While Krekar himself has denied these allegations, Supo at the time stated that there had been "indications of this type of activity" within the Kurdish population in Finland.[138] While Supo also stated it was investigating the issue,[139] it does not appear that its investigation led to a more formal criminal investigation.

Additionally, three individuals connected to the networks were reported to have participated in the activities of Ansar al-Islam and Ansar al-Sunna in Iraq in mid-2000s. The individuals mentioned in a YLE documentary sued the public broadcast company for libel and won as the journalists refused to share their sources with the court.[140] There have also been other allegations that several of the cell's alleged members had also attended the group's training camps or fought in its ranks, but these cannot be independently verified.[141]

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[136] "MOT: Turun terroriverkosto toimii pizzerioiden kautta." Turun Sanomat, 19.9.2005; "Supo Annual Report 2004", Suojelupoliisi (2005), p. 6; Toby Archer & Ann-Nina Finne, "Pizzaa islamisteille," Ulkopolitiikka 4/2005 (2005).
[137] "Ansar al-Islam knyttes till terrortrussel." Aftenposten, 2.11.2004; "Finsk gruppe skal ha fått penger fra Krekar" (2004); "Suomesta yhteyksiä terroriepäiltyyn?" (2004).
[138] "Rahoitusväitteet eivät hetkauta Krekaria." YLE Uutiset, 16.10.2004.
[139] "Turkulainen kurdivaikuttaja pitää liikehdintäväitteitä tosina." Turun Sanomat, 17.10.2004.
[140] See e.g. "Korkein oikeus kovensi MOT-ohjelman tuomiota." YLE Uutiset, 9.12.2010.
[141] "Finsk gruppe skal ha fått penger fra Krekar." Stavanger Aftenblad, 15.10.2004.

The Finnish network within Ansar al-Islam's broader European network represents one of the most established and transnationally connected nexuses within the Finnish jihadi milieu from the 2000s to at least mid-2010s. Yet, unlike was the case in many of the broader network's key nexuses in Europe (for example, Italy and Germany), the Finnish network was never targeted by counter-terrorism officials. There are no known criminal investigations or court cases targeting its members in during the 2000s, at least in the context of terrorism offences. Instead, the existence of this branch appears to have continued relatively undisturbed well into the 2010s.[142] The branch was still active in Finland in 2015, under the guise of its spinoff – Rawti Shax network – and played a limited role in the Finnish foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq.

Support networks within Finland's Somali diaspora

While there has been support and supporting activity for al-Shabaab among the Somali diaspora in Finland in the latter half of the 2000s, and most likely for other Islamist groups operating in Somalia – e.g. the Islamic Courts Union and al-Itihad al-Islamiya – earlier in the decade, very little is known about jihadist activists or networks within the Somali diaspora. However, this activity has been one of Supo's main concerns around the end of the decade. Indeed, Somalia and Ethiopia were considered by Supo a key area for its counter-terrorism efforts as there were clear signs of Somali youth from Denmark and Sweden armed Islamist groups operating there.[143] Any support activity linked to armed groups in Somalia have likely been a significantly smaller

[142] "Supo tietoinen Uusi suunta -jihadistijärjestön Suomi-kytköksistä." Ilta-sanomat, 13.11.2015.
[143] Kristiina Markkanen, "Suomalainenkin separatisti saattaa taistella Somaliassa." Helsingin Sanomat, 6.5.2010.

scale compared to other Nordic countries. This strongly suggests that the diasporic support networks within the Finnish Somali diaspora have mainly consisted of individual activists or small networks – bound together by common ethnicity, kinship, familial bonds, friendships, and marriage, that that their capacity for outreach and activism has been limited.

The best-known example is a support group linked to al-Shabaab are the three Somali men and one woman – connected by familial ties and marriage – who were accused of crimes with terrorist intent in Finland's first ever terrorism-related criminal trial. The suspected criminal activity included recruitment and fundraising for al-Shabaab between 2008 and 2011. In addition to fundraising, the main defendant in the trial was also charged with recruiting his brother to al-Shabaab, and planning to kidnap his brother's children and bring them to an Al-Shabaab training camp in Somalia without their consent.[144]

While the accused were initially found guilty in 2014,[145] the Court of Appeal overturned the sentence in 2016 due to lack of sufficient evidence.[146] In its decision, the Court took the view that "while the accused had most likely supported al-Shabaab, the prosecution had not shown to which specific terrorist offences in Somalia the funding had contributed," which was a legal requirement at the time the crimes had taken place.[147] The Court also stated that although one of the accused had been aware that the funds they sent to al-Shabaab would support the group's violent operations, it could not be shown that his intent was to fund specific terrorist offences

[144] Paula Tapiola, "Suomen ensimmäisessä terrorismijutussa syytteitä neljälle." YLE Uutiset, 17.9.2014.
[145] Tuuli Toivanen, "Suomen ensimmäisessä terrorismioikeudenkäynnissä vankeustuomio neljälle." Yle, 19.12.2014.
[146] Sara Rigatelli, "Somalimiehen hätkähdyttävä tarina: Vapautui Suomessa terrorismituomiosta, oli jo Isisissä." YLE Uutiset, 4.3.2017.
[147] Jokinen (2018).

criminalised in Finnish criminal law.[148] Interestingly, at the time his sentence was overturned, the main defendant – and his Finnish convert wife and their children – had travelled to Syria and joined the IS.[149] This small group in question likely represents the more established and organised end in the spectrum of al-Shabaab related support activism in Finland during the 2000s, as it is the only case that proceeded to a criminal investigation and trial. This suggests that many other actors involved with al-Shabaab related support activities at the time have been small, mainly covert in their activities, with both their outreach and recruitment base limited to their immediate social circles.

Since early 2010s the interest in Al-Shabaab among Finland's Somali diaspora has reportedly declined significantly,[150] reflecting broader trends in Europe. However, Supo estimated in 2015 that there were still people in Finland who were interested in participating in the conflict in Somalia.[151]

Homegrown extremists

The number of converts in Finland is very small, estimated to be less than thousand in 2007.[152] Yet, a small subset within Finnish convert population, particularly within the Salafi milieu in

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[148] See e.g. "Hallituksen esitys HE135/2020vp." 1.10.2020, https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/HallituksenEsitys/Sivut/HE_135+2020.aspx. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[149] Ibid.
[150] See e.g. "Suomen somalien mukaan islamistien tuki romahtanut." Turun Sanomat, 18.9.2011.
[151] "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016." Suojelupoliisi (2015).
[152] Tuomas Martikainen, "Muslimit suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa" in "Islam Suomessa: Muslimit arjessa, mediassa ja yhteiskunnassa." Tuomas Martikainen, Tuula Sakaranaho & Marko Juntunen (eds.). Helsinki: SKS (2008), pp. 71–72.

Helsinki, has shown interest and participated in jihadist activism. Lacking a country of origin whose conflict or armed groups they could focus on, extremist converts were attracted to various conflicts and jihadist groups in Muslim-majority countries. This development was also noticed by Supo, which in 2007 noted that potential security threats emanating from radicalised converts were not an unknown phenomenon in Finland.[153] A handful of extremist converts were connected to and active within *Islamin aika*, a religious association established in 2006 as a further step by Finnish-speaking converts to becoming organised and to promote their faith. The association carried out dawah work, mainly in the streets of Helsinki, and translated key texts of conservative interpretations of Islam - particularly Wahhabism and Salafism. A small number of its active members travelled to Saudi Arabia and studied Islam in the Islamic University of Madinah. The association changed its name to Helsingin Muslimit (Muslims of Helsinki) in 2010 and established its own Salafist-oriented mosque in Roihuvuori in eastern Helsinki.

Interestingly, it was not only the male converts who were attracted to jihadism. The phenomenon appeared to have found a small number of supporters also among female converts within the same Salafi milieu in the latter half of the 2000s. Indeed, Salafist interpretations of Islam were not uncommon among Finnish converts, including female converts, and a small minority within this milieu have expressed and promoted jihadist views – particularly online. There appears to have been at least one female convert within this milieu who actively propagated for radical views and formed a small group of like-minded female converts around herself.[154]

[153] "Supo Annual Report 2007." Suojelupoliisi (2008).
[154] Mikko Marttinen & Heini Kilpamäki, "Sanna eli tavallista elämää, kunnes perheeseen tuli mustaan kaapuun pukeutunut toinen vaimo – IS paljastaa kantasuomalaisten naisten avainroolin radikaalissa muslimiverkostossa." Ilta-Sanomat, 30.3.2019.

It is difficult to estimate the number of radicalised converts in this community at the time, however, conservative estimates would put their number around a dozen. It should be noted that while many were Finnish converts, others were converts from mixed parentage. In their organisation structure and social dynamics, this extremist network likely resembled Marc Sageman's "bunches of guys" – and in the case of female converts, "bunches of girls". In these networks, individuals have gone through their respective radicalization processes together with friends and comrades sharing common interests and views.[155] Additionally, they were what Peter Neumann describes as "genuine self-starters". In other words, they lacked formal or informal associations and connections to bona fide jihadist entrepreneurs, militants, networks, and armed groups, but who "define their own agenda and decide for themselves when [and how] they wish to act."[156]

Several of these extremist converts – both men and women – were still active in the 2010s, and became a part of the Finnish foreign fighter contingent in Syria and Iraq. Indeed, the Salafi milieu and its jihadist subset in east Helsinki and particularly around Roihuvuori mosque seemed to form a key nexus within the Finnish jihadi milieu and the mobilisation to the conflict zone from 2012 onwards.

External connections

It is widely believed that armed jihadist groups had little connections to or interest in Finland. What seems certain is that these groups, let alone individual activists or networks, almost never

[155] Sageman (2008).
[156] Neumann (2009), p. 18.

appeared to pay attention to Finland in their propaganda. In fact, one of the few – if not the only – mention of Finland in jihadi propaganda or online communications during the 2000s was reportedly a comment by al-Qaeda's former deputy and leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Speaking on the topic of al-Qaeda's treatment of tourists, he noted, "[w]e don't attack Brazilian tourists in Finland."[157] Indeed, the Finnish jihadi milieu appears isolated and far removed from the conflict zones where armed jihadist groups operated as well as the key nexuses in the broader European jihadi milieus. Despite its remoteness, however, the Finnish jihadi milieu was not entirely cut off from external jihadist actors in Europe or various conflict zones.

In the context of these connections, the main manifestation has been the connections to armed jihadist groups abroad by various active extremists in Finland. At minimum, this likely included groups such as al-Qaida and its various branches, al-Shabaab and other armed Islamist and jihadist groups in Somalia, in addition to Ansar al-Islam and Ansar al-Sunna in Iraq. It is difficult to fathom what exactly these connections were, or how they have impacted jihadist activity in Finland. However, at least some of the individuals who have had connections to armed groups abroad, or individuals directly connected to them (e.g. through memberships) have likely played key part in how supporting activity in Finland – e.g. in the form of fundraising or foreign fighter recruitment – reached its destinations during the 2000s. Further connections may have been formed between domestic activists and jihadist actors elsewhere through online discussion forums. In 2010, it was reported that at least some users from Finland were active on various jihadist discussion forums and chatrooms associated with al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab.[158]

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[157] Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within." The New Yorker, 2.6.2008.
[158] Saarinen (2013).

Additionally, armed jihadist groups – or at minimum, their individual members – appear to have shown limited interest in Finland. Indeed, Europol noted in its EU terrorism situation and trend report in 2008 that member states, such as Finland, ”which reported a generally low threat from Islamist terrorism, nevertheless highlighted the risk that their country may be used as a logistical base for terrorists operating outside of the EU.”[159] The most notable example is al-Shabaab, for whom Somali diasporas in Europe has been a major foreign fighter recruitment pool. However, even in the context of the Nordic countries, the group's attention appears to have largely been focused on Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Yet, in 2011 Supo noted that Al-Shabaab was in the process of establishing itself in Finland.[160] There were few earlier signs of organised al-Shabaab recruitment activities targeting the Somali diaspora, and the Somali youth in particular, in Finland. For example, foreign speakers have spoken in various events in Finland, likely encouraging participation in fighting in Somalia.[161] One such case is a senior Al-Shabaab figure, who reportedly visited Finland in 2009 for fundraising and recruitment.[162]

During the 2000s, Ansar al-Islam's broader European support network's Finnish branch is the only publicly known link between domestic activists in Finland and extremist actors elsewhere in Europe. While Finland was hardly a high profile target for militant visitors,[163] particularly from elsewhere in the region, Finland did attract at least some individual activists. One example is

[159] "TE-SAT 2008: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report." Europol (2008), p. 23, https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/tesat2008_1.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[160] "Terroristeilla Suomi-kontakteja." Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 4.1.2011.
[161] Jukka Huusko, "Supo: Suomessa ei al-Shabaabin järjestäytynyttä värväystä." Helsingin Sanomat, 27.9.2013; Erik Nyström, "Somaliliitto: Suomessa ei tietoa al-Shabaabin värväystoiminnasta." Helsingin Sanomat, 19.10.2013.
[162] "IL: Al-Shabaabin johtomies värväsi Suomessa," Helsingin Sanomat 15.10.2011.
[163] Simo Alatalo, "Supo: Suomen islamilainen yhteisö ei ole terrorismin kasvualusta." Kotimaa24, 12.12.2010.

British-Pakistani Ishaq Kanmi, a self-professed leader of "Al-Qaeda in Britain". He was arrested – together with Abbas Iqbal, another known British extremist – in Manchester Airport on his way to Finland together in August, 2008. He had on him three storage devices and a mobile phone containing jihadist propaganda for recruitment and radicalisation purposes. Kanmi was apparently regular visitor to Finland.[164] The arrested pair were reportedly planning to go to a mosque in Helsinki, where Kanmi had previously studied and read the Quran in their Ramadan prayers.[165] In 2010, Kanmi pleaded guilty to a string of terrorism offences including professing to belong to al-Qaida, inviting support for a terrorist organisation, making a terrorist recording, and dissemination of terrorist publications.[166] It remains unclear whether the Mosque in question or any individuals connected to it were aware of Kanmi's jihadist views, past activism, or potentially planned illicit activities in Finland. Additionally, some individuals directly or indirectly linked to armed jihadist groups operating in the Horn of Africa region have sought to immigrate to Finland during the 2000s. Supo has stated it was able to inform relevant authorities and prevent a handful of individuals with connections to "terrorist activism or terrorist groups" moving to Finland from the Horn of Africa region during its "Africa operation" in 2010.[167]

Lastly, Finland has attracted some attention from virtual extremists in the jihadist discussion forums. In June 2011, an unknown individual using the kunya Abu Suleiman al-Nasser incited

[164] Rafaello Pantucci, "'We Love Death as You Love Life': Britain's Suburban terrorists, London: Hurst & Co (2015), p. 259.
[165] Jerome Taylor, "Man who called for murder of PM pleads guilty to terror charge." Independent, 11.5.2010; "Al-Qaida -terroristien Suomi-kytkös: Näitä videoita miehet olivat tuomassa Helsinkiin." Ilta-sanomat, 14.5.2010.
[166] Taylor (2010).
[167] Mikko Lindqvist, "Supo: Estimme terroristeja pääsemästä Suomeen." YLE Uutiset, 21.8.2010; "Maahanmuuttajia värvätty Suomesta koulutusleireille." Turun Sanomat, 25.9.2010.

attacks against Finnish troops in Afghanistan,[168] and later claimed two incidents – a failed firebombing by an improvised incendiary device and a firebombing of a petrol station – in Helsinki in June, 2011. A self-professed cyber-jihadist and al-Qaeda member, he became active on the most important online forums used by Al Qaeda supporters and sympathizers around 2010, and maintained a prolific presence, constantly posting threats against European countries and other Western targets – particularly against NATO troops in Afghanistan.[169] According to Magnus Ranstorp, he was also among the first to write about and praising the suicide bomber in Stockholm in late 2010.[170] While this threat attracted considerable media attention in Finland at the time, his activism was ultimately not particularly significant. Shortly after the attacks, local anarchists took credit for the two incidents with a considerably more believable claim.[171]

Patterns of activism

Jihadism was a marginal phenomenon in Finland well into the 2000s. The levels of activism were comparatively low throughout the decade. As the first criminal investigation related to terrorist offences begun formally in 2009, there are no official statistics or confirmation of any form of activity. For instance, the Finnish counter-terrorism strategy paper from 2010 states only if indications that individuals residing in Finland participate in activity supporting armed groups abroad.[172] Yet, based on available data, it appears that jihadist activism in Finland during the 2000s included a broad range of different forms of activism. These have either been directed at

[168] "TS: Al-Qaida uhkaa suomalaisia Afganistanissa." Uusi Suomi, 1.6.2011.
[169] J. M. Berger, "An Interview with online Jihadist Abu Suleiman al-Nasser." Intelwire, 29.8.2011.
[170] Stina Sirén, "Forskare: Islamister vill sprida skräck." Svenska Yle, 6.6.2011.
[171] "Helsingin pommin ajastajilta tiedote." Ilta-sanomat, 6.6.2011; Jussi Sippola, "Sosiaalikeskus Satama ei sanoudu irti pommiviesteistä." Helsingin Sanomat, 9.6.2011.
[172] "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 5.

conflicts abroad, which have involved supporting activity for violent Islamist and jihadist groups, e.g. recruitment or fundraising, or radicalising or recruiting new supporters among various ethnic groups.

Radicalisation and recruitment

Finland's first counter-terrorism strategy paper stated in 2010 that it was possible that individuals from "certain" ethnic backgrounds are being radicalised and recruited in Finland to participate in armed conflicts abroad.[173] In this context, radicalisation refers to the process through which a targeted individual is influenced to adopt ideas, beliefs, values, norms or worldviews that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream society and to reject the legitimacy of the existing sociopolitical – and possibly also international – order in order to replace it with a new sociopolitical model based on a different belief system derived from these ideas, beliefs, values, norms or worldviews. Recruitment, on the other hand, refers to the additional step of participating in activism, either alone or part of a social collective. Recruitment generally occurs through peer-to -peer recruitment or top-down recruitment. The latter refers to the activities of armed jihadist groups, formal organisations or entrepreneurs aiming to recruit new members. The former on the other hand refers to individuals interested in jihadism recruiting individuals in their social circles through pre-existing connections.

Radicalisation and recruitment activities by Finland-based activists exist in several contexts. However, due to the relative lack of activists with ties to armed groups abroad, there appears to

[173] Ibid., p. 6.

be no indications of top-down recruitment, where jihadist entrepreneurs or representatives of armed groups identify suitable individuals and target them in their activism. Instead, what can be observed is more informal, social forms of recruitment, e.g. radicalisation and recruitment by encouragement – either within small social groups of like-minded people or by charismatic and influential activists – and self-recruitment of eager individuals and small groups (e.g. based on shared kinship, friendship, familial ties), some of whom may have sought out activists – in Finland or elsewhere – who have contact with bona fine militants.[174]

The most relevant context for recruitment and radicalisation activity is within the Somali diaspora, particularly in the context of al-Shabaab-related support activity and foreign fighting. Supo states there has been no organised recruitment or designated recruiters for al-Shabaab in Finland. Instead, the organisation suggests that domestic radicalisation and recruitment efforts are uncommon, and mainly occur through informal encouragement to participate in the conflict in Somalia.[175] Conversely, a Finnish-Somali investigative journalist Wali Hashi, who has investigated al-Shabaab-related radicalisation and recruitment in Sweden and Denmark, states there are designated al-Shabaab recruiters who regularly visit Nordic countries, and try to recruit vulnerable Somali youth by grooming and luring them in to Somalia under false pretenses, and that they have also targeted Somali youth in Finland.[176] He has also suggested that recruitment to al-Shabaab was occurring near mosques frequented by Somali youth in Finland.[177] Additionally, Supo believes it is possible that online recruitment has also occurred.[178]

[174] Neumann (2009), p. 17–19.
[175] Nyström (2013).
[176] Hannele Valkeeniemi, "En tahtonut terroristiksi." YLE Uutiset, 22.3.2013.
[177] "Radikala värvare också I Finland." Svenska YLE, 14.12.2010.
[178] Nyström (2013).

Importantly, it appears that the Finnish jihadi milieu did not have any high-profile recruitment locations or places, which could have served as radicalisation hubs and magnets for eager self-starters seeking contact with jihadist entrepreneurs. For instance, the country did not have any "radical mosques" akin to Finsbury Park in London or Brandbergen in Stockholm, although some extremist converts were active congregants in Roihuvuori Mosque in Helsinki. Yet, there appear to be few public locations where radicalisation and recruitment activities, which have been targets for radicalisation and recruitment—related activism. These seem to be limited into what Peter Neumann described as "places of congregation" (i.e. places to which members of Finland's Muslim population would regularly congregate in relative large numbers), predominantly mosques and prayer rooms,[179] and places of vulnerability, particularly asylum-seeker and refugee reception centers, where activists would target vulnerable individuals and take advantage of their personal crises or lack of orientation.[180] Nor did it appear to have any charismatic radical preachers such as Abdullah al-Faisal or Abu Hamza al-Masri. And lastly, it did not have any established activists salafist organisations, which could have promoted jihadist views, e.g. al-Muhajiroun in the UK.

Creation, translation, and dissemination of propaganda

There are no indications in open sources that Finland-based extremist were creating jihadist propaganda during the 2010s, although at least some Finland-based extremists were active members of jihadist online forums and chatrooms by the end of the decade. There is evidence

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[179] See e.g. "Radikala värvare också I Finland" (2010).
[180] Neumann (2009), p.28; "Kansallisen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 6.

that there was interest in consuming and disseminating propaganda among Finnish converts. Indeed, interest in jihadism among Finnish converts in the 2000s appears to have manifested mainly in studying, discussing and to a lesser extent, disseminating texts and following events related to Islamist militancy. According to Finnish researchers Leena Malkki and Matti Pohjonen, who conducted a study on jihadist online communications directly or indirectly relevant to Finland in 2019, there were few writings online written in Finnish, whose content was close to the jihadist worldview in the 2000s.[181] For instance, a group of radicalised convert women in Helsinki had been active at least in promoting the jihadist ideology through online activism. One of the group's members translated into Finnish in 2009 a document titled "Siskojen tehtävät jihadissa" (in English: "A sister's role in Jihad"[182]), which dealt with the role of women in jihad. The translation contained a detailed description of women's various roles in supporting jihadism, provided numerous instructions on how to raise children to be jihadists, and pictures of children in suicide vests. [183]

Fundraising and financing

According to Kari Laitinen, a Finnish researcher, Finnish police has at several occasions suspected that terrorist financing is occurring in the country during the 2000s.[184] However, these suspicions not resulted in formal criminal investigations until 2011. Yet, terrorist fundraising and

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[181] Leena Malkki & Matti Pohjonen, "Jihadist online communication and Finland." Publications of the Ministry of Interior 2019:29, Ministry of Interior, April 2019, p. 44, http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-324-300-2. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[182] The Islamic State appears to have republished it as a propaganda booklet for women in 2014.
[183] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 44.
[184] Katja Kaartinen, "Krp tutkii terrorismin rahoitusta Suomessa – kaksi henkilöä pidätettynä." Turun Sanomat, 17.9.2011.

financing has been a priority for domestic intelligence and police officials since at least 2008, when a senior Supo official stated it was possible to such activism was present in Finland.[185] The possibility of this sort of activism was highlighted again in Finland's first national counter-terrorism strategy and Europol's Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports two years later.[186] Such activism likely existed predominantly if not only in diasporic support networks. The counter-terrorism strategy paper stated it is possible that part of the funds sent from Finland to abroad ends up supporting "terroristic activity" although proving this is exceedingly difficult,[187] as turned out in the Al-Shabaab investigation and trial.

Foreign fighting and attending terrorist training camps

In Europol's Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2010, Finland was one of the member states which had expressed "particular concern" that radicalised EU nationals travel to conflict zones with the intent to take part in fighting or attend training camps.[188] In 2009 and 2010, the Finnish authorities stated it was possible that individuals residing in Finland have participated or are seeking to participate "violent resistance" in their countries of origin.[189] There is very little information about Finnish citizens or residents foreign fighting in the ranks of jihadist groups in conflict zones abroad. In September 2013, a Supo representative confirmed that individuals from

[185] "Terrorismin rahoittajia mahdollisesti myös Suomessa." YLE Uutiset, 12.9.2008.
[186] "Kansallisen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 6; "TE-SAT 2010: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report." Europol (2010), p. 20, http://data.europa.eu/88u/dataset/te-sat-2010-eu-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[187] "Kansallisen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 6.
[188] "TE-SAT 2010: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report" (2010), p. 20.
[189] See e.g. "Supo: Kymmenillä terroristiyhteyksiä Suomessa" MTV3, 19.11.2009; "Kansallisen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 6.

Finland had been travelling abroad for several years to various conflict zones with the intent of taking part in the hostilities there.[190]

The only other confirmed conflict zone with Finnish foreign fighters (aside from Syria and Iraq in the 2010s) is Somalia.[191] An unknown but likely relatively small number of Finnish Somalis had travelled there in order to join al-Shabaab or smaller groups.[192] The minimum estimates put the number around half of dozen, and they have likely joined the group from 2006 onwards to until at least 2013.[193] While there were reports that support for al-Shabaab among the Finnish Somali diaspora diminished considerably around 2011,[194] as late as 2015 Supo confirmed there were individuals in Finland who maintained willingness to participate in the hostilities in there.[195] A possible further destination is Iraq. For instance, researcher Lorenzo Vidino has suggested Finland-originated foreign fighters belonging to the broader Ansar al-Islam support network in Europe have taken part in the conflict in Iraq the 2000s.[196] It is certainly possible that at least some individuals from Finland have fought in the group's ranks in Iraq – or participated in its activities in other ways – in mid-to-late 2000s, although this cannot be independently verified.

Additionally, there has also been at least one failed attempt to participate in foreign fighting, in the context of the conflict in Chechnya. A group of activists in the *Islamin aika* association

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[190] "Tutkija lehdelle: Suomalaistaustaisia al-Shabaabin riveissä – Supo ei yllättänyt." MTV3, 27.9.2013.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Jukka Huusko, "Tutkija: Al-Shabaabin riveissä useita suomalaistaustaisia." Helsingin Sanomat, 27.9.2013.
[193] Hannele Valkeeniemi, "Me tehdään susta rohkea mies." YLE Uutiset, 11.4.2013.
[194] "Turun Sanomat: Ääri-Islamistien kannatus romahtanut Suomessa." MTV3, 18.9.2011.
[195] "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016" (2015).
[196] Vidino (2005).

followed the conflict with strong interest in mid-2000s, having formed a clique where suicide bombings were glorified and visual propaganda – particularly relating to combat – were regularly consumed according to a former member.[197] According to at least one witness testimony in later criminal investigation connected to suspected terrorism-related offences, several individuals active within the extremist convert community expressed interest in travelling to Chechnya to participate in the hostilities against Russia, and some allegedly went as far as making travel arrangements. However, in the end the group temporarily fractured as one of its key activists went to Saudi Arabia to study.[198] However, at least one of its members attempted to travel to the conflict zone. He was ultimately detained in neighbouring Georgia and deported back to Finland.[199]

Not all of those who have travelled abroad have done so to take part in a conflict. Some travel with the explicit purpose of attending terrorist training camps. There have been Finnish residents or citizens who have attended terrorism training camps in the 2000s and early 2010s. The first indications of this type of activism in Finland came in 2009 a Supo representative stated there were indications of recruitment in Finland to terrorist training camps abroad.[200] In October 2010, a senior Supo official stated that individuals – reportedly immigrants – residing in Finland had in fact attended training camps, [201] although this was denied by another statement from a Supo official less than two months later.[202] By late 2012, Supo's Director Antti Pelttari confirmed that

[197] Johanna Mattinen, "Suomalaiskäännynnäisten radikalisoituminen tapahtui helsinkiläisessä moskeijassa – Olimme joukko suomalaisia fundamentalistimuslimeja." Iltalehti, 8.11.2017.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Mika Parkkonen, "Suomalainen muslimi halusi auttaa sodan piinaamia veljiään," Helsingin Sanomat, 15.9.2006.
[200] "Maahanmuuttajia värvätty Suomesta koulutusleireille" (2010).
[201] "Suomestakin lähdetty terroristien oppiin." Iltalehti, 9.10.2010.
[202] "Supo: Suomesta ei ole lähdetty terroristileireille." YLE, 13.12.2010.

the organisation's counter-terrorism target individual list included individuals who had experience in foreign fighting and attending terrorist training camps – although he did not state whether these individuals had done so from Finland or from elsewhere before immigrating to the country.[203] Although there is no detailed information on the number of individuals or their destinations, the number is likely single-digits or low double-digits. In terms of destinations, the border region in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Al-Shabaab's training camps in Somalia have been suggested as likely destinations.[204]

Domestic and international attack plots

The terrorist threat from jihadist groups to Finland was estimated to be low throughout the decade, [205] and domestic extremists were rarely even mentioned in the threat assessments. There were no successful jihadist terror attacks in Finland in the 2000s. Nor were there any failed or foiled plots. While threats have been issued against Finland or Finnish targets abroad – and two incidents in Finland claimed as jihadist attacks – by an external activist, no domestic extremists seem to have made such threats or claims. It is possible that Finnish citizens or residents have taken part in attacks or plots abroad, although data gathering is exceedingly difficult – especially outside North America and Western Europe. Interestingly, one former Finnish resident was arrested in Estonia in 2004 in connection to a terrorist plot. According to Norwegian press, he was a Kurdish Ansar al-Islam member, who had previously resided in Finland. He reportedly

[203] Anttila (2012).
[204] Teemu Kammonen, "IL: 150 länsiterroristia viime vuonna – joukossa suomalaisia." Uusi Suomi, 9.10.2010; Janne Yläjoki & Eija Mikkonen, "Somalian terroristeilla yhteyksiä Suomeen." Kaleva, 4.1.2011. See also "TE-SAT 2010: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report" (2010), p.14.
[205] See e.g. "Kansallisen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 5.

participated a terrorist plot in Riga, Latvia. According to the information he gave to Estonian police, the attack was supposed to target three buildings in Riga, including the Norwegian Embassy.[206]

Conclusion

This chapter examined the emergence and early evolution of jihadism in Finland between 2001 and 2011. Almost by any measure, jihadism may have appeared as a nearly non-existing phenomenon in Finland, at least during this decade. The first known arrests related to suspected terrorist offences related to jihadism occurred in 2011.[207] The first trial begun three years later in 2014.[208] And the first jihadist terror attack three years after that in 2017. However, behind these statistics, a more nuanced picture forms. Information about the early years of jihadism in Finland regrettably remains scarce, and it is possible to only provide a partial picture. However, this picture clearly shows that jihadism has been present in Finland since at least the first half of the 2000s, likely imported by various activists from the Middle East and East Africa. Since then, the phenomenon has found room to grow, develop and take root in Finland.

Around early extremists and eager self-starters, the Finnish jihadi milieu emerged in the 2000s. While it slowly evolved throughout the decade, and the number of individuals within it multiplied, it remained relatively small in size, atomised along and within ethnic boundaries, limited to individuals and small groups from predominantly from Kurdish and Somali

[206] "Ansar al-Islam knyttes till terrortrussel" (2004).
[207] "Terrorismiin liittyvästä vangitsemisesta lisätietoa tänään." MTV3, 17.9.2011.
[208] Antti Honkamaa & Anniina Nissinen, "Yritettiinkö lapset pakottaa al-Shabaabin koulutusleirille? Poikkeuksellinen oikeudenkäynti alkoi Helsingissä." Ilta-sanomat, 7.10.2014.

backgrounds. Their focus was predominantly on the conflicts in their countries of origin, and their fellow countrymen in exile targets of their activism. The outreach and capacity for support activism remained low, as these actors limited their activism to their immediate social circles and sought to act fully or semi-clandestinely. The milieu became more homegrown in the latter half of the decade as Salafi-jihadist views and activism started to emerge among Finnish converts, especially those tied to the Salafi milieu in Helsinki. Throughout the decade, the relatively underdeveloped Finnish jihadi milieu produced only low levels of activism, although a broad range of different activism types were present throughout the decade. While this activism was predominantly non-violent, i.e. support activity for armed groups abroad, some individuals from Finland took part in foreign fighting and terrorist training in groups operated by armed groups abroad. However, no jihadist terror attacks, or foiled/failed plots occurred in Finland during the 2000s.

In 2011, the uprising in Syria occurred as part of a wider wave of revolutionary activity in the Middle East known as the Arab Spring. While Finland, or activists within the Finnish jihadi milieu appear to have had very few contacts or little interest in the country beforehand, the conflict would resonate strongly within the Finnish jihadi milieu. Interest and participation in jihadist activism and militancy would grow among Finnish second-generation Muslims, and activists would become focused on the conflict, increasingly in the context of the Islamic State and its state-building project. Some of the earlier developments in the milieu, as will be discussed later, would part lay of the foundations for growth of Finland's jihadi milieu and drastic increase in levels of activism, most visibly in the context of the country's disproportionately large mobilisation of foreign fighters to the ranks of jihadist groups operating

in Syria and Iraq beginning from 2012. It is to these developments, that the thesis will now turn its attention.

Chapter 3: The evolving Finnish jihadi milieu, 2012–2020

This chapter examines the evolution of the Finnish jihadi milieu in the 2010s. Specifically, it looks at what is known about its key characteristics, and how the milieu has evolved throughout the decade. It argues that whereas the Finnish milieu was small and atomized as well as relatively isolated up until the turn of the decade, by the end of 2020 the milieu had grown significantly, experienced a significant increase in the number of activists with experience in foreign fighting and armed training and those with more direct and serious connections to jihadist actors abroad, the emergence of homegrown multi-ethnic jihadist networks with significantly improved capacity for outreach and activism. Additionally, Finland begun to feature in the propaganda of armed jihadist groups, increasingly attracting attention from foreign activists and networks. The chapter ends by noting that these developments have led in levels of jihadi activism increasing drastically, especially but not solely in the context of the foreign fighting phenomenon and the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq from 2012 onwards.

A key consequence of the evolution of the Finnish jihadi milieu and levels of activism (see next chapter), particularly in the context of the mobilisation from Finland to Syria and Iraq, is that there has been significantly more public attention and resources directed at investigating jihadism in Finland. A key difference compared to early 2000s is that the authorities in Finland have committed substantially more resources into countering terrorism, increasing their

information-gathering and investigative capacity. Relevant authorities, Supo and the Ministry of the Interior specifically, have also prioritised communicating relevant information about the phenomenon to the public through official documents and reports. Additionally, investigative journalism covering the phenomenon and individuals involved in it has increased in quantity and quality, and official reports (and media commentary by the authorities) have increased in number and substance. Further, some non-academic studies and reports have been commissioned on the various relevant aspects of phenomenon in or concerning Finland by various government authorities, including the Finnish Ministry of Interior and the Prime Minister's Office.[209] Subsequently, there has been significantly more information made available about how jihadism has manifested itself and evolved in Finland in the 2010s compared to the previous decade, and from a wider variety of sources – including from social media accounts belonging to individuals taking part in jihadist activity themselves. While this has made it possible to form a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon that previously, many gaps in our knowledge remain. This is especially so because there have been still a relatively small number of court cases related to domestic jihadist activity that would have made more detailed information available to the public.

The Finnish jihadi milieu grows

Based on available data, the Finnish jihadist milieu has grown considerably in size in the 2010s. While this trend is empirically indisputable, it is difficult to give any precise independent estimation of how many individuals have been, or currently are involved in jihadist activities in

[209] Juntunen, Creutz & Saarinen (2016); Malkki & Saarinen (2019); Malkki & Pohjonen (2019).

Finland. The optimal point of departure to estimate the size of the milieu and its evolution is Supo's counter-terrorism target individual list. Whereas in the 2000s Supo and its representatives ambiguous referred to "former members" of terrorist or armed groups[210] or individuals with "worrying connections,"[211] when speaking about individuals either active or otherwise relevant in terms of jihadism in Finland, in the 2010s they have used the term *counter-terrorism target individual*. The target individuals vary widely. As stated by Supo, "[t]hey may be radicalised individuals seeking to carry out an attack, internationally networked combatants, charismatic instigators, propagandists, foreign fighters who may be returning to Finland, and potentially significant sources of financing."[212] In essence, in the context of jihadism, counter-terrorism target individuals actively work to promote jihadist ideology or engage in jihadist activities.[213] While Supo's counter-terrorism target individual list includes all individuals from various ideological orientations, a vast majority of individuals on the list, however, are connected to jihadism.[214]

The number of counter-terrorism target individuals has doubled within a decade. The first public estimate from the year 2012 puts the number of "risk individuals" at over a hundred, including an unknown albeit likely small number those with training from camp operated by armed groups

[210] See e.g. "Supo Annual Report 2008" (2009); "Supo Annual Report 2009" (2010).
[211] "Supo: Terrori-iskulla ei yhteyksiä Suomeen – tarkkailussa kourallinen henkilöitä." YLE, 12.12.2010.
[212] "The Counterterrorism (CT) target may be a perpetrator, or a supporter of a terrorist organisation." Suojelupoliisi website, https://supo.fi/en/counterterrorism-targets. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[213] "Supo Year Book 2017." Suojelupoliisi (2018), p. 10, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/40760242/2017_EN_Supo_yearbook.pdf/886b7089-679b-d30c-babd-239b7c626af6/2017_EN_Supo_yearbook.pdf?t=1602666303958. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[214] See e.g. "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2020: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2019 ja kehityksen suunta." Sisäinen turvallisuus | Sisäministeriön julkaisuja 2020:8, Sisäministeriö (2020), p. 24, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162174/SM__2020_08.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

and former foreign fighters.[215] In Supo's Annual Review in 2014, the organisation stated that the number of "risk individuals", or counter-terrorism target individuals, had grown 45% to almost 300 individuals within the space of two years,[216] suggesting the overall number of counter-terrorism individuals in 2012 had been closer to two hundred. By 2014, this number had grown to three hundred.[217] This increase is almost entirely due to the increased interest in jihadism and actively participating in it in the context of the conflict in Syria and Iraq – either domestically through various forms of support activism or foreign fighting.[218] For several subsequent years then, the estimate was on the rise, reflecting the effect of the Syrian-Iraqi conflict and that of IS in particular, on the Finnish jihadi milieu. The most accelerated growth phase was between 2012 and 2017, coinciding with the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, the emergence of the IS, and the unprecedented wave of asylum-seekers from various conflict areas in Muslim countries arriving in Europe – including Finland – in 2015–2016. At the end of 2017, the number had reached 370.[219] By late 2019, the number had plateaued to around 390 where it still stands in December 2020.[220]

It is worth highlighting that not all individuals listed as counter-terrorism targets reside in Finland, which suggests that the Finnish jihadi milieu is less remote and isolated than in the previous decade. Indeed, the list includes individuals, who live and are active abroad, but are

[215] Anttila (2012).
[216] "Supo Annual Report 2014." Suojelupoliisi (2015), p .4.
[217] Ibid.
[218] "Supo Yearbook 2019" (2020), p. 13.
[219] "Supo Yearbook 2017" (2018), p. 10.
[220] See, e.g. "National Security Review 2020." Suojelupoliisi (2020), p. 2, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/39761269/Supo_national-security-overview-2020.pdf/6234d8c5-9eec-c801-0eec-2529ed5be701/Supo_national-security-overview-2020.pdf?t=1603884700679. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

deemed to be relevant in the context of Finland's national security. Indeed, it highly likely includes individuals who have lived in Finland for extended periods of time and may have contacts or even extensive networks within the Finnish jihadi milieu, including Finnish foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq – or possibly other conflict zones, e.g. Somalia – who may return to Finland. It may also include internationally networked combatants abroad, who have contacts within the Finnish jihadi milieu, or target the country in their activism. Finnish authorities have deported at least one person connected to the phenomenon in the decade, Awat Hamasalih – a British citizen of Kurdish descent and a convicted member of the IS, who will be discussed later – but it is not clear whether he is included in the list.

The counter-terrorism target individual list provides a somewhat clear picture of the "core" of the Finnish jihadi milieu, which consists of at least 300-350 individuals, some organised in networks, vast majority in Finland – predominantly in and near Helsinki, and to a lesser extent in Turku – but increasingly in other parts of Finland, too[221] – and a small minority abroad in various conflict zones, e.g. Syria and Iraq, or elsewhere. In addition, there are likely a number individuals in Finland, who match the definition of a counter-terrorism target individual but are not known to the authorities. In addition, there are likely individuals who may have adapted in part or in full a "pro-terrorist ideology", e.g. jihadism, or support individual armed groups, but who are only occasionally active or remain passive sympathisers. In the case of the latter, it is impossible to estimate how many passive sympathisers there are in Finland.

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[221] "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa - tilannekatsaus 1/2013" (2013), p. 6. See also Soile Suvanto, "Supo seuraa yhteyksiä terrorismiin myös Pohjois-Suomessa." YLE Uutiset, 29.1.2015; Heidi Vaalisto, "Supo: Suomessa useita radikaaleja islamistisia verkostoja – "Osa ryhmistä hyvin järjestelmällisiä." Ilta-sanomat, 31.3.2019.

There are, in addition, two qualitative developments within the Finnish jihadi milieu's core members, which merit attention. First, according to Supo its counter-terrorism target individuals "have more connections to international terrorism than before."[222] This likely includes significant links to foreign jihadist activists, networks and armed groups, both in various conflict zones in Muslim majority country and in Western Europe, which have become "more immediate and serious."[223] At minimum this may refer to Finnish IS members, who the organisation suggests have gained significant positions in the group and have developed extensive networks with other militants in the conflict zone.[224] Likely, this is a larger issue, though, as the Supo estimates its target individuals have contacts to nearly all key armed groups in various conflict areas. And second, an increasing percentage of target individuals have taken part in an armed conflict or received terrorist training.[225] As stated by Supo, some of them have moved to Finland from various conflict zones after fighting in the ranks of or otherwise supporting or promoting armed groups in those areas.[226] Among them are both Finnish returnees from Syria and Iraq, including recent and possibly less recent returnees from Syria and Iraq,[227] and asylum-seekers from conflict areas with active jihadist groups (e.g. Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan), who arrived to Finland in 2015–2016.[228]

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[222] "National Security Review 2019." Suojelupoliisi (2019), p. 2, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/39761269/20191205_EN_Supo_National_Security.pdf/1d2d74d0-04ee-0bbb-cecf-9d8ddb45face/20191205_EN_Supo_National_Security.pdf?t=1602666568406.

[223] "The Counterterrorism (CT) target may be a perpetrator, or a supporter of a terrorist organisation."

[224] "Supo Yearbook 2017" (2017), p. 10.

[225] "National Security Review 2019" (2019), p. 2.

[226] "National Security Overview 2020" (2020), p. 2.

[227] See e.g. Yrjö Kokkonen, "Supo: Syyriasta palannut noin 20 ihmistä Suomeen." YLE Uutiset, 13.10.2014; Petri Burtsoff & Risto Mattila, "12 suomalaista on iltapäivällä palannut Al-Holin leiriltä Suomeen, mukana alle 10-vuotiaita lapsia – UM: Eivät ole vierastaistelijoita." YLE Uutiset, 31.5.2020; Sara Rigatelli, "Al-Holista palasi jälleen äiti lapsineen Suomeen – UM myönsi matkustusasiakirjat mutta ei auttanut perhettä paossa." YLE Uutiset, 1.8.2020.

[228] Tulikukka de Fresnes, "Ministeri vahvistaa: Turvapaikanhakijoissa Isis-taistelijoita." YLE Uutiset, 3.11.2015.

Internal structures

Concurrently with growing in size, the Finnish jihadi milieu has undergone several notable qualitative developments, especially relating to its internal structures and external connections. Since 2015, the authorities have repeatedly emphasised that jihadist activities in Finland have become increasingly organised.[229] In terms of structure, the Finnish milieu was previously organised into individuals and small, ethnically homogenous and isolated networks. Larger, informal multi-ethnic networks have emerged in the latter half of the decade.[230] Additionally, many of these groups and networks in Finland have developed contacts abroad in both Muslim-majority and Western countries.[231]

Some of these networks are intergenerational, including first and second generation Muslims.[232] Many of the latter have come of political age around the same time as the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, and radicalising concurrently with it – making the phenomenon more homegrown than previously.[233] Additionally, as stated by Supo, "[m]arriages are concluded within networks," strengthening internal cohesion – or connections between networks – and "potentially hampering disengagement from radical ideology and reinforcing the radicalisation of future generations."[234] These both are a consequence of and reflect the increasing interest and

[229] Ismo Virta, "Jihadistinen alamaailma leviää Suomeenkin – 'Huolestuttavinta ovat Suomeen viime vuosina syntyneet radikaali-islamistiset verkostot." Talouselämä, 13.4.2017.
[230] Vaalisto (2019).
[231] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[232] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[233] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018" (2018), p. 23.
[234] "The terrorist threat assessment is an overview of terrorism." Suojelupoliisi website (2020), https://supo.fi/en/terrorist-threat-assessment. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

involvement in jihadism among Muslim women in Finland. Further, according to a senior Interior Ministry official, within some families in Finland, children are being grown and groomed into violent extremism, including jihadism.[235] In the context of jihadism, this is most clearly observed within the foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq. Finnish authorities have had to take custody of several children belonging to parents wishing to travel, or in some cases, successfully traveling to the conflict zone.[236] Despite of these successes, several women have taken their children to the conflict zone, most to live under the IS's rule.[237]

The Finnish jihadi milieu appeared to consist in large part of first-generation activists in the previous decade, largely divided and fractured along (and possibly also within) ethnic boundaries. The rising rates of homegrown radicalisation among second generation Muslims, who have lived in Finland most or all their lives, have shifted the ethnic composition of the Finnish jihadi milieu, making ethnic boundaries less relevant and giving rise to multi/ethic networks. While individuals originating from conflict zones in the Middle East as well as North and East Africa are still well represented in addition to a small number of homegrown extremist converts, the ethnic composition within the milieu is now much more varied – as indicated by the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq.[238] Indeed, among the Finnish foreign fighter contingent in Syria and Iraq, at least 19 different ethnicities are represented.[239]

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[235] Minna Akimo, "Huostaanotto on pelastanut useita lapsia Syyrian sodalta – Suomessa elää perheitä, joissa lapset kasvatetaan väkivaltaiseen radikalismiin." Kaleva, 29.9.2019.
[236] Ibid.
[237] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018" (2018), pp. 27–28.
[238] For instance, see "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2/2015." Sisäinen turvallisuus, Sisäministeriön julkaisu 20/2015, Sisäministeriö (2015), p. 16, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75491/V%C3%A4kivaltaisen%20ekstremismin%20tilannekatsaus.pdf?sequence=1. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[239] Ibid.

Al-Shabaab

According to media reports, there has been loss of interest in al-Shabaab among the Somali diaspora in Finland from 2011 onwards.[240] Yet, there have been signs of interest and activism related to the conflict in Somalia and al-Shabaab, particularly in the first half of the decade. However, it is unclear how many of these individuals there are, or how they are organised. It is unclear, and unlikely, that any multi-ethnic support networks focused on al-Shabaab and the conflict in Somalia would have emerged, considering the lack of appeal of either al-Shabaab or the conflict in Somalia outside the Somali diaspora – although al-Shabaab's merger with al-Qaeda early in the decade could have increased its appeal and popularity within other parts of the Finnish jihadi milieu. Conversely, it is highly likely that there still are individuals and small networks, who are interested in jihadism and support al-Shabaab, and may even be interested in participating in the conflict, as was stated by Supo in mid-2010s.[241] Indeed, it is very unlikely that support activity connected to al-Shabaab would have stopped completely considering it was a primary area of concern to the Finnish counter-terrorism authorities before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011,[242] and Somalis still constitute the biggest Muslim ethnic group in Finland. However, all the of publicly known cases of Somalis participating in jihadist activity have occurred in the context of the foreign fighter mobilisation in Syria and Iraq.

Rawti Shax

[240] See e.g. "Suomen somalien mukaan islamistien tuki romahtanut" (2011).
[241] "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016" (2015).
[242] See e.g. Esa Juntunen, "Somaliterroristeilla yhteyksiä Suomeen." Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 5.1.2011.

In November 2015, the Italian authorities – in cooperation with police officials elsewhere in Europe – executed what they described as "the most important police operation in Europe in the last 20 years." During the operation, 13 suspected members of a Europe-based, transnational jihadist network, Rawti Shax, were arrested in raids across Europe, although arrest warrants were reportedly issued for 17 individuals.[243] The raids reportedly occurred in Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. According to the Italian authorities, the network and its members were allegedly recruiting foreign fighters to be sent to Iraq and Syria, particularly for the IS, and they were also planning terror attacks in Europe with the aim of securing its' leader's – Mullah Krekar's – release by Norwegian authorities.[244]

Rawti Shax is headed by Mullah Krekar and believed to represent an evolution of Ansar Al Islam's European support networks, which he began reconstituting in late 2000s.[245] Unlike Ansar Al Islam, which was founded in Iraq in the early 2000s, Rawti Shax emerged and is rooted in Europe, with local and national cells communicating and operating via the Internet. The group's network is reported to span at least Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Finland, Italy, Greece, Sweden and Norway in Europe, as well as Iraq, Iran and Syria in the Middle East. The group has been active in providing logistical and financial support to recruiting foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) to Syria and Iraq.[246]

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[243] Juha-Pekka Tikka, "IL: näillä jihadistien terrorisolun jäsenillä on yhteys Suomeen." Verkkouutiset, 13.11.2015.
[244] "Jihadist cell in Europe 'sought recruits for Iraq and Syria." BBC, 12.11.2015.
[245] Lia & Nesser (2016), p. 123.
[246] "Press Release: Joint action against radical Islamist terrorist group coordinated at Eurojust (Operation JWEB)." Eurojust, 12.11.2015.

Rawti Shax's Finnish "branch" can hardly be perceived as a key nexus within the transnational network despite Finland's geographical proximity to Norway, where the network's leader resided until his deportation in 2020. In the Finnish case, however, there was likely significant continuity between the Ansar al-Islam's and Rawti Shax's membership. Unlike in the network's key nexuses, e.g. Germany and the UK, there was not a crackdown on the members and their suspected activities in Finland. Based on openly available data, no members or individuals connected to Ansar al-Islam (or its spinoff, Ansar al-Sunna) were arrested or tried in Finland during the 2000s or 2010s – at least on terrorist offences. As the Finnish authorities have suggested, the main difference between the Rawti Shax network and Ansar al-Islam's support network appears to have been the new name.[247]

While Supo stated it was aware of the network's existence in Finland at the time of the raid in mid-November 2015, its representatives did not at the time wish to comment on its members or their activities in Finland. In general, however, a senior Supo official has stated that the networks in Finland seek to recruit new members.[248] It is then likely that the membership of the cell had increased at least somewhat in the 2010s compared to the previous decade, reflecting overall developments within the milieu and the group's aim to expand by radicalising and recruiting new members. Further, it appears that the Finnish branch had at the least become more integrated to the network's international structures as some of its key figures resided in Finland during the 2010s.[249]

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[247] "Supo tietoinen Uusi suunta jihadistijärjestön Suomi-kytköksistä" (2015).
[248] "Supo tiesi jihadistijärjestön Suomi-kytköksistä." Savon Sanomat, 13.11.2015.
[249] Juha Ristimäki, "Lähde vahvistaa: Suomessa majailee kolme kovan luokan terroristia." Iltalehti, 5.12.2015; Rebekka Härkönen, "Supo: Jihadistien toiminta jatkuu." Turun Sanomat, 14.11.2015.

According to Italian authorities, four individuals who had warrants issued for their arrests had a connection to Finland.[250] The first individual was initially and erroneously reported to have been arrested in Finland.[251] The person in question was the suspected leader of Rawti Shax's Finnish branch, Sadiq Qadir Karim. A warrant was reportedly issued for his arrest,[252] but he was not in Finland at the time, despite officially residing in Espoo in the Helsinki metropolitan region.[253] According to reports in the Norwegian press, he had initially met Krekar during a demonstration in central Oslo on March 2, 2012.[254] He was also reported to have visited Krekar in prison after the Norwegian domestic intelligence service PST arrested him at the end of March the same year. In January 2013, he was allegedly given a central role in Rawti Shax's Finnish branch, although it is not clear whether he was appointed as its leader at the time. In a conversation between Krekar and his son-in-law[255] in May 2013, Krekar talked with his son-in-law about Rawti Shax's members possibly receiving military training in Syria. According to the latter, son-in-law said that the leader of the Finnish Rawti Shax cell wanted to travel to Syria, and that a new leader was therefore needed in Finland. Karim travelled to Syria, joined IS in March according to the groups' internal documents, [256] and reportedly died fighting in the ranks of IS in late 2014, apparently in Syria.[257]

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[250] Sami Koski & Julia Aalto-Setälä, "Jihadistiryhmän lonkerot yltävät Suomeen - ainakin neljällä yhteyksiä." Iltalehti, 12.11.2015.
[251] See e.g. Jason Hanna, Hada Messia & Livia Borghese, "15 Arrested in European sweep against Ansar al Islam offshoot." CNN, 12.11.2015; Petri Burtsov, "Näkökulma: Oppitunti italialaispoliisin tiedotuksesta." YLE Uutiset, 12.11.2015.
[252] "Italia: Yhdestä henkilöstä annettu pidätysmääräys Suomessa – on mahdollista, että on kuollut." Aamulehti, 12.11.2015.
[253] Sara Rigatelli, "Isisin vuodetulla jäsenlistalla ainakin viisi suomalaistaistelijaa." YLE Uutiset, 23.3.2016.
[254] Svein Vestrum Olsson, Martin Zondag & Mari Grafsrønningen, "Dette er Krekars angivelige terrornettverk." NRK, 4.12.2015.
[255] Krekar's son-in-law repotedly participated in Rawti Shax financial management and strategic planning. Kjell Persen et al., "Mener 36-åringen hadde sentral rolle." TV2, 18.7.2019.
[256] Rigatelli (2016).
[257] Kjell Persen, "Slik knytter italiensk politi Krekar til IS." TV2, 19.11.2015.

Additionally, he reportedly aided at least two other foreign fighters from Finland, and one from Switzerland, to join the IS.[258] This is unlikely the extent of Karim's impact on the Finnish foreign fighter mobilisation as several of its alleged members have travelled to Syria and Iraq and joined the group. It is not known who has succeeded him as the branch leader, or how the broader mobilisation has affected the group's membership base post-mobilisation, but in 2015 Supo estimated the branch's activities in Finland are likely to continue.[259]

The second individual is Awat Hamasalih, a British citizen of Iraqi Kurd descent. He is one of the key leaders of Rawti Shax and a close associate of the network's leader Krekar.[260] Hamasalih married a Finnish citizen,[261] and moved to Finland in 2013, living in the city Turku, where the key nexus of Kurdish jihadi activity in Finland had been since the 2000s, before being deported back to the United Kingdom due to national security concerns in December 2014,[262] and given a 15 year ban from entering Finland. Reportedly, Supo had recommended Hamasalih to be deported from Finland as early as August 2013. The reason for Hamasalih's deportation was that he was deemed to have recruited individuals for terrorist organisations (presumably Rawti Shax and IS) and disseminated violent propaganda.[263] He was subsequently arrested and jailed in the UK, and given a jail sentence in 2017 for being a member of a proscribed organisation, IS. He

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[258] Persen et al. (2019).
[259] Härkönen (2015).
[260] E.g. see "Three Britons fight extradition on terror charges." The Guardian, 20.11.2015.
[261] Andy Richardson, "ISIS prisoner got brother and wife to send him phone memory cards inside Harry Potter book." Birmingham Mail, 11.2.2020.
[262] Anu Nousiainen, "Suomi karkotti Turussa asuneen ääri-islamistin Britanniaan – "Vakava uhka yleiselle turvallisuudelle"." Helsingin Sanomat, 15.1.2015.
[263] Sara Rigatelli, "Yksi terrorismipidätetyistä oli karkotettu Suomesta, asui Turussa." YLE Uutiset, 12.11.2015.

was described by the judge who oversaw the trial said as a committed "advocate and ambassador" for the group.[264]

Interestingly, Hamasalih was not the only individual connected to Rawti Shax with whom Finland had difficulties deporting due to national security concerns. According to Finnish media reports from late 2015, at least three senior-level individuals within to the network, who arrived in Finland as asylum-seekers had been denied asylum, but the Finnish authorities at the time were unable to deport them as they had appealed the decision. While in Finland, the individuals reportedly promoted the ideology of the network and participated in its activities .[265]

Extremist converts

The radicalised converts within the Salafi milieu in Helsinki have continued their activism in the 2010s around the Roihuvuori Mosque in Helsinki. Partially because of the sermons held in Finnish and its Finnish-language membership, the mosque has attracted many Finnish converts and second-generation Muslims from various other ethnic backgrounds and mixed parentage. Many of the milieu's extremist converts congregated, exchanged views, and networked with each other there. The mosque has subsequently acquired a reputation as a radical mosque. There are good grounds for characterising the mosque as Salafist-oriented but not necessarily as radical. There are at best only a few indications in open sources that jihadist views have been or are promoted by the Mosque's preachers or key activists within the congregation.[266] However,

[264] "Awat Hamasalih from Birmingham is jailed for IS membership." BBC, 3.8.2017.
[265] Ristimäki (2015).
[266] Solmu Salminen, "Espoolaisesta rakennusmiehestä tuli radikaali jihadisti – myönsi aatteensa poliisille 2014, toimii edelleen Helsingissä." Iltalehti, 10.11.2017.

the association behind the mosque has attracted negative attention by inviting Muslim preachers with conservative and controversial views to lecture there, including Khalid Yasin in 2012 and Bilal Phillips in 2014,[267] and confrontational activism. For instance, in 2015 the association hung a sizeable banner outside the mosque wall, which stated that "Islam is the only real religion" and that Jesus was a Muslim.[268] However, equally there is very little information about how aware its preachers and key activists have been about the jihadist views or activism of some of the Mosques congregants. The Mosque was relocated to Malmi neighbourhood in North-eastern Helsinki in 2016. It is unclear whether similar dynamics have continued in the new location. However, at least one former extremist and witness in a subsequent terrorism trial, who frequented Roihuvuori has raised suspicions that similar activism is continuing in the Malmi Mosque.[269]

Within this broader Salafi milieu in eastern Helsinki, there were at least two separate small jihadist cliques, a bunch of guys and a bunch of girls. Bonded together by friendship, marriage and common Muslim identity, and segregated by gender, the activist groups shared jihadist views and were active in the Helsinki Salafi milieu in the 2010s.[270] Both groups were informal – although both had key activists who reportedly at least perceived to be leaders within them[271] –

[267] Markus Liimatainen & Jenna Karas, "Kuka on tämä kohuttu muslimisaarnaaja?" YLE Uutiset, 14.3.2014.
[268] Antti Halonen, ""Jeesus oli Muslimi" -lakana ilmestyi moskeijan seinään itä-Helsingissä – kirkkoherra: "Kannanoton osoite on aika selkeä"." Ilta-sanomat, 17.6.2015.
[269] Solmu Salminen, "KRP:n todistaja kertoo Iltalehdelle helsinkiläisten jihadistien salaseurasta: "Katsoin, että tässä on jotain menossa pieleen ja pahasti." Iltalehti, 11.11.2017.
[270] Mattinen (2017); Mikko Marttinen, "IS kävi läpi kantasuomalaisen radikaalit viestit: Tällaisia ovat "Fatiman" ankarat opetukset – julistaa moniavioisuuden ja aseellisen jihadin puolesta." Ilta-sanomat, 2.4.2019; Marttinen & Kilpamäki (2019).
[271] See e.g. Rami Mäkinen, "Vierastaistelijoiksi syytettyjen toivioretki Roihuvuoresta Syyrian sotaan johti riitelyyn ja kuolemiin." Ilta-sanomat, 8.11.2017; Marttinen & Kilpamäki (2019).

and dynamic – with new individuals gravitating towards the clique and its core members,[272] and old members leaving as their interest in jihadism or faith waned.[273] It is likely that both of these cliques were among the multi-ethnic networks that have emerged in Finland, as both included members from other and mixed ethnic backgrounds and were directly connected to other individuals from various backgrounds active in the Finnish jihadi milieu. It is not clear how overtly these individuals expressed their views, or whether they actively or openly sought to radicalise or recruit others. However, if such activity occurred, it likely was within their immediate social circles where issues relating to jihadism were discussed, views exchanged, and participation often encouraged. Several converts within these "bunches of guys" - and "bunches of girls" - and their acquaintances considered travelling or actually travelled to Syria and Iraq from 2012 onwards. It is possible, if not likely, that some of these extremists-cum-foreign fighters are or were among the active foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, who connected to multi-national jihadist networks that have emerged in Finland in mid-2010s.[274]

Emerging multi-ethnic jihadist networks in Finland

Throughout 2000s, Finland had a number of relatively unorganised small social networks, which were largely ethnically homogenous and isolated from one other. With the Syrian civil war as a cause célèbre and mobilising force, some of these different groups and individuals connected to them have begun to form loose multi-ethnic networks and cooperate within them. Further, the conflict has caused the emergence of new networks formed by self-starters. This has been aided

[272] Mattinen (2017).
[273] Ibid.; Marttinen & Kilpamäki (2019).
[274] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018), p. 10.

by the fact that geographically individuals involved in jihadism are mostly concentrated in the larger cities in southern Finland, particularly in and around Helsinki and Turku – where the majority of Finland's Muslim population also resides.[275]

First indications of the emergence of these networks came in March, 2014, when a Supo representative commented in an interview that the organisation has observed indicators of "radical islamist and multi-ethnic networks" in Finland.[276] In November 2015, the organisation confirmed that jihadist "support groups" had been established in Finland in an attempt to recruit and radicalize individuals.[277] Naturally, some of the above-mentioned groups and networks may be included to this category, particularly in the context of converts where individual extremist from non-Finnish background have been present in the Salafi milieu . Outside of this, there is no information available on individual networks, but some general observations can be made about their characteristics.

In terms of size, they are likely to be comparatively small. As noted by a senior Supo researcher, the networks are relatively young, so they have not had enough time to grow and develop to a similar size as similar networks with longer histories in the key nexuses in the broader European jihadi milieu. In terms of organizational structure, some are hierarchical and disciplined,[278] but majority appear to not be particularly hierarchical, disciplined or with well-defined

[275] "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa - tilannekatsaus 2/2013." Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma, Sisäasiainministeriö (2013), p. 9, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/3723676/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-2-2013.pdf/6460c576-254e-4fc5-bd64-088192c017cd/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-2-2013.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[276] Jarkko Sipilä, "Supo: Syyrian suomalaisjihadisteissa muhii terrorismiongelma." MTV3, 5.3.2014.
[277] Saarinen (2016).
[278] Vaalisto (2019).

memberships. Rather, their membership is in flux, and they tend to lack activists who have control over other members.[279] Other networks are even looser and more informal.[280] In terms of composition, these networks are multi-ethnic and intergenerational, including first- and second-generation generation Muslims.[281] As stated by Supo, "[m]arriages are concluded within networks" also, serving to strengthen internal cohesion – or possibly serving external cooperation.[282] It is highly likely that within certain networks in Finland and families within them, children are being grown and groomed into adopting a jihadist ideology.[283]

In terms of activity, these networks have, according to Supo, so far focused on support activities and spreading the ideology. They seek to grow by radicalising and recruiting new members in other ways.[284] However, the may prefer to participate in other forms of activism too, e.g. fundraising and foreign fighting. These networks tend to locate where the majority of Finland's Muslim population and members of its jihadi milieu resides, i.e. larger cities in south and southwestern Finland. However, networks may have members in more cities than one. For instance, the Finnish branch of the Rawti Shax network has membership at least in Turku and the greater Helsinki region. These networks tend to function covertly and shy away from overt activism.[285] Consequently, their outreach and recruitment base is limited primarily to the social

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[279] Patrik Saarto, "Supon erikoistutkija: Tällaisia ovat Suomen radikaali-islamistiset verkostot." Iltalehti, 23.8.2017.
[280] Vaalisto (2019).
[281] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[282] "The terrorist threat assessment is an overview of terrorism" (2020).
[283] Akimo (2019).
[284] "Supo Year Book 2018." Suojelupoliisi (2019), p. 32, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/40760242/2018_EN_Supo_Jubilee_Yearbook.pdf/5361b756-6105-ee43-286c-5472444886ea/2018_EN_Supo_Jubilee_Yearbook.pdf?t=1602666383277. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[285] Saarto (2017).

circles of their active members, [286] which tends to be how ideologies and activism often spread in Finland more broadly.[287] In fact, the emergence of these networks has highly likely contributed to the increasing rates of violent radicalisation in Finland among second generation Muslims.[288] Lastly, these networks may be connected to external actors via various mechanisms. Their active members are known to have taken part in the operations of jihadist groups, especially in Syria and Iraq. They may also be indirectly influenced strategic choices made by leadership figures of jihadist groups,[289] or by individual jihadist entrepreneurs or activists with connections to Finland, who may travel to Finland to promote the ideology.[290]

Sharia4Finland

The impact of these qualitative developments to internal structures should not be exaggerated. Indeed, despite the developments described above, the Finnish jihadi milieu did not experience the emergence of significant radicalisation hubs, at least based on openly available data. Despite limited social clustering of radicalised individuals in the Salafi Milieu around Roihuvuori Mosque, there were still no high-profile radical mosques or charismatic jihadist entrepreneurs within the Finnish milieu. And lastly, there appears to have been no significant Salafist organisations, which promoted jihadist views or venerated individual militants or acts of

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[286] Vaalisto (2019).
[287] "Supo Year Book 2016." Suojelupoliisi (2017), p. 20, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/40760242/2016_EN_Supo_yearbook.pdf/a17d7df6-68b3-95a2-7a5a-eec9673d52c3/2016_EN_Supo_yearbook.pdf?t=1602666282005. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[288] "National Security Review 2018." Suojelupoliisi (2018), p. 1, https://supo.fi/documents/38197657/39761269/2018_EN_National_Security_Review.pdf/3bbd1e0f-7b27-cf84-ae36-8aad551b84a0/2018_EN_National_Security_Review.pdf?t=1602669140559. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[289] "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018), p. 10.
[290] Saarto (2017).

violence. Indeed, no Sharia4-type organisation was established in Finland in the 2010s, as has been suggested by some notable scholars.[291] As many of them noted, Al-Muhajiroun leader Anjem Choudary, who helped form Sharia4 groups throughout Western Europe around the turn of the decade, did visit Finland in March 2013 to speak in an event titled *Free All Muslim Hostages*, as was also widely reported in the Finnish press at the time.[292] Chodary was highly likely invited by his close acquaintance, fellow Brit and jihadist entrepreneur Awat Hamasalih, who was based in Finland between 2013 and 2014.[293] At the event Choudary announced the establishment of Sharia4Finland albeit – according to his own words – as an idea rather than an organisation.[294] Whatever the plan was, it failed to get off the ground as no activity by Sharia4Finland has been observed since.

There are at least four potential explanations for this. First, Sharia4Finland was set up just for the purposes of the meeting in Helsinki meeting in order to further strengthen Choudary's links with the jihadist Kurdish community in Finland and the Nordics.[295] In fact, after the event Choudary reciprocated and invited Awat Hamasalih, who is a British citizen, to speak in his event when he was back in the United Kingdom.[296]

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[291] See e.g. Nesser (2019); Moghadam (2019), p. 257; Pantucci (2015).
[292] See e.g. Laura Halminen, "Supo: Radikaalien vierailuja on vaikea estää." Helsingin Sanomat, 3.4.2013; Marika Kataja-Lian, "Radikaali muslimisaarnaaja puhuu Helsingissä salaisessa paikassa - vaatimuksena terroristien vapauttaminen." YLE Uutiset, 28.3.2013.
[293] Pantucci (2015).
[294] Anssi Miettinen, "Suomessa käynyt islamisti: 'Bin Laden oli sankari'." Helsingin Sanomat, 7.4.2013.
[295] Nick Lowles & Joe Mulhall, "Gateway to Terror: Anjem Choudary and the al-Muhajiroun Network." HOPE Not Hate (2013), p. 36, https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/gateway-to-terror-2013-11.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[296] Pantucci (2015).

Second, it is possible that there were no suitable activists in Finland interested in playing a leading role in such an organisation, as many who could have theoretically been interested in such a position, and have the necessary capabilities for a leadership role in such an organisation were either already in Syria or planning to travel there.

Third, it is highly likely that Choudary was invited to Finland at the invitation of Awat Hamasalih and by extensions the Rawti Shax network's Finnish branch. The event was organised on the tenth anniversary of the Rawti Shax network's leader, Mullah Krekar's incarceration, a senior member of its leadership, Awat Hamasalih was among the guest speakers, and the crowd reportedly consisted of 60 individuals of Kurdish background.[297] It is at least plausible to suggest that Kurdish individuals associated with Rawti Shax in Finland would be hesitant to take on a role in another extremist organisation, and highly likely that they were simply not interested in it.

And fourth, it is also highly likely that the Finnish organisers failed to attract the right kind of audience for the event that would have been interested in Choudary's project. As reported, there was a high level of secrecy among the event, with even its main organiser distancing himself from the arranged event in the Finnish press.[298] Hence, the crowd that turned out for the event was at least predominantly Kurdish,[299] although it would have been a certainty that plenty of individuals in the Finnish jihadi milieu would have been eager to meet and network with Choudary, and potentially participate in his Sharia4Finland project.

[297] Christian Sønsteby, "Profetens Ummah-mentor til tilhengerne: « Vær stolte av å kalles terrorister»." TV2.No, 31.3.2013.
[298] Halminen (2013).
[299] Sønsteby (2013).

External connections

Until the 2010s, the activities of international, armed jihadist groups or bona fide jihadist militants had little connection to or interest in Finland. However, during the decade this has begun to shift, in large part aided by the fact that more Finnish jihadi activists are better networked with external actors,[300] and they participating in jihadist activism abroad in greater numbers.[301] Consequently, external jihadist actors – jihadist entrepreneurs, extremist networks and armed groups – have a better knowledge of Finland, and are likely to have more contacts in the country than before.[302] Some jihadist actors, including the IS, have acted on this information and targeted Finland in their online communications or other forms activism. Indeed, IS presented individuals from Finland in its various publications and videos on a few occasions, and targeted the country in its communications on several occasions between 2014 and 2020.[303] Hence, while the Finnish jihadi milieu is still geographically far removed from the conflict zones where armed jihadist groups operate as well as the key nexuses in the broader European jihadi milieus with high-profile jihadist entrepreneurs and networks, the increasing connection between various extremists and networks within the Finnish jihadi milieu and those abroad have integrated the milieu to the transnational phenomenon more than before.

In the context of these connections, the main manifestation has been the connections to jihadist actors abroad by various Finland-based activists, and increasingly small groups and networks.[304]

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[300] Halminen (2013).
[301] E.g. see “Supo Year Book 2017” (2018), p. 10.
[302] “Supo Year Book 2016” (2017), p. 21.
[303] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), pp. 82–83.
[304] E.g. see “National Security Overview 2020” (2020), p. 2.

According to Supo, the links between Finnish jihadi milieu and external actors have become significant during the decade.[305] These quantitatively increased and qualitatively more serious contacts are undoubtedly in large part caused by an increasing number of Finnish or Finland-based jihadi militants, who have experience in foreign fighting or training with armed groups, predominantly in Syria and Iraq. However, the same trend is observable among domestic activists and collectives. In the case of some of these collectives, these contacts occur through Finland-originated foreign fighters, who are their active members – as is the case with some of the Finnish foreign fighters, who have joined the IS. However, according to Supo, individual activists, small groups and networks within the Finnish jihadi milieu likely have links to practically all key jihadist groups relevant in major conflict zones. At minimum, this likely includes groups such as al-Qaida and its various branches (e.g. Al-Shabaab and possibly Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP), including its former branches such as Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, the IS and its various branches, and local unaffiliated jihadist groups in Syria, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Additionally, the contacts between individual activists and networks within the Finnish milieu and their counterparts elsewhere in Europe have also evolved, as exemplified by the continued and evolving presence of the Rawti Shax network in Finland especially during the first half of the 2010s.

A significant qualitative change in the Finnish jihadi milieu is that jihadist networks abroad have begun to create contacts and recruit supporters from Finland.[306] One context which this is observable is that Finland has attracted visits and immigrations from a higher profile of militant

[305] Ibid.

[306] "Suojelupoliisin hallinnollista asemaa ja tulosohjausta sekä valvonnan kehittämistä selvittäneen työryhmän loppuraportti. Raportti 24.9.2014." (2014), p. 13.

exiles and visitors. This includes individuals close to Rawti Shax leadership, e.g. the Rawti Shax network, who have at least tried to move to Finland on a more permanent basis.[307] Additionally, this includes individuals, such as Anjem Choudary, who arrived to Finland on a temporary basis and for a specific purpose, the establishment of Sharia4Finland, and possibly to network with Kurdish extremists.[308] Another possible example of a militant visitor is a Bosnian jihadist entrepreneur, Bilal Bosnic, who reportedly visited Finland in 2014. According to Italian research Alessandro Boncio, he "is one of the most important leaders in the Salafi-jihadist movement of Bosnia Herzegovina. He is considered by many intelligence services as one of the main Balkan FTFs recruiter, especially due to his role as itinerant imam in the 2000s in Europe, that also allowed him to strongly impact on the Italian jihadist scene." He was arrested in Italy in September 2014 during a police operation, while returning from a preaching and fundraising tour in Finland.[309]

Some external activists are also suspected of having recruited foreign fighters from Finland. Indeed, the Finnish Ministry of Interior's Overview of Violent Extremism in Finland from 2014 highlights the potential influence and impact of jihadist "mentors" abroad on individuals in Finland was highlighted as a phenomenon relevant to the Finnish jihadi milieu.[310] Additionally, a senior Supo official stated in a media interview that "networks and mentors" are guiding youth

[307] Ristimäki (2015)
[308] Lowles & Mulhall (2013), p. 36.
[309] Alessandro Boncio, "Three Generations of jihadist preachers in Italy compared." ITSTIME, 30.6.2020, https://www.itstime.it/w/three-generations-of-jihadist-preachers-in-italy-compared1-by-alessandro-boncio/. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[310] "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 1/2014." Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma, Sisäministeriö, (2014), p. 7, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/3723676/Vakivaltainen-radikalisoituminen-tilannekatsaus-1-2014.pdf/a9c1a1d1-74b3-4077-ae63-37f8a8f65582/Vakivaltainen-radikalisoituminen-tilannekatsaus-1-2014.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

vulnerable to violent radicalisation in online environments, and exploiting the opportunities it provides in their activism.[311] One of the few such examples is "Jouni", a Finnish convert extremist, who was recruited to become a foreign fighter in Syria online in 2013-2014 by a then-Netherlands-based extremist. It is not clear how or where they connected online, but the two corresponded via Skype and email for the space of two years. "Jouni" travelled to Syria in early 2014 and returned in late 2015. Reportedly the activist facilitated his travel to Syria, and possibly aided his entry to a jihadist group there.[312]

Additionally, it is possible that a well-known jihadist entrepreneur and close associate of Anjem Choudary, Omar Bakri Muhammed has played a role in the Finnish mobilisation. When interviewed in Lebanon by the Finnish public broadcaster YLE in October 2031, he stated he had helped those willing to go to Syria to get a recommendation to join an armed group. While he did not explicitly state he had facilitated Finnish foreign fighters' entry to armed groups operating in Syria, he stated that he knew about 35-40 Finnish individuals there.[313] Although there is no available data to suggest Omar Bakri had played a role in the Finnish mobilisation, it raises an important question: How did early Finnish foreign fighters gain entry to armed groups, which often required a letter of recommendation from a respectable and trustful source? The question is particularly pertinent as the Finnish jihadi milieu in 2013 was still much smaller and less connected to external actors than it was by the end of the decade. And in this context it is

[311] Ossi Rajala, "Supon mukaan tulevaisuuden terroristi on verkossa toimiva diginatiivi – torjuntaan tarvitaan uusia keinoja." Lapin Kansa, 29.7.2018.
[312] Pekka Lehtinen, "17-vuotias kantasuomalainen "Jouni" halusi tarkka-ampujaksi – Imaami värväsi ummikkopojan Syyriaan." MTV3, 19.9.2016.
[313] Kari Ahlberg, "Radikaali muslimisaarnaaja Libanonissa Yle Uutisille: Syyriassa kymmeniä suomalaistaistelijoita." YLE Uutiset, 29.10.2013.

important to note that Omar Bakri had recruited and facilitated foreign fighters from other Western European countries.

Finland has also been targeted by external entrepreneurs in other types of activism. Fundraising, which Finland has struggled to effectively prosecute, has been one of these forms. As explained by Swedish researcher Magnus Ranstorp, a 30-year-old Salafi preacher in Sweden, who was influential among Swedish foreign fighters, was charged with "VAT fraud amounting to SEK6 million ($740,000) in a scheme lasting four months during the first quarter of 2013. He purchased mobile phones and tablets for SEK29.7 million ($3.6 million) in the United Kingdom and sent the order to his company in Finland. He then resold the shipment to a 23-year-old Swedish FTF and his company in Bergsjön. SEK5 million is believed to be missing still and is thought to be in the Middle East or North Africa."[314]

Conclusion

This chapter examined the evolution of jihadism in Finland between 2012 and 2020. While Finland is still a peripheral country in the broader European milieu by any measure, it has seen significant qualitative and quantitative developments compared to the 2000s. There is much more information about how the phenomenon has evolved and manifested itself, making it possible to provide a more comprehensive and representative picture of the milieu and its development. The Finnish jihadi milieu has grown significantly,[315] but its most important

[314] Magnus Ranstorp, "Microfinancing the Caliphate: How the Islamic State is Unlocking the Assets of European Recruits." CTC Sentinel, Volume 9 Issue 6 (May 2016).
[315] "Year Book 2019." Suojelupoliisi (2020), p. 12.

developments have been qualitative. For instance, the increase in the number of activists with experience in foreign fighting and armed training, the increasing rates of homegrown radicalisation among second generation Muslims, the emergence of multi-ethnic and intergenerational jihadist networks, more direct and serious connections between jihadist activists and networks in Finland with their counterparts abroad, and Finland's elevated profile in the online communications of jihadist groups and increasing levels of attention from increasingly high profile foreign activists and networks, who seek to target Finland, Muslim youth vulnerable to violent radicalisation, or individuals within the Finnish jihadi milieu with their activism.

Despite the developments, the Finnish jihadi milieu is still a peripheral area in the broader European jihadi milieu. It lacks local radicalisation hubs, enabling environments, notable jihadist entrepreneurs and robust networks. However, the developments described above have had a significant impact on the quantity and quality of jihadist activism in Finland, predominantly in the context of the conflict in Syria and Iraq. In recent years, Supo has stated it has observed significant terrorism support operations occurring in Finland.[316] For example, Supo has also identified groups and individuals who have both motivation and capacity to carry out a terrorist attack.[317] Finland has also experienced one of the largest mobilisation of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq relative to Muslim population size.[318] Consequently, the number of terrorism-related criminal investigations has grown significantly during the decade.[319] It is to these developments in the Finnish jihadi milieu's shifting patterns of activism that the thesis will focus next.

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[316] "National Security Overview 2020" (2020), p. 2.
[317] "National Security Review 2019" (2019), p. 3.
[318] See e.g. Benmelech & Klor (2020).
[319] Rebekka Härkönen, "Supo: Terrorismirikosten näyttökynnys liian korkea – poliisilla ollut selvittelyssä lähes 130 terrorismijuttua." Satakunnan Kansa, 6.4.2019.

Chapter 4: Patterns of Domestic jihadist activism in Finland, 2012–2020

This chapter examines jihadist activism in Finland during the 2010s. Specifically, it looks at what is known about different types of jihadist activity in Finland between 2012 and 2020, and how these activism patterns have evolved over time. It argues that Finland has experienced a significant growth in the quantity of jihadist activism in the 2010s, and that these activities have been predominantly connected to the conflict in Syria and Iraq, and particularly the IS. Additionally, there are several qualitative developments. First, there is a wider spectrum of activism present in Finland than in the 2000s, with online activism, terrorist financing, and violent activism emerging in the 2010s. Second, there has been an increase in the quality of activism as there are more serious and professional activities that have taken place during the decade. And lastly, Finland is being increasingly targeted by external actors, which is visible in the jihadist activism patterns in the 2010s in various ways. The chapter ends by noting that the most significant development regarding jihadist activism in Finland has been the foreign fighting mobilisation to Syria and Iraq from 2012 until 2016.

Compared to the 2000s, much more attention has been given to jihadism's domestic manifestations. For instance, there has been a substantial increase in the number of official documents – e.g. reports, reviews, and strategy papers – from various governmental authorities. There is also information from a wider range of sources than in the previous decade. Investigative journalism covering the phenomenon and individuals involved in it has increased in quantity and quality, particularly after August 2014 when a Finnish foreign fighter of Somali

descent appeared on an IS propaganda video.[320] Knowledge gaps, however, remain. This is especially so as there have been only few of court cases related to domestic jihadist activity that would make more detailed information available to the public and researchers. While the picture presented below is somewhat fragmented, and there are gaps within it, it is highly likely much more representative of the whole of the phenomenon than the analysis focusing on Islamist militancy in Finland in the 2000s.

Shifting activism patterns

As the Finnish jihadi milieu has grown and developed in the 2010s, so have the activism patterns in the country. In Finland's first counter-terrorism strategy paper, it was estimated there were indications of activity supporting armed groups operating abroad.[321] As was argued earlier in this study, there was some supporting activity in Finland, including efforts related to radicalisation and recruitment, fundraising, and foreign fighting. These activities existed in at least three separate contexts: the Somali and Kurdish "support networks" as well as homegrown extremists.

In the 2010s, jihadist activism has consistently increased in quantity. Vast majority of this activism was connected to the conflict in Syria and Iraq, and especially the IS. As stated in the Interior Ministry's situational overview of Violent extremism in Finland in 2015, more "international level" phenomena connected jihadism can be observed in Finland than ever before.[322] Indeed, the number of terrorism offence-related criminal investigations has grown

[320] Jessica Stern & J.M. Berger, "ISIS and the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon." The Atlantic, 8.3.2015.
[321] "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 4.
[322] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2/2015" (2015), p. 16.

significantly throughout the decade. In 2011 the police authorities in Finland had started their first counter-terrorism related investigation. By 2019, there were over 130 ongoing or completed criminal investigations relating to terrorist offences.[323] In the 2010s, the range of different types of activism became even broader, including violent and violence-related activities – although limited only to few occurrences – by the latter half of the decade. Additionally, Finland has started to attract attention from various jihadist actors abroad in the 2010s.

Some of this activism is more serious in quality, reflecting broader developments in the Finnish jihadi milieu, particularly increasing homegrown radicalisation, emergence of multi-ethnic networks and the foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq.[324] According to Supo, the organisation became aware around 2017–2018 that "more serious terrorism-related plans and projects in Finland" were occurring than before,[325] Finnish authorities also expected support activity in Finland to continue to grow and evolve in the future.[326] By 2020, they stated that there was significant support activity for international terrorism, especially relating fundraising and dissemination of ideology – latter especially online.[327] It is to these various forms of jihadist activism and their manifestations in Finland that this study will now turn its attention.

Radicalisation, recruitment, and facilitation

[323] Härkönen (2019).
[324] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), p. 21.
[325] "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018) p. 11; "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32.
[326] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 23.
[327] "National Security Review 2019." Suojelupoliisi (2019), p. 3.

According to Supo, domestically active jihadist networks in Finland seek to grow and expand by radicalising, recruiting, or finding new members in “other ways”.[328] Reflecting the broader trend in Europe, Finland-based entrepreneurial-type activists recruit “on their own initiative among family, friends, and members of their social network. Conversion, socialization, and radicalization takes place through religious and political discussions as well as various teambuilding activities by the leader.”[329] According to Supo, these social ties, and eventually networks formed around them, are how “radical ideologies and activism” have spread and continue to spread in Finland.[330]

The importance and impact of interpersonal ties and social networks on patterns of jihadi activism in Finland can be observed in the dynamics of the foreign fighter mobilisation from Finland to Syria and Iraq, in which peer-to-peer radicalisation and recruitment have played a key role, particularly among extremist converts and Finnish Somalis. Indeed, many of the Finnish foreign fighters have friends or family members, who have also travelled to Syria and Iraq.[331] One key reason for the importance of social ties is that the Finnish jihadi milieu lacks – or at least appears to lack – radicalisation hubs, e.g. charismatic activists or extremist communities

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[328] “Supo Year Book 2016” (2017), p. 21; “Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2017.” Sisäinen turvallisuus | Sisäministeriön julkaisu 3/2017, Sisäministeriö (2017), p. 18, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79235/03%202017_Vakivaltaisen%20ekstremismin%20tk%201_2017.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]; “Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä” (2018), p. 23. “Supo Year Book 2018” (2019), p. 32.

[329] Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010), p. 807.

[330] “Supo Year Book 2016.” Suojelupoliisi (2017), p. 20.

[331] For instance, in a study by Malkki and Saarinen in which 44 foreign fighters from Finland were identified, only ten of these individuals appeared to not be connected to other foreign fighters socially. And in these cases, lack of available information may have resulted in several false “negatives”. Malkki & Saarinen (2019), p. 122.

with overt outreach and recruitment activities.[332] Even the most formal manifestation of jihadist networks, the Finnish Rawti Shax branch, appears to have similar dynamics. Their domestic activities have been largely limited to radicalisation, foreign fighter recruitment, and fundraising activities. Its members have been carrying out these activities largely within its own network and the surrounding broader community around them. At least three members of the Finnish branch joined the IS, as have at least two other peripheral members of the broader community, which surrounds the branch.[333] As argued by a senior Supo official, the same social dynamics – and social clustering – can be observed in patterns of homegrown radicalisation and network membership.[334]

Additionally, from summer 2014 onwards – until at least 2017 – there were several reported cases of public albeit amateurish recruitment attempts in locations by suspected recruiters connected to the IS.[335] However, based on openly available data it is at best unclear whether any of these extremists actually had the necessary contacts to facilitate the individuals entry to the IS, or whether they were explicitly trying to recruit or only encouraging people to travel to the conflict zone and join the group on their own. However, according to Supo there were individual

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[332] Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone & Eva Entenmann, "Fear Thy Neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West." George Washington University's Program on Extremism, the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2017). p. 17, https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2017/06/FearThyNeighbor-RadicalizationandJihadistAttacksintheWest.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[333] Malkki & Saarinen (2019), pp. 100-101.
[334] Vaalisto (2019).
[335] Petja Pelli, "Värvääminen Isisiin on muuttunut Suomessa avoimemmaksi – lähtijöitä kysytty jopa suoraan kadulta." Helsingin Sanomat, 2.6.2015.

recruiters active in Finland around summer 2014, who encouraged and tried to recruit others to Syria and Iraq, and to join the IS.[336]

These types of attempts have been occasionally reported at several different locations across several cities in Finland, including Helsinki and the greater Helsinki region, Turku, Jyväskylä (a city in central Finland) and Vaasa (a city in Western Finland). These attempts reportedly occurred in places of congregation, like public streets and malls in in Helsinki,[337] and mosques, [338] but also in places of vulnerability, e.g. asylum-seeker reception centers (particularly between 2015-2017),[339] universities,[340] and vocational training centers.[341] Additionally, it has been alleged that recruiters connected to the IS in Finland may also have targeted asylum-seekers who had arrived to Finland as minors, had turned 18 and had to move out from group homes.[342] And lastly, there have also been reports of jihadist support activities and activism in prisons in

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[336] Antti Koistinen, "Supo: Suomessa toimivista terroristivärvääjistä tihkuu aiempaa enemmän tietoja." YLE Uutiset, 6.9.2014.

[337] Markus Kuokkanen, "Helsinkiläisiä on houkuteltu kaduilla Syyriaan taistelemaan." YLE Uutiset, 26.8.2014; Heikki Kauhanen, "Isis toimii avoimesti – turkulaismies tapasi värvääjän ruokakaupassa." Turun Sanomat, 28.7.2015; Minna Rajainmäki, "Espoolaisnuori kertoo: 'Näin Isis painostaa Suomessakin'." Länsiväylä, 21.3.2015; "Vaasan Isis-rekrytointi: 'Värvääjät pelottelivat", MTV3, 14.1.2016.

[338] "Journey to Isis: from astrophysics student to shell-shocked Islamist fighter." Newsweek, 13.5.2015.

[339] See e.g. Kari Ikävalko, "Supo: turvapaikanhakijoista merkittäviä vaikutuksia Suomen turvallisuudelle – tulijoilla kytköksiä väkivaltaisiin ryhmiin." YLE Uutiset, 3.11.2015; Asta Tenhunen, "Kolme miestä kiersi vastaanottokeskuksissa kehumassa Isistä." Savon Sanomat, 20.4.2017; Tiina Örn, "Turvapaikanhakija levitti islamistista propagandaa vastaanottokeskuksessa - 'Sai silti oleskeluluvan'." Helsingin Uutiset, 21.8.2017.

[340] Pekka Juntti, "Opiskelija yritti värvätä Isis-taistelijoita – Sitten hän kuvasi revontulet, muutti Syyriaan ja kuoli." Satakunnan Kansa, 26.1.2017.

[341] "Vaasan rekrytointi: "Värvääjät pelottelivat"" (2015).

[342] Sara Rigatelli, Juha Rissanen & Anna Hurtta, "Isis haluaisi minut – näin taistelijoita värvätään Suomessa." YLE Uutiset, 17.6.2015.

Finland, although the extent of the phenomenon remains unclear, and it has not yet appear to have played a major role in jihadist activism in Finland.[343]

However, Supo in particular has consistently highlighted that the impact of the internet, and social media in particular, has significantly impacted radicalisation and recruitment in Finland.[344] This has been particularly through dissemination of ideology, as will be discussed below. Indeed, particularly during the golden age of online "jihadisphere" (2013-2014),[345] there were ample opportunities for radicalised individuals in small communities without potential peers in their immediate social circles and areas of residence, and individuals with life management issues and poor social skills to find and connect with extremist peers virtually. The importance of internet and social media appears to be even higher in the cases where radicalised individuals have lived outside the main population centres in Finland, as has become somewhat more common during the 2010s,[346] where like-minded peers can be found. Indeed, in these cases they have been more likely to find peers and join social networks online.

The most visible example of online radicalisation in Finland is a young Finnish man, who converted to Islam in 2012 at the age of 17, radicalised and became a sympathiser of al-Qaeda. In 2013, he was planning to travel to Syria and join Jabhat al-Nusra, only to be discouraged by a

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[343] Peter Neumann, Juha Saarinen & Rajan Basra, "The Crime-Terror Nexus in Finland and the Baltics." Crime Terror Nexus Country Papers (2018), p. 16.
[344] "Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös kansalliseksi terrorismintorjunnan strategiaksi 2014 – 2017." Periaatepäätös, Sisäministeriö (2014), p. 6, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/3723676/Kansallinen+terrorismin+torjunnan+strategia+2014-2017/9b549988-3c30-4ecb-ad7f-1f99053b131b. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[345] See Maura Conway et al., "Disrupting Daesh: Measuring Takedown of Online Terrorist Material and Its Impacts." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 42 Issue 1-2: Islamic States Online Activity and Responses (2019), pp. 141–160.
[346] Suvanto (2015).

visit from Supo. By 2014, he had become a high profile and internationally networked IS cheerleader with over 11000 followers on his Twitter account @mujaahid4life. He eventually deradicalised and left Islam.[347] Another example is a fellow convert known as Abu Ibrahim al-Finlandi. He reportedly converted to Islam in 2013, and travelled to Syria in September 2014 where he joined the IS. He was reportedly a lonely, insecure and antisocial young man, who reportedly had both mental health and life management issues and spent a lot of time online.[348] However, as he became more radicalised while serving his mandatory military service, he begun to connect with like-minded peers online, including fellow converts from Norway and Latvia – meeting the latter in Helsinki in late 2013.[349] Their interactions online appeared to lead to collective radicalisation, and the trio eventually decided to travel to Syria and join the IS.[350]

The rise and golden age of jihadisphere has also provided "radical islamist mentors", i.e. jihadist activists seeking to influence, encourage, radicalise or recruit eager or vulnerable individuals online, with ample opportunities for such activities. Efforts by external activists targeting vulnerable or eager individuals from Finland have been highlighted in a report by the Ministry of Interior in 2014.[351] At least one such case has been reported in Finnish media. In online conversations – through skype and email – spanning from 2013 to early 2014 a Netherlands-based extremist, allegedly an Imam, recruited "Jouni", a then 17-year old convert to travel to

[347] "The bullied Finnish teenager who became an ISIS social media kingpin – and then got out." Newsweek 5.6.2015.
[348] Sara Rigatelli, "Isis-soturi Jonin taustat: Yksinäinen nettieläjä, joka vihasi armeijaa ja haki yliopistoon." YLE Uutiset, 15.2.2015b.
[349] Rigatelli (2015b).
[350] "Hellig overbevist: De frafalne - Del 1: Hvem er Abu Mohammed al-Norwiji?", Adresseavisen 16.06.2017.
[351] "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 1/2014" (2014), p. 7.

Syria in 2014 quickly after turning 18. He returned to Finland in late 2015 after nearly two years in the conflict zone.[352]

Fundraising and financing

In early 2010s, fundraising was estimated a key form of activism supporting jihadist groups abroad.[353] The recipient jihadist groups include at least al-Shabaab, likely also Ansar al-Islam and Ansar al-Sunna in Iraq. According to a senior analyst from Supo, fundraising mainly consists of small sums collected from various donors (not all of whom know the true purpose of the fundraising) by extremists, who pool it and transfer it abroad using various brokers and middlemen (either based in Finland or abroad), e.g. transferring the funds through the Hawala system. The sources of income have included legitimate businesses, fraudulent charities (for soliciting funds and other donations), various frauds, and presumably social benefits.[354]

In the 2010s, particularly in the latter half of the decade, Supo estimates that fundraising and financing has become a key form of support activism related to jihadism.[355] Similar estimation has been made by the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation, which has been increasingly receiving notifications about funds being transferred to Syria and Iraq via Turkey from 2014-

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[352] Lehtinen (2016).
[353] See e.g. "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 2/2013." Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma | Sisäasiainministeriö (2013), p. 9, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/3723676/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-2-2013.pdf/6460c576-254e-4fc5-bd64-088192c017cd/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-2-2013.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[354] Ville Juutilainen, Kati Pehkonen & Riikka Kurki, "Starttirahaa pyhään sotaan." YLE Uutiset, 1.4.2019.
[355] See e.g. "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).

2015 onwards.[356] By 2017, the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) received 30 notifications of suspected terrorist fundraising or financing from various public and private organisations in Finland, particularly relating to money transfers to Syria and Iraq via Turkey. However, according to a former senior official in the NBI, the organisation had struggled to start formal criminal investigations on these notifications as they had no way of investigating the end point or purpose of these transfers. Indeed, in 2017, the NBI reportedly had no active investigations to suspected cases of terrorist financing in Finland.[357] In 2019 the Financial Action Task Force recommended Finnish law enforcement take "a more proactive approach to opening TF [terrorist financing] cases" in its evaluation report of Finland's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures.[358]

Terrorist financing has existed in at least three different forms in Finland. First, there is self-financing. In self-financing, individuals or small groups collect funds – both through legitimate and criminal means – and use it to finance their own activism and activities related to jihadism. Second, there is micro-financing, in which funds are collected by individuals or small groups – similarly via legitimate, but also increasingly criminal means – and they are used to partly fund the activity of the individual or individuals themselves, e.g.. supplies and materiel deemed important to living, fighting, and surviving in the conflict zone, and travel to the conflict zone itself. When these individuals reach the conflict zone, they become a source of funds and materiel to the groups they join. The IS in particular has encouraged and even instructed recruits

[356] Olli-Pekka Paajanen, "KRP: Ilmoitukset epäillystä terrorismin rahoittamisesta lisääntyneet." Satakunnan Kansa, 28.9.2017.
[357] Ibid.
[358] "Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures: Finland." Mutual Evaluation Report, Financial Action Task Force (2019), p. 83, http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/mer4/MER-Finland-2019.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

to bring “whatever assets are available to contribute to the group’s cause.”[359] And lastly there has been financing other individuals’ participation in jihadist activities, e.g. their travel to a conflict zone or activities there. In this context, Finnish authorities have also reported in 2015 that a common methodology for financing foreign fighters in the conflict zone is to send money via money remitters (e.g. through Western Union), who have agents operating in border areas close to ISIL held territory. This is to finance them once they are in Syria/Iraq.[360] However, there is very little information about this kind of activism in public sources.

The other two forms of financing have occurred in the context of Finland’s foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq. In terms of self-financing, several fighters have been reported to commit various financial frauds related to the fraudulent use of credit cards, loans and instant loans, hire purchase contracts, and part payment plans to fund their materiel acquisitions and travel to the conflict zone.[361]

Some individuals have taken part in such activism collectively. In 2012-2013 there was a more ambitious plan to systemically collect significant sums via value added tax and other frauds. The objective was to fund the activities of a small group of converts from the Roihuvuori mosque to travel to Syria. According to reports in the Finnish media, the value of the fraud was roughly 30

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[359] Ranstorp (2016).

[360] “Financing of the Terrorist Organisation Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).” FATF Report (2015), Financial Action Task Force, p. 21, http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Financing-of-the-terrorist-organisation-ISIL.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

[361] See e.g. Anu Nousiainen, “Neljää suomalaista epäillään terrorismirikoksista – nyt he kertovat mitä Syyriassa tapahtui.” Helsingin Sanomat, 6.5.2017; Juutilainen, Pehkonen & Kurki (2019); Miika Viljakainen, “Espoolainen lähihoitaja Antti tuli uskoon vuonna 2012, kaksi vuotta myöhemmin hän oli Isis-taistelija – tässä koko uskomaton tarina.” Ilta-sanomat, 31.12.2019.

000 euros,[362] but the overall monetary value of the various frauds of individuals members of the group was well over 100 000 €. A key role was played by at least one member – possibly two members – of the group who had previously worked in the construction business and undertaken similar frauds in the context.[363] This is what Rajan Basra and Peter Neumann describe as "skills transfer". Individuals with criminal pasts who become involved in jihadist activities may deploy skills acquired during their criminal past in support of their ideological activism and objectives.[364] Indeed, at least one member of the group who took part in these frauds justified them in religious terms, stating it was legitimate war loot – *ghanima* – taken from infidel enemies.[365] As a part of the plan, the individuals had also started a non-profit charity to aid them in collecting funds and materiel, and likely also to provide a cover for their travel to Syria. The plan also included elements of microfinancing, as some of the materiel collected and taken to the conflict zone by the group was acquisitioned by the armed group they intended to join, Kataib al-Muhajirin. Curiously, while three members of the group were found guilty of these financial crimes in a trial after returning to Finland, they were not accused of terrorist financing.

In one case, a Finnish foreign fighter has also financed other, non-Finnish individuals' jihadist activism. The case connects to the Rawti Shax network's Finnish cell and its leader, Sadiq Qadir Karim. According to Italian authorities, he assisted a Kosovar-Albanian IS member Hodza

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[362] E.g. see Juutilainen, Pehkonen & Kurki (2019); Nousiainen (2017).
[363] Juutilainen, Pehkonen & Kurki (2019).
[364] See Rajan Basra & Peter Neumann, "Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 10 Issue 6 (2016), pp. 32–34, pp. 25–40.
[365] Viljakainen (2019).

Eldin's travel from Switzerland to Syria at the end of December 2013.[366] According to Italian press reports, he partly financed Eldin's travel to Istanbul, from where he continued to Syria.[367]

Creation, translation, and dissemination of propaganda

During the 2010s, a vibrant online culture had formed around jihadism. Initially, it was limited to various discussion forums and chat rooms,[368] but after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war the importance of the Internet to jihadist activism has increased dramatically – facilitated by the increased availability of smart phones, mobile high speed internet connections, and the proliferation of various social media and file-sharing platforms. Indeed, social media platforms have provided an unprecedented opportunity for individuals with extremist beliefs to share their views, connect with peers with similar interests and views, and meaningfully engage with bona fide extremists and militants, and engage in jihadist activism, at least virtually. As extremists and militants use the Internet "very much the same way as everyone else,"[369] it is not surprising that Finnish extremists and militants have been and are active online. While there is some evidence of online radicalisation and recruitment in the Finnish case in the context of the foreign fighter mobilisation,[370] the relevance and prevalence neither should be exaggerated. The internet is not a separate dimension where people radicalise or decide to become involved in jihadist activism or militancy, but rather the Internet can be "a facilitator and catalyser of an individual's trajectory

[366] Persen (2015).
[367] E.g. see "Speciale terrorismo / Ecco nomi, piani, organizzazioni e azioni dei terroristi arrestati oggi dal ros dei carabinieri." Il Nord Quotidiano, 12.11.2015.
[368] See e.g. Gilbert Ramsay, "Jihadi Culture on the World Wide Web." London: Bloomsbury (2013).
[369] Neumann (2009), p. 53.
[370] See e.g. Lehtinen (2016); "Hellig overbevist: De frafalne - Del 1: Hvem er Abu Mohammed al-Norwiji?" (2017).

towards violent political acts” or activism more broadly,[371] as well as an important avenue for covert activism, including radicalisation, recruitment, and propaganda dissemination.

In September 2014, the Finnish Ministry of Interior noted in its overview on violent extremism that propaganda and “hatred” messages (see next section) was a new jihadism-related phenomenon in Finland.[372] While this phenomenon was primarily connected to foreign fighters (see next chapter), a small number of domestic extremists have also been active online and produced different types of jihadist content. For instance, they have discussed jihadism-related texts, events and actors, as well as disseminated official content created by armed jihadist groups, predominantly the IS. Some of content was openly accessible and distributed outside the social media, including on websites and blogs or discussion forums, although Finnish jihadist online content produced by domestic extremists can be described as rather modest in both quantity and quality.[373] Only few Finnish extremists, including @mujaahid4life and @ummirhab have managed to attract considerable attention and build a relatively significant followership, but they have produced content in English rather than Finnish.

In some cases domestic extremists have also produced jihadist content in Finnish. In a media interview in February 2017, Pekka Hiltunen – a senior researcher at Supo – stated the

[371] Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens & Nick Khaderbai, “Research Perspectives on Online Radicalisation: A Literature Review 2006–2016.” VOX-Pol Network of Excellence (2017), p. 6, https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ICSR-Paper_Research-Perspectives-on-Online-Radicalisation-A-Literature-Review-2006-2016.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[372] “Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 2/2014.” Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma | Sisäministeriö (2014), p. 10, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/3723676/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-2-2014.pdf/4548b2a9-64f0-4b24-bf03-dd66b9ca6a1b/Vakivaltainen-ekstremismi-Suomessa-tilannekatsaus-2-2014.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[373] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 83.

organisation has observed an increasing amount of jihadist propaganda in Finnish language and jihadist online content targeting Finland. [374] The most notable example of this is An-nida Media, a Finnish pro-IS blog that disseminated official IS content translated to Finnish. It was operational from late August 2016 to October 2017. The content was mainly translated from English to Finnish, including texts inciting and glorifying violence, e.g. calling its readership to commit terrorist attacks on soft targets. Other content encouraged the readership to travel to the conflict zone with their families and join the IS. While the content they created was low in quantity (it published only 18 articles), it was professional in quality. It is not clear who run the website, or who created and uploaded the content, but it is clear that they tried to organise a community of like-minded extremists around the website. Indeed, before the site was deleted (either by its service provider, WordPress, or the site owners), it advertised a closed Telegram channel to which its readers could join. While An-nida Media became inoperational in early 2017 and was eventually deleted in October the same year, Supo has noted in late 2020 that there still are "significant terrorism support operations found in Finland," which includes the dissemination of ideology.[375] While such activities are likely to occur online as well as offline (within extremist social networks), they likely do so in closed instant messaging services and the dark web, making it less accessible to radicalised or radicalising individuals without access to individuals who know where this content is located.

As Finland's profile "has strengthened" among jihadist actors,[376] more content mentioning or targeting Finland has been created by external actors, particularly the IS. Indeed, the group has

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[374] "Supo: Finnish-language radical Islamic propaganda spreading." YLE News, 9.2.2017.
[375] "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).
[376] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018).

prominently featured at least three Finnish foreign fighters in its official publications, both video and print, creating content that glorified and incited violence, and encouraged travel to the conflict zone (see next chapter). More broadly, the group views Finland as a Western country and part of the anti-IS coalition, i.e. an enemy entity. While some of this content has incited attacks in Finland,[377] it does not prominently feature Finland as a primary target for terrorist attacks.[378]

Incitement and threatening with violence

At least one domestically active individual, a convert and a member or a former member of the community of extremist converts around Roihuvuori, has incited violence and hatred against a minority group. In October 2017, Abdullah Rintala and an IS-inspired extremist, received a suspended sentence in the Helsinki District Court for ethnic agitation against Shias and for distributing depictions of violence.[379] He stated "us Finnish-speaking jihadists" should pledge loyalty to the IS and travel to Syria to massacre Shias.[380] Rintala is also one of the key individuals behind the islamtieto.com discussion forum, where a significant number of pro-jihadist and pro-IS content has been written – predominantly by him and one other person, an extremist female convert and a returnee from Syria.[381] Interestingly, Rintala is a founding member and former vice president of the Finnish Islamic Party, which consisted of a few dozen

[377] "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32.
[378] Ibid., p. 28.
[379] Niko Ranta, "Voimakkaan tukensa terroristijärjestö Isisille antanut suomalaismies tuomittiin vankeusrangaistukseen – "Rynnäkkökivääri on sananvapautta vahvempi"." Ilta-sanomat, 6.10.2017.
[380] Eero Mäntymaa, "Vihapuhepoliisin kokoa leikattu, vaikka tutkittavaa riittää – "Tuo on tuollainen loputon suo." YLE Uutiset, 6.5.2018.
[381] Marttinen (2019); Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 75.

members,[382] and was another step Finnish converts took to self-organise in the mid-2000s.[383] Rintala was not the only active member within the short-lived party, who was interested and involved in jihadism. Reportedly, the former secretary of the party was among the group of Finnish converts, who were interested in travelling to Chechnya to take part in the hostilities there during that time.[384] Another activist would later travel to Syria in 2013.

In the latter half of the decade, the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation has reportedly investigated at least four threats made involving terrorist attacks, both posted online and made offline.[385] Only two of these are publicly known. The first was a suspected threat against the Temppeliaukio Church, a notable tourist destination in Helsinki around summer 2017. The police initially considered the alleged threat credible and subsequently carried out a visible counter-terrorism operation in the church's immediate vicinity.[386] Large concrete blocks preventing vehicles from driving to the entrance were also placed in front of the church. The operation attracted considerable media attention. The operation was triggered by a tip received by the police, the reported nature of which was such that it could not be ignored. Upon further investigation, threat was able to be ruled out, which can be interpreted to mean that there was no concrete plot – or at least no concrete evidence of an attack plot – behind the intelligence received by the NBI.

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[382] "Suomeen perustettiin islamilainen puolue." YLE, 6.9.2007.
[383] Hanna Kaarto, "Abdullah on suosikki." Helsingin Sanomat Sunnuntailiite, 9.9.2007; Eeva Haltsonen, "Islamilainen puolue perusteilla Suomeen." Verkkouutiset, 6.9.2007.
[384] Ari Peltonen, "Abdullah Tammi." City, 19.10.2007.
[385] Härkönen (2019).
[386] Eero Mäntymaa & Heidi Sullström, "KRP:n Haapala Temppeliaukion operaatiosta: "Uhka kohdistettiin kirkkorakennukseen"." YLE Uutiset, 20.6.2017.

The second was an alleged bomb threat against the International Ski Federation Ski Championships in Lahti in Spring 2017. Reportedly, a then-17-year-old male convert discussed and sought support for his plans of committing a terrorist attack targeting the Championships on Darknet.[387] Supo was tipped by its international partners, and the organisation referred the case to the NBI. The NBI did not start a criminal investigation, because there was no concrete evidence of an attack plot. Later, he had left Islam and become interested and involved in the Nordic Resistance Movement,[388] a far-right organisation banned in Finland in 2020.[389]

Plotting or committing terrorist attacks

As the jihadism in Finland has grown and evolved during the past decade, the terrorist threat emanating from it has also grown. Indeed, Supo has had to raise its terrorism threat assessment on three separate occasions in the past six years. The first was in June 2014, when the organisation stated it had to raise their assessment mainly due to the situation in Syria and its spillover effects.[390] In November 2015, Supo raised its terrorist threat assessment in Finland for the second time in the space of 18 months. While it estimated that the threat of "structured attacks by terrorist organizations" remained low, the risk posed by "individual terrorist actors" was rising.[391] In June 2017, the organisation elevated its assessment for a third and final time to

[387] Pekka Lehtinen, "Rikospaikka paljastaa: Lahden MM-hiihdoissa 2017 oli terroriteon uhka – ulkomaalainen tiedustelupalvelu lietsoi nuorta suomalaista iskuun." MTV3, 18.9.2019.
[388] Pekka Lehtinen, "Terroritekoa Lahden MM-hiihtoihin hautonut poika ollut myöhemmin mukana uusnatsijärjestö PVL:n marssilla." MTV3, 21.9.2019.
[389] On the Nordic Resistance Movement and the ban, see Daniel Sallamaa & Tommi Kotonen, "The case against the Nordic Resistance Movement in Finland: an overview and some explanations." Right Now!, Center for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo, 2.11.2020.
[390] "Annual Report 2014" (2015), p. 4.
[391] See e.g. Saarinen (2016).

date, stating that the terrorist threat facing Finland had been ”further increased by Finland's stronger profile within the radical Islamist propaganda and more serious links of CT target individuals with terrorist activities.”[392] By 2019, Supo stated it had identified individuals and small groups, who have both the motivation and the capacity to carry out terrorist attacks in Finland.[393] It estimates “[t]he most significant threat is posed by individual actors or small groups motivated by radical Islamist propaganda.”[394] Supo has also expressed its concern that jihadist networks in Finland, as they grow and become stronger, may attempt to commit a jihadist terror attack in Finland or abroad.[395]

Despite these assessments Finland sas only experienced one jihadist terror attack to date, the attack in Turku in 2017. On the morning of Friday, August 18th in 2017, Abderrahman Bouanane, a Moroccan asylum-seeker, wrote a manifesto at his friend’s flat in the town of Kaarina near Turku. He justified his upcoming act with jihadist ideology and objectives. He took two IKEA kitchen knives from the flat and cycled to Turku. After attending noon prayers at a local Mosque, he cycled to a park next to Turku Cathedral, a local landmark. There, at around 3 p.m., he read his manifesto aloud in Arabic, recording it on video on his mobile phone. The perpetrator released the manifesto video in few pro-IS Telegram channels and took a bus to the Turku Bus Station. He saw a conscript, a young man, wearing his military uniform and decided to stab him. However, he gave up his initial idea, and instead went to Market Square in

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[392] “Terrorist Threat in Finland Elevated.” Press Release, Suojelupoliisi (2017).
[393] See e.g. “Supo Year Book 2019” (2020), p. 12.
[394] “National Security Review 2018” (2018), p.1.
[395] “Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä” (2018), p. 23.

Downtown Turku, where he begun his attack around 4 o'clock in the afternoon.[396] The stabbings targeted mostly women, although it is not entirely certain whether this was a conscious choice or a matter of opportunity. Eight of the victims were women, two were male. The first man tried to aid the first stabbing victim, who died on scene, and the second tried to stop Bouanane's attack.[397]

Bouanane left Morocco around October 2015, first applying for an asylum in Germany under his real identity.[398] In May 2016, he arrived in Finland, and again applied for asylum. He gave the authorities a false name – Abderrahman Meckah – and a false age, choosing to apply for asylum as a minor as he reportedly thought this would increase his chances of getting a positive response to his application.[399] In the course of his stay in Finland, he begun to become more religious, and showing signs of radicalisation by late 2016. By early 2017 he had started showing clear signs of radicalisation, and he was reported to the immigration police. The report filed by immigration police stated that Bouanane had threatened to kill a fellow asylum-seeker on three separate occasions, and that he spoke of the IS in favourable terms, also claiming he considered joining the group.[400] A tip about him had also been given to Supo, but it lead to no concrete follow up, and he was not a counter-terrorism target individual before the attack.[401]

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[396] "Turku Stabbings on 18 August 2017." Safety Investigation Authority Investigation report 7/2018, Safety Investigation Authority (2018), p. 5, https://turvallisuustutkinta.fi/material/attachments/otkes/tutkintaselostukset/en/muutonnettomuudet/2017/oNRjHqmjf/P2017-01_Turku_EN.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[397] Ibid., p. 22.
[398] Ibid., p. 24.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid., p. 25.
[401] Pauli Juusela, "Suomeen on syntynyt jihadistinen alamaailma – Suojelupoliisi tarvitsee konkreettista näyttöä epäilysten tueksi." Kirkko ja Kaupunki, 30.8.2017.

During Ramadan 2017, Bouanane started showing further signs of radicalisation. He met a Finnish man of Uzbek descent – who possibly had connections to the IS – in a local mosque, whose religiosity made an impression on the Moroccan. The two formed a social relationship, speaking to each other on a few different occasions. The Finnish-Uzbek man sympathised with Bouanane's positive views of the IS, and allegedly "gave him advice and showed him websites and instant messenger services where he could find ISIS materials."[402] One of the reported topics of discussion was conducting a terrorist attack in Finland, another was travelling to the conflict zone to join the IS. Bouanane's views on the group hardened as a consequence of these interactions.[403] Three weeks before the attack, contact between the men stopped, reportedly due to lack of trust as the Finnish-Uzbek objected Bouanane's cannabis use.[404] On the night of August 17th, on the day of the IS-inspired vehicle attack in Barcelona, Spain,[405] Bouanane decided to carry out an attack, and sent farewell messages to his friends.[406]

To date, the stabbing in Turku in August 2017 has been the only incident in Finland that can be considered a jihadist terror attack. And while a small number of Finnish citizens have been arrested abroad for terrorism-related offences, this is also the only known case of an individual staying in Finland or a long-time resident of Finland carrying out a violent jihadist attack in a Western country.

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[402] "Turku Stabbings on 18 August 2017" (2018), p. 26.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] "Barcelona attack: 13 killed as van rams crowds in Las Ramblas." BBC, 17.8.2018.
[406] "Turku Stabbings on 18 August 2017" (2018), p. 26.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the evolving patterns of jihadist activism in Finland in the 2010s. As it has argued, there is much more information available on jihadi activism and activities compared to the previous decade and there has been much more activity to observe, leading to a significant increase in the number of terrorism offence-related criminal investigations.[407]. Jihadist activities in Finland during the 2010s have consistently increased in quantity, and some of this activism has been more serious in quality, reflecting the broader developments in the Finnish jihadi milieu. The rise in quality has been a significant development in particular, with Supo being aware of "more serious terrorism-related plans and projects in Finland" than before.[408] There is more of different kinds of activism, reflecting broader developments, e.g. online activism of various forms ranging from creation translation and dissemination of propaganda to recruitment and inciting or threatening violence. In Finland, there is now significant support activity for terrorism, especially relating fundraising and dissemination of ideology – latter especially online.[409] Additionally, there are now more individuals and small groups in Finland that have both the willingness and the ability to commit jihadist terror attacks, although only one attack has taken place to date.[410] However, the most notable and important form of jihadi activism in Finland has occurred abroad, namely foreign fighting in Syria and Iraq. Largely between 2012 and 2016, at least 80 adults and 30 minors from Finland made their way to Syria and Iraq, majority with the intent to join and live under the IS. These foreign fighters have, in the past eight years, taken part in different kinds of activities and activism that

[407] Härkönen (2019).
[408] "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018) p. 11.
[409] "National Security Review 2019" (2019), p. 3.
[410] See e.g. "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).

have impacted Finnish national security and jihadi milieu. It is to this phenomenon that this thesis now turns its attention.

Chapter 5: Jihadist activism abroad – Finnish foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, 2012–2020

This chapter examines the foreign fighter mobilisation from Finland to Syria and Iraq. Specifically, it looks at the key characteristics of the contingent, the contingent members' activities in the conflict zone, the current status on the Finnish contingent, and the impact and potential impacts of the foreign fighter mobilisation, and the returnees on jihadism in Finland in particular. The chapter argues that the Finnish foreign fighters constitute a heterogenous group, reflecting the broader developments within the Finnish jihadi milieu. Additionally, it argues that foreign fighters have taken many roles in the region, and participated in a broad range of activities, some of which have impacted or have the potential to impact the Finnish jihadi milieu and the country's national security in the future. And lastly, the chapter concludes by noting that the foreign fighting mobilisation, and particularly the returnees, has the potential to further impact the developmental trajectory of jihadism in Finland in the coming decade.

Foreign fighting has been by far the most visible and prominent form of jihadist activism in Finland in the 2010s, reflecting broader trends in Europe. At least 5000 foreign fighters from Europe – perhaps as many as 7000[411] – have travelled to Syria and Iraq, majority with the intent

[411] Nesser (2019).

of joining the IS and living in its self-proclaimed caliphate.[412]. According to the most precise estimations (from 2018), over 80 adult individuals and 30 minors from Finland have been confirmed to have travelled to Syria and Iraq.[413] While the size of the Finnish mobilisation is at best average when compared to other European countries,[414] what is noteworthy that relative to Muslim population size – estimated approximately 60 000 in 2015[415] - no other western country has experienced more departures to the conflict zone.[416] While motivations of Finnish foreign fighters for travelling to the conflict zone have varied, especially early on in the mobilisation,[417] most have sought to join jihadist groups, [418] predominantly IS.[419]

There is still not enough information about the Finnish foreign fighter contingent to allow for a similar and detailed analysis – aided by the respective authors' access to data gathered by various governmental authorities in their countries – as has been conducted with for example Swedish or Italian foreign fighter contingents.[420] What has identification and data collection somewhat challenging is that much of the information provided in the media is heavily anonymised, at

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[412] "RAN MANUAL: Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families." Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence (2017), p. 6, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[413] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 24.
[414] See e.g. Bibi van Ginkel & Eva Entenmann (eds.), "The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies." International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, ICCT Research Paper (2016), https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[415] "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016" (2015), p. 2.
[416] Benmelech & Klor (2020). See also, "Supo confirms suicide bombing by Finnish citizen in Iraq." YLE News, 22.11.2016.
[417] See e.g. Saarinen (2014).
[418] In 2015, Supo disclosed that approximately 75 percent of the individuals identified by them (more than 50 persons) had attempted to join jihadist groups. "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016" (2015).
[419] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[420] Gustafsson & Ranstorp (2017); Marone & Vidino (2019).

times to the point of excluding important information – particularly regarding biographical information. Indeed, in the cases of most individual foreign fighters, detailed biographical data has remained elusive, especially in those cases where social media accounts or broader online footprint could not be identified by the author. An additional hurdle has been that the contingent appears to be very diverse. Some individuals, small groups and broader networks within the contingent were relatively easy to identify, e.g. through snowball sampling method on social media, whereas other individuals, groups and likely networks have remained elusive.

There is, however, enough information available on the key characteristics of the contingent (gender, ethnicity, age, citizenship, for instance) to provide a general overview, although the provided data is partial at best. Some characteristics with potential relevance for the analysis – including educational and employment histories, in addition to criminal records – are missing entirely. Knowledge gaps make a detailed analysis of the causes of radicalisation and pathways to jihadist activism on a micro-level practically impossible without access to additional data. This issue is made all the more acute by the fact that very few foreign fighters have been the targets of criminal investigations, and even fewer have been formally charged of terrorism-related or other offences related to their travel to Syria and Iraq. To date, the author is aware of only four individuals who have been charged related to their actions concerning foreign fighting, none of whom have been found guilty of terrorist offences by December 2020.

However, unlike is the case with domestic extremists, there is much more information available on individual foreign fighters, particularly by Finnish and and the foreign fighters themselves through social media accounts. There is still a significant part of the contingent that has not been

identified, which puts in question the representativeness of the sample (45 out of 80-96 adults) and its subsequent analysis. Further, while information about roles and activities in Syria and Iraq is relatively limited, there is enough data available to explore the broad range of various roles and activities of Finnish foreign fighters in the conflict zone, especially those who have joined or lived under the IS. In terms of the current status of various members of the contingent, there has been more data from 2019 onwards as many have been detained by SDF – predominantly in al-Hol camp – where Finnish investigative journalists have been given access to interview them. However, vast majority of this information is about Finnish women in the area, whereas new information about the status and whereabouts of Finnish men in the conflict zone has been nearly non-existent.

The key characteristics of the Finnish foreign fighter contingent

To date, Finnish authorities have identified more than eighty individuals and thirty minors, who have travelled to the conflict zone.[421] Additionally, an unknown number of children, likely at least two dozen, have been born to Finnish or Finland-originated women in the conflict zone.[422] The actual number is likely higher as not all the cases – particularly those who may have travelled to the conflict zone after 2016 - may have come to the attention of the authorities, as has been acknowledged by the Ministry of Interior.[423] According to a senior Supo researcher

[421] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 24.
[422] See e.g. Sami Sillanpää, "11 naista ja heidän lapsensa." Helsingin Sanomat Sunnuntailiite, 13.12.2019.
[423] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 24.

Pekka Hiltunen, the number could be approximately 10-20 percent higher.[424] Out of these eighty to approximately ninety-six adults, the author has partly or fully identified forty-five different individuals.

Ethnicity and citizenship

In terms of ethnic background, the Finnish contingent appears very heterogeneous, reflecting the multi-ethnic character of Finland's Muslim population, the increasing ethnic variance within the Finnish jihadi milieu, and the emergence of multi-ethnic jihadist networks in Finland. According to a report published in 2015 by the Ministry of the Interior, there were people from at least nineteen different ethnic groups among the seventy individuals that had left Finland for the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq by that time. Most of them had, however, been born in Finland or lived in the country for longer periods of time as a total of 62 percent of them were Finnish citizens.[425] Some of the Finland-originated foreign fighters only lived in the country for relatively short period before travelling, which means that they are not particularly relevant to the phenomenon from the Finnish perspective.[426]

Finnish converts (13), Somalis (7), and Kurds (5) and Bengalis (3) were the most represented ethnic groups among 45 people identified by the author. The presence of 13 converts is increased to 21 when including Finnish converts with mixed parents – often a Finnish mother and a

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[424] Liisa Haapanen, "Supon erikoistutkija: Konfliktialueelle lähteneiden määrä voi olla 10-20 prosenttia suurempi kuin lähtijöitä on tunnistettu. YLE Uutiset, 23.1.2018.
[425] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2/2015." (2015), p. 16.
[426] For instance, a radicalised Turkish exchange student Rashid Tugral moved to Finland in August 2014 and left for Syria in January 2015. Juntti (2017); "Journey to ISIS: From Astrophysics to Shell-Shocked Islamist Fighter" (2015).

Muslim father, who had moved to the country from abroad.[427] This overrepresentation of converts among Finnish foreign fighters reflects broader trends in Europe, but it puts the relative representation of converts within foreign fighter contingents from various countries among the highest in Europe.[428] This overrepresentation is likely caused by the long-term entrenchment of the phenomenon within Finland's small convert population,[429] both among male and female converts forming groups and networks by the latter half of the previous decade.

Majority of the identified Kurdish individuals are connected to the Finnish Rawti Shax cell, reflecting the presence, albeit in limited form, of transnational jihadist networks in Finland. At least 3 of its members in Finland travelled to Syria and Iraq, including two of its former leaders.[430] At least two other Iraqi Kurdish individuals within the contingent identified by the author had at least direct contacts with Finnish Rawti Shax members.

In the case of the Somalis travelling to Syria and Iraq, most of the foreign fighters of Somali descent appear to have come interested through following the conflict in Syria and the IS.[431] There is, however, at least one exception. One of the identified Somalis is the main defendant in

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[427] Converts with mixed heritage often have Finnish mothers as the majority of Finnish converts to Islam are female.
[428] See e.g. Bart Schuurman, Peter Grol & Scott Flower, "Converts and Islamist Terrorism: An Introduction." International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, ICCT Policy Brief (2016), p. 9, https://www.icct.nl/app/uploads/2016/06/ICCT-Schuurman-Grol-Flower-Converts-June-2016.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[429] While there are no official statistics, the total number of converts in Finland was estimated less than a thousand in 2007. See e.g. Kristiina Kouros, "Suomessa asuvien muslimien suhtautumisesta perhearvoihin ja perhelainsäädäntöön." Ihmisoikeusliitto ry:n selvitys, Ihmisoikeusliitto (2007) , p. 10, https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Suomessa_asuvien_muslimien_suhtautumisesta_perhearvoihin_ja_perhelainsaadantoon_IOL_2007.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[430] Rigatelli (2016).
[431] Sami Metelinen, "Suomen somalialaisilla yhteyksiä ISIS:in." Verkkouutiset.fi, 29.8.2014.

the Al-Shabaab trial. He travelled to Syria with his Finnish convert wife and their children sometime after spring 2015, in the middle of the appeals process arising from the Al-Shabaab related trial.[432]

Age and minors

Reports published by the authorities give an idea about the composition of the contingent. In terms age, the situation appears to be largely similar to other countries. According to Supo, the adult foreign fighters are aged between 18 and 50 years. The largest individual age group are those, who were between 21 and 25 years of age when they travelled.

Additionally, about 30 minors from Finland have also ended up in the region, either with their mothers (or both parents) or as the result of being kidnapped by one of their parents. Some of these minors have reached adulthood in the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. It is estimated that the women that have travelled from Finland to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq may have given birth to up to a dozen children,[433] although the actual number is closer to 30 if not more.[434]

Gender

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[432] Rigatelli (2017).
[433] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 27.
[434] Sillanpää (2019).

While majority of the Finnish foreign fighter contingent are men, women comprise more than 20 percent of the people known by the authorities to have left for the area.[435] Even though the caliphate created by IS has been particularly appealing to Western female foreign fighters, a small number of Finnish women already had travelled before its declaration in summer 2014. First cases known to the author occurred in 2012, when at least two female converts travelled independently to the conflict zone, the first with her husband,[436] and the second alone.[437] The next cases occurred early 2013 when at least two Somali women travelled to the conflict zone, independently from one another, at least the latter together with her husband.[438] Of the approximately twenty Finland-originated women who have been confirmed to have travelled to the conflict zone, majority are either ethnic converts (with two Finnish parents) or Finnish Somalis. Indeed, converts are even more overrepresented among women than men.[439] A large proportion of the women travelled with their husbands, although some have also made the trip alone, and got married after arrival. In one case, women in two close families played a key role in their adult sons deciding to travel to the conflict zone and join IS.

Geography

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[435] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 27.
[436] See e.g. Nuno Tiago Pinto, "Nero Saraiva, o mais procurado terrorista português." Sabado, 29.8.2019.
[437] Hanna Vaittinen, "Kaksi orpolasta saapui Suomeen al-Holin leiriltä – vanhemmat kuolivat sota-alueella." MTV3, 23.12.2019.
[438] Anu Nousiainen, "Espoosta pyhään sotaan – islamistinuoret kertovat." Helsingin Sanomat, 20.10.2014.
[439] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 27.

The people leaving for the conflict areas mainly come from the large cities in Southern and Western Finland (e.g. from Turku), particularly from the greater Helsinki region (Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa). which is not surprising because most of Finland's Muslims (and most of the individuals and networks active within the Finnish jihadi milieu) also live in these cities. A handful of people have also travelled to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq from small municipalities throughout Finland, reflecting the milieu's evolution during the 2010s. Some of the individuals residing in smaller municipalities had been in contact with extremists or networks in larger cities, and similar contacts existed between individuals in different larger cities as well.

Finnish foreign fighters' activities in Syria and Iraq

What have the individuals travelling from Finland been doing in Syria and Iraq? Determining this has been difficult, even for the authorities as the conflict zone is inherently a chaotic place, access to information is limited, and there is a collapse of local authority in the areas where fighting takes place. However, Syria has been the most socially mediated civil war in history, and an "exceptional amount of what the outside world knows—or thinks it knows" about the conflict has come from material circulated through social networks online.[440] Indeed, many foreign fighters from Europe, have as active on the virtual battlefield as they have been in the actual battlefield. Various social media platforms and instant messaging platforms have been key avenues for their various activities, also for women whose opportunities for participating jihadist activity in the conflict zone were largely confined to their domiciles. This has also been the case

[440] See e.g. Marc Lynch, Deen Freelon & Sean Aday, "Blogs and Bullets III: Syria's Socially Mediated Civil War." United States Institute of Peace (2014), p.1, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW91-Syrias%20Socially%20Mediated%20Civil%20War.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

for most of the Finnish foreign fighters,[441] whose accounts on various social media platforms and parts of their broader online footprint the author has been able to identify and examine. Based on openly available data, it is possible to identify and examine a broad range of activities in which Finnish jihadists in the conflict zone have participated, some of which have had national security implications for Finland.

Groups

One of the most important acts of a foreign fighter after arriving to a conflict zone is to join an armed group and live under its control. According to the authorities is the vast majority – several dozens, in fact - have joined IS and lived under its self-declared Caliphate.[442] However, others have joined smaller groups, particularly early on in the mobilisation. These groups include Kataib al-Muhajirin (KaM) and its subsequent form Jaish al-Muhajirin wal-Ansar (JAMWA), Katibat Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaa, Jabhat al-Nusra, and its eventual offshoot Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

One of the first destinations for Finnish foreign fighters was KaM, a group composed of a mix of foreign fighters in Syria, apparently led by the Georgian Abu Omar al-Shishani.[443] and its subsequent form JAMWA.[444] The first reported Finnish foreign fighter to join the group was Abu Salamah al-Finland. He was a Finnish-Namibian convert, born around 1993, who had

[441] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 83.
[442] "Väkivaltaisen ektremismin tilannekatsaus 2020: Arvio väkivaltaisen ektremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2019 ja kehityksen suunta" (2020), p. 24.
[443] Raffaello Pantucci, "The British Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria." CTC Sentinel, Volume 7 Issue 5 (2014).
[444] See e.g. Sipilä (2014).

travelled to Syria (via Turkey) in late 2012[445] together with his Finnish convert wife, Umm Salamah al-Finlandi,[446] and reportedly joined the group with "some other Finnish citizens."[447] He had a significant criminal record, including convictions from petty thievery, frauds, and drug-related crimes. He was also convicted reportedly of rape and assault. According to his friend, he converted and radicalised in prison.[448] Before leaving for Syria, he had reportedly finished compulsory military service in Finland, and expressed his desire to study Islam abroad.[449] In an account that Umm Salamah told in a Muslim discussion forum in August 2014 under a nom de plume *Greenbird*, they came to Syria together with the intent of participating in the jihad there and joined the group. She made no mentions about additional Finnish citizens who may have joined the group. He was reportedly the first Finnish foreign fighter to die in Syria, killed in battle between KaM and Hezbollah in June 2013.

Another, separate early destination was Jabhat al-Nusra. At least two Finnish Somalis were reported to have joined the group. The first was Abu Mansour al-Somali, a young Finnish-Somali man. He had moved to Finland from Somalia with his family in 1993, when he was two years old. He grew up in the city of Espoo near Helsinki. He had shown signs of radicalisation prior leaving for Syria in December 2012.[450] After arriving in the conflict zone, he reportedly joined Jabhat al-Nusra.[451]

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[445] Another account states that Abu and Umm Salamah left for Syria few months earlier, in summer 2012. Sami Sillanpää, "Isis-vaimo ja sen mies." Helsingin Sanomat Sunnuntailiite, 31.8.2019b.
[446] Pinto (2019).
[447] However, the author has been unable to find any information, even in criminal investigation documents, about possible Finnish citizens, who joined the group the same time as Abu Salamah. "TS: Finnish volunteer killed in Syrian conflict." YLE News, 1.8.2014.
[448] Vaittinen (2019).
[449] "TS: Finnish volunteer killed in Syrian conflict" (2014).
[450] Tommi Nieminen, "Espoolainen nuori mies lähti salaa Syyrian sotaan." Helsingin Sanomat, 9.6.2013.
[451] Nousiainen (2014).

The second reported Finnish foreign fighter was Abu Shuayb al-Somali, who would later attract considerable attention after appearing and speaking fluent Finnish in an IS propaganda video in August 2014. He was born in Finland in 1991, a year after his parents had moved to Finland. According to his father, Abu Shuayb started to show signs of radicalisation around 2010,[452] although his father had lived in Somaliland since 2000 while his family lived in Espoo, Finland. However, by 2011-2012 he had reportedly exhibited clear signs of increased religiosity, and signs of radicalisation by early 2013.[453] Before leaving to Syria, he may have tried to join al-Shabaab in a prior trip to Somalia with his wife in 2013.[454] There have also been suspicions that the two may have tried to travel to Syria or to Yemen (presumably to join AQAP) from there.[455] These suspicions reportedly prompted an arrest by the Somali authorities,[456] allegedly at the behest of his father, a notable Somaliland politician.[457] The couple were returned to Finland, and months later they left the country for Syria.[458] The couple was allegedly invited by Abu Shuayb's cousin, who had travelled to Syria in late 2012.[459] Along with many of JaN's foreign fighters after its dispute with the IS begun,[460] the trio would later move to join and live under the IS.[461]

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[452] Sara Rigatelli & Kyösti Hagert, "Suomalainen somalipoliitikko: Isiksen jihadisti-videolla puhuu poikani." YLE Uutiset, 6.8.2014.
[453] Jani Parkkari, "Espoolaisnuoresta kiihkeä uskonsoturi – Mitä tapahtui "Hugelle"?" Iltalehti, 7.8.2014.
[454] Antero Eerola, "Espoossa vuosia asunut poliitikko Faisal Ali Warabe menetti poikansa ISIS:lle: "Kehotan somalivanhempia seuraamaan lapsiaan internetissä – ja sitä, miten paljon he ovat moskeijassa"." Seura, 17.12.2018.
[455] Harun Maruf & Barkhad Kariye, "Somali Jihadist Killed in Syria." VOA News, 14.1.2018.
[456] "Somalia: Son of Somaliland Politician Arrested on Terrorism Charges." allAfrica.com, 17.2.2013.
[457] "Father of Finnish jihadi: "Deceased extremist cousin may have radicalized my son"." YLE News, 12.8.2014.
[458] Nousiainen (2014).
[459] Ibid.
[460] Charles Lister, "Profiling Jabhat al-Nusra." The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper No 24, Brookings Institution (2016), p. 13, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/iwr_20160728_profiling_nusra.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[461] Nousiainen (2014).

Abu Mansour was later the third reported Finnish foreign fighter casualty, having died in June, 2014 whilst on guard duty. Abu Shuayb allegedly perish in a coalition airstrike in Syria on December 29th, 2017.[462] His wife, Umm Shuayb, survived the fall of the IS' self-declared Caliphate, al-Hol camp, and returned to Finland in the summer of 2020.[463]

There are no other known cases of Finnish foreign fighters in Jabhat al-Nusra, although it is certainly plausible that more foreign fighters, who had travelled to the conflict zone, between late 2012 and early 2013 in particular, joined the group. However, according to information that spread on Twitter in 2018, at least one Finland-originated Somali member of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, an offshoot of an offshoot of Jabhat al-Nusra, was reportedly killed in an assassination by. It is not clear when he travelled to the conflict zone, and which other groups he had possibly joined prior to fighting for HTS.

Roles and activities

Determining what roles Finnish foreign fighters have had in their respective armed groups, or what kinds of activism they have participated in the conflict zone is extremely challenging, even for the authorities. Based on publicly available information most of them (though not all) have joined jihadist groups, and especially IS as has been stated earlier. However, this does not say much about what kind of activities they have participated in, as the IS has likely provided a broad range of opportunities for jihadist activism, from online proselytising and recruitment to

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[462] "Exclusive to Goobjoog News: Son of Ali Waraabe, an ISIS member killed in Syria." Goobjoog News, 14.1.2018.
[463] Heini Kilpamäki, "Kolme Isis-vaimoa palasi Suomeen – tällaisia he ovat." Iltalehti, 2.6.2020.

fighting and participating in "martyrdom operations", and from indoctrination to moral policing. Indeed, foreign fighters can, and often do, engage in various different tasks, depending for instance on their own skillsets, and the needs and priorities of the groups they have joined.[464]

Fighting

According to official reports, a large proportion of those travelling from Finland to the region have sought to take part in violent activities in the ranks of the jihadist groups. In a report in 2015, Supo stated that approximately 75% of the individuals it had identified by then (more than 50 individuals) had attempted to take part in jihadist fighting.[465] The examples mentioned here are by no means exhaustive. As described earlier, these included, among others, Abu Salamah al-Finlandi, who fought in KaM's ranks, and Somali cousins Abu Mansour al-Somali and Abu Shuayb al-Somali, who fought for Jabhat al-Nusra, and later the IS. Other noteworthy cases include Abu Anas al-Finlandi, Abu Muhajir al-Kurdi, Abu Musa al-Bengali, and Abu Ismail al-Bengali.

Abdullah Anas was a Finnish convert and a member of the extremist Roihuvuori clique who travelled to Syria in 2013. He was a former anarchist from Espoo in the greater Helsinki region, who had converted to Islam in 2012. He became both a regular visitor in the Roihuvuori mosque, and a peripheral member of its extremist clique. Before travelling to Syria, he – together with other members of the clique – participated in significant valued added tax and other frauds. He

[464] Vera Mironova, "From Freedom Fighters to Jihadists: Human Resources of Non-State Armed Groups." New York: Oxford University Press (2019), p. 291.
[465] "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016" (2015).

considered it as *ghanima*, legitimate war loot from the IS' infidel enemies. After arriving in Syria, he initially joined and fought for KaM – reportedly forming a close relationship with a well-known Portuguese IS fighter Nero Saraiva, who at the time was the successor of Abu Salamah as the head of the group's European foreign fighters.[466] He later joined the IS – together with many of the group's European foreign fighters, including Saraiva. He was reportedly killed in the fighting between the IS and the Free Syrian Army in early 2014.[467]

Abu Muhajir al-Kurdi, real name Sadiq Qadir Karim, was reportedly the former leader of Rawti Shax's Finnish branch and a key activist since at least early 2013, as described earlier.[468] According to reports in the Norwegian press, he initially met Krekar in 2012.[469] In mid-2013, he expressed his desire to travel to Syria to the the network's leadership, leaving Finland and joining IS in March, 2014.[470] He reportedly died fighting in the ranks of IS in late 2014, apparently in Syria.[471] Not much is known about him or his life in Finland before that. Reportedly he was born in 1980 – unclear where – and had a wife and children. He resided in Espoo, near Helsinki before travelling to Syria.

Further, there are two Bangladeshi friends Abu Musa al-Bengali, and Abu Ismail al-Bengali, both of whom fought for the IS and died in its ranks.[472] According to reports from Bangladesh newspaper Dhaka Tribune, Abu Ismail al-Bengali is Taz Rahman. He was born and raised in a

[466] On Nero Saraiva, who also had two Finnish wives in the conflict zone, see Pinto (2019).
[467] Viljakainen (2019).
[468] Persen et al. (2019).
[469] Olsson, Zondag & Grafsrønningen (2015).
[470] Rigatelli (2016).
[471] Ibid.
[472] See e.g. "Latest Bangladeshi Is fighter killed in Iraq is Taz Rahman." Dhaka Tribune, 12.5.2017.

higher-middle class family living in Dhaka, before moving to Cyprus and spending a decade there., reportedly having a “party-loving” lifestyle. In 2011, he moved to Finland in with his Latvian wife, separating months later.[473] After separation from his Latvian wife, Taz met Dr Abdul Mannan, imam of a mosque in Oulu in northern Finland. He reportedly became influenced by Mannan's “radical” religious views,[474] and lated married his daughter.[475] According to a Swedish-Bangladeshi investigative reporter Tasneem Khalil, Taz “was active in the Finnish jihadi/Islamist scene until 2013/2014 before migrating to Syria.”[476] Before travelling to Syria, Taz briefly lived in Helsinki, working in a Halal butcher shop together with another Bangladeshi, Abu Musa, whom he befriended. According to documents allegedly leaked from the IS, Rahman joined the group in July 2014 and went to Syria with his wife, the imam's daughter.[477] However, he appears to have temporarily returned to Finland, as he was reported there in January 2015,[478] before leaving again in early 2015.[479] In May 2017 the group announced his death and published a photo of him, stating he had worked as physical therapist for the group.[480]

Abu Musa al-Bengali (whose other kunya was Muhammad al-Muhajir) was a Bangladeshi foreign fighter who lived briefly in Finland before leaving for Syria. He moved to Finland around 2012 in order to pursue studies in computer science Centria University of Applied

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[473] Nuruzzaman Labu, “How the tattooed, party-loving Taz became Abu Ismail al-Bengali.” Dhaka Tribune, 18.5.2017.
[474] “Radical” in this context appears to refer to his reported support of the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami party in Bangladesh.
[475] Labu (2017); “Latest Bangladeshi IS fighter killed in Iraq is Taz Rahman” (2017); “MOT: Oulu Imam’s son-in-law and business partner died in Isis ranks.” YLE News, 1.4.2019.
[476] “Latest Bangladeshi IS fighter killed in Iraq is Taz Rahman”(2017).
[477] “MOT: Oulu Imam’s son-in-law and business partner died in Isis ranks” (2019).
[478] “Latest Bangladeshi IS fighter killed in Iraq is Taz Rahman” (2017).
[479] Labu (2017).
[480] “MOT: Oulu Imam’s son-in-law and business partner died in Isis ranks” (2019).

Science in Kokkola in western Finland.[481] He probably only lived in Finland about two years, first in Kokkola to pursue his studies, and later in the Helsinki region after dropping out from Centria) before travelling to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq somewhere between July and August 2014.[482] In August, he posted an update on his Facebook account, simply stating: "Started working as Soldier at Islamic State".[483] Before migrating to Syria, he too was too reportedly a part of the same pro-Jamaat Islamist community based in the Helsinki region to which Taz Rahman belonged. In early 2015, a Finnish convert, who later become his wife travelled to Syria, travelled to Syria and Iraq. It is not clear whether he was in contact with her before she travelled or impacted her decision to leave.[484] Abu Musa is reported to have been killed in the conflict zone.[485] His widow was one of the Finnish women who resided in al-Hol camp in 2019-2020. It is unclear whether she is among those who managed to escape the camp and return to Finland.

Participating in suicide attacks

In the official documents about its foreign fighters confiscated from IS, five Finnish IS fighters were mentioned, but none had wished to volunteer to become suicide attackers.[486] However, at least one Finnish citizen has been reported to have participated in an IS suicide attacl. In September 2015, Abu Hurairah al-Finlandi – A twenty-something Finnish-Pakistani foreign

[481] "Samir från Finland struder nu för IS." Svenska YLE, 26.4.2015.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Sara Rigatelli, "Suomi taas esillä Isisin propagandassa – yhtenä syynä suomalaistaustaiset Isis-johtajat." YLE Uutiset, 10.3.2017.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Sami Sillanpää "Lapsista emme luovu." Helsing Sanomat Sunnuntailiite, 15.12.2019.
[486] Rigatelli (2016).

fighter from the city of Pori on Southwestern Finland, who had travelled to Syria in September, 2014[487] – reportedly carried out a suicide attack by driving an armoured vehicle laden with explosives to an army barracks near Baiji, Iraq.[488] Abu Hurairah's reported attack, if true, is the known first suicide attack by a Finnish jihadist.[489]

Providing instruction or terrorist training

In Finland every male citizen over 18 years of age has a duty to serve the country as conscript, either through military or civil service, it is highly likely that least some of the adult male foreign fighters with Finnish citizenships had served in the military before travelling to Syria. For women, military service is voluntary. There is data to suggest at least some of the Finnish foreign fighters had military training.[490] Those individuals would have likely been valuable as fighters, but also potentially instructors and trainers for fresh recruits without similar experiences or various skillsets they had acquired while in the Finnish Defence Forces. As noted by Chelsea Daymon, Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn and David Malet, "[s]uch expertise could also explain why certain individuals rise within the ranks of those groups." Indeed, some of the Finnish jihadists who have joined the IS have been estimated rise in prominent status within the group.[491]

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[487] Harri Aalto, "Porilaisen Isis-taistelijan kohtalo jäi mysteeriksi – Supo ei kerro "al-Finlandista"." Aamulehti, 22.11.2016; Jari Pelkonen, "SK:Porilaisnuorukainen kertoo taistelevansa Isisin riveissä Syyriassa." YLE Uutiset, 13.10.2014; Sara Rigatelli, "Itsemurhaiskijäksi arvellun Abu Hurairahin isä: Poikani olisi helppo aivopestä." YLE Uutiset, 14.9.2015.
[488] Sara Rigatelli, "Isis väittää suomalaisen tehneen itsemurhaiskun Irakissa." YLE Uutiset, 13.9.2015.
[489] Heidi Vaalisto, "Supo: Porilaismies voi olla ensimmäinen suomalainen ISIS-itsemurhaiskijä." Ilta-sanomat, 14.9.2015.
[490] See e.g. Tero Karjalainen, "Suomen armeijan käyneitä reserviläisiä sotii Syyriassa." Ilta-sanomat, 7.9.2014; Rigatelli (2015b); Tomi Tuomi, "Abu Hurairah al-Finlandi." Satakunnan Kansa, 30.12.2019.
[491] Päivi Happonen, Mikko Leppänen & Heidi Sullström, "Supo: Suomesta lähteneitä taistelijoita noussut korkeaan asemaan Isisissä." YLE Uutiset, 22.11.2016.

One of the foreign fighters who had completed their military service before departing to Syria was Abu Salamah al-Finlandi. It may have been one of the contributing factors why he reportedly became the KaM's leader for European foreign fighters,[492] and he likely provided the fresh recruits that joined the group some military training, as at least those from Europe often tended to lack these skills. Additionally, one of the alleged key individuals in the Roihuvuori clique – who had served in the military both in Finland and abroad – planned a training schedule for the group's recruits and provided it to the group, also downloading and taking with him several military instruction manuals to the conflict zone on his laptop – which he stated was freely used by the group's members. He has, however, denied being the group's member or providing training for its other members – despite being ask to by Abu Salamah's successor Nero Saraiva. Providing terrorist training was a terrorist offence of which he was accused, and subsequently found not guilty.

Radicalising, recruiting, and facilitating

A small number of Finnish foreign fighters have also functioned as radicalisers, recruiters, and facilitators. More generally, Supo has noted the existence of these activities vis-à-vis returnees from the conflict zone and those that travelled between Finland and the conflict zone. For instance, in June 2014 a Sup official stated that the organisation was aware of foreign fighters shuttling between Finland and the conflict zone. And those who had had a "positive experience" in the conflict zone, would seek to recruit new foreign fighters. Additionally, he stated that the

[492] Pinto (2019).

organisation had knowledge of Finnish returnees, who have – upon returning to Finland – facilitated contact individuals to eager extremists at home.[493]

However, foreign fighters appear to have participated in similar activities in the conflict zone. These have included informal recruitment through either indirectly inspiring and encouraging individuals to travel to the conflict zone through creating pro-IS content online. More formal forms of radicalisation, recruitment and facilitation have likely occurred in closed environments, e.g. private messages on various social media platforms and instant messaging services, reflecting broader trends in recruitment of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq[494] - although these kinds of activities are naturally impossible to research without access to transcripts, e.g. from criminal investigations. In the context of Finnish foreign fighters, these peer-to-peer radicalisation and recruitment efforts have mostly occurred within pre-existing social networks. Some examples of such activity are described below, although it is exceedingly difficult to form a comprehensive and detailed picture as these communications have occurred in fora to which researchers lack access.

Abu Mansour, who has already been discussed above reportedly invited his cousin Abu Shu'ayb and his wife, Umm Shu'ayb, to Syria, and the couple travelled to the country in early 2013.[495] As the two were reportedly under suspicion of trying to travel to a conflict zone – Syria or Yemen – or joining al-Shabaab in Somalia, Abu Mansour's activity can be perceived as facilitation rather

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[493] Nieminen (2014).
[494] See e.g. J.M. Berger, "Tailored Online Interventions: The Islamic State's Recruitment Strategy." CTC Sentinel, Volume 8 Issue 10 (2015).
[495] Nousiainen (2014).

than recruitment. In other words, he facilitated access to an eager domestic extremist to an armed group, Jabhat al-Nusra, operating in Syria.

Abu Mansour was not the only facilitator among the Finnish foreign fighter contingent. According to the National Bureau of Investigation's criminal investigation records, previously mentioned Abu Salamah al-Finlandi also served as a facilitator, and possibly also a recruiter, for a group of extremist converts from the Roihuvuori mosque. In fact, in his role of leader of the group's European foreign fighters, [496] one of his likely responsibilities was recruitment of European foreign fighters. Two members of this clique had visited Syria on an "exploratory" trip in earlier in 2012, and likely had decided to join the group and bring together like-minded recruits.[497] However, the Finnish-Namibian – reportedly the leader of KaM's European foreign fighters – was killed in a battle between the group and its adversary in June 2013,[498] while several members the Roihuvuori clique were en route to the conflict zone.

The group – reportedly beset by social friction and disputes after the death of their contact person in Syria – scattered,[499] and likely impacted at least some of the individuals' plans to become foreign fighters. Except for the convert Abu Anas, who died in Syria fighting for the IS in early 2014, it is unclear whether this group has been involved in violent activism in the region. One of the two returned while the other was reportedly residing in Turkey in late 2020. One member of

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[496] Pinto (2019).
[497] Henri Forss, "Misstänkta huvudmannen: Jag förnekar inte en del galenskap, men terrorist är jag inte." Huvudstadsbladet, 5.12.2017.
[498] Heikki Kauhanen, "Suomalainen kaatui Syyriassa – uusia lähtijöitä kymmenittäin." Turun Sanomat, 1.8.2013.
[499] Mäkinen (2017); Anna Nuutinen et al., "KRP tutkii terroririkoksia: Tällaisia ovat neljä epäiltyä miestä." Ilta-sanomat, 2.11.2016.

the clique changed his mind in Turkey and returned to Finland before entering Syria. Another one temporarily joined a different group, Katibat Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaa, expressing interest in taking part in the group's fundraising and propaganda activities, before similarly returning to Finland shortly thereafter. The self-professed leader of the group and one other individual remained close to the KaM, but both have denied membership despite some circumstantial evidence, which suggests otherwise – at least on the membership.

It is likely that both Abu and Umm Salamah also served indirectly impacted the Finnish mobilisation, acting as role models and sources of inspiration to members of their immediate social circles, who shared similar views and likely were interested in the conflict in Syria and the IS. It is likely that Abu Salamah's example influence his younger brother, a Finnish-Namibian convert Abu Muusa al-Finlandi and his Finnish convert wife to travel to Syria and Iraq with their children in 2015 to join and live under the IS – two years after his brother had been killed. Similarly to his brother, Abu Muusa is reported to have been killed the conflict zone. The status and whereabouts of his widow and their children are unknown.

Additionally, Abu Muhajir al-Kurdi, the reported head of the Finnish Rawti Shax branch, facilitated at least two other foreign fighters from Finland to join the IS, and one other from Switzerland whilst also partly financing his travel to the conflict zone.[500] It is possible that he would have recruited more members of the cell – or individuals directly or indirectly connected to it – to fight in Syria while still in Finland and from the conflict zone until he was killed in December 2014.

[500] Persen et al. (2019).

At least three Finnish Somali foreign fighters have appeared in IS propaganda videos. One of these only mentioned Finland, [501] and the other targeted the country, encouraging local Muslims to move to the Caliphate.[502] In a video titled *Islamic State Caliphate Eid Greetings from the Land of Khilafah* from August 2014, a Finnish IS foreign fighter – Abu Shuayb al-Somali – encouraged Muslims from western countries – including Finland – to come and live under the caliphate and join the group. As argued by Finnish researchers Leena Malkki & Matti Pohjonen, the video is unique "in the sense that a man with a Somali background using the fighter name Abu Shuayb al-Somali talks directly to the audience in Finnish on it."[503]

Making threats and inciting violence

While some IS videos have framed Finland within its camp of enemies, not many Finnish foreign fighters have made explicit threats that targeted Finland, notable targets within Finland, or Finnish

Public figures. One exception is Abu Hurairah al-Finlandi, who reportedly participated in a suicide attack in Baiji, Iraq in September 2015. Between 2014 and 2015 (before his death), he

[501] One additional Finnish Somali foreign fighter appeared on an IS video targeting Somalia and al-Shabaab fighters.
[502] In an Arabic-language video recording published in late 2013, which was probably made somewhere in Syria earlier that year, an individual named Abu Mansour was being interviewed by a local Syrian. Abu Mansour stated was from Finland, and explained to the audience in what appeared to be a dawah event that he had come to the area to help establish the Caliphate. Jukka Huusko, "Suomalaiseksi väitetty mies esiintyy äärijärjestö ISISin tv-ohjelmassa", Helsingin Sanomat 14.6.2014.
[503] Malkki & Pohjonen, p. 51.

sent a number of threatening online messages to individuals including notable Finns Party members and to the Finnish government.[504]

The varied activities of Finnish female foreign fighters

As stated by Gina Vale, a researcher focusing on women in the Islamic State, “[w]ithin the territorial boundaries of the Islamic State’s (IS) ‘caliphate’, women were largely confined to the domestic sphere. Their roles centred on support to militant husbands and the ideological upbringing of children.”[505] While this is likely true in at least some of the cases, the motivations, roles and activities of Western – and Finnish – women who have joined IS are more varied than simply being a wife and a mother.[506] As argued by Erin Saltman and Melanie Smith, women have also had “crucial roles in propaganda dissemination and recruitment of more women online, both directly and indirectly.”[507] This appears to be the case with Finnish women, who have travelled to the conflict zone and lived under the IS.

Wives and mothers

[504] Sara Rigatelli, “Perussuomalaisten nettiuhkaaja on todennäköisesti porilainen Isis-taistelija.” YLE Uutiset, 9.1.2015; Sari Autio, “Timo Soinia raa’asti uhannut teki itsemurhaiskun Irakissa.” Ilta-sanomat, 2.12.2016.
[505] Vale (2019), p. 1.
[506] See e.g. Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford & Ross Frenett, “Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS” Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2015), https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ISDJ2969_Becoming_Mulan_01.15_WEB.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2020]; Saltman & Smith (2015); Perešin (2015).
[507] Saltman & Smith (2015), p. 71.

Indeed, all of the interviewed Finnish women in al-Hol camp have consistently highlighted their domestic duties as wives and mothers, often stating that they were confined to their houses and knew nothing of the IS' violence and cruelties.[508] This likely at least partially reflects their experiences in the conflict zone. Many of the women were married on several occasions and gave birth to approximately 30 children while in the conflict zone. Additionally, at least one of the Finnish women had highlighted the importance of being a good wife and mother. For instance, on her twitter feed, @UmmIrhab – one of the Finnish detainees in al-Hol – tweeted in February 2015, how "[e]ven though we muslimahs are not able to go to the front line we can contribute to raising a next generation of warriors." In March 2015 she continued that "InshAllah children most likely with good upbringing and environment follow the footsteps of their father." Simultaneously, she tweeted about the "virtues of marrying a righteous muhajid", which were that "loving and supporting him helps him in jihad."

Propagandists

At least some of the women, who have lived under the IS have found ways to actively participate in the groups' activities, propagate their views, promote its content, and engage with like-minded individuals and target audiences online. These women include the later deceased widow of Abu Salamah al-Finlandi and Abu Mansour al-Somali, a Finnish convert from Turku, Finland. She was an active congregant, together with her first husband, of Roihuvuori Mosque before travelling to Syria in late 2012. In August 2014, under the nom de plume *Greenbird, she* propagated pro-IS views, disseminated information about the group's propaganda, and

[508] Sillanpää (2019b).

encouraged the members of a Finnish Muslim discussion forum to watch the group's videos on YouTube. Additionally, she encouraged other members of the forum to "give bay'ah" move to the Caliphate or die in a state of ignorance. Umm Salamah was reportedly killed in Syria around 2017.[509]

Two other Finnish women have also appeared in official English-language IS publications, Dabiq and Rumiyah. In the 15th issue of the IS English language Dabiq magazine published in 2016, Umm Khalid al-Finlandiyyah – the convert wife of the main defendant in the Al-Shabaab trial –described her path to Islam, urged Christians to "break their crosses" and convert to Islam. In her article, she describes living in the Caliphate as a "blessing" and encouraged all Muslim to "disavow the disbelieves" and perform hijra to the Caliphate.[510] Interestingly, the story had a picture of the Temppelinaukio Church in Helsinki, which was a target of an unfounded terrorist threat in 2017.[511] In the 7th issue of English-language Rumiyah magazine, Umm Musa al-Finlandiyyah – a Finnish convert widow of a dead Bangladeshi fighter who travelled to Syria from Finland – wrote about how the IS represents true Islam, and how the group's enemies are all disbelievers. In her article, she also criticized Finnish Finnish Muslims' lack of religious adherence.

Inciters and glorifiers of violence

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[509] Ibid.

[510] "Women in Islamic State Propaganda: Roles and incentives." Europol Specialist Reporting Report, Europol (2019), p. 10.

[511] "KRP: Temppelinaukion uhkaa vastaavia tilanteita ollut aiemminkin – IL: Kirkko mainittiin Isisin propagandalehdessä viime vuonna." Kaleva, 20.6.2017.

As noted by Anita Perešin, "[t]here are many posts in social media in which ISIS women support and celebrate brutality and violence towards enemies."[512] One of the most notable examples in the Finnish context is a young female Somali jihadist, and an ex-wife of one of the converts in the Roihuvuori clique. She was a visible IS cheerleader on Twitter (@UmmIrhab), who had travelled twice in the conflict zone twice: first in 2013 with his ex-husband, and in 2014 with his brother, who later became an IS foreign fighter. She actively disseminated pro-IS material and views on her now closed Twitter account. While she created content that reflected her everyday life and experiences,[513] she also provided other types of content, including content that praised the violent acts of the IS.

Most prominently this type of content produced by @UmmIrhab included the celebration of James Foley's and Steven Sotloff's executions in August and September 2014. On the former, her tweets included "What is 1 James Foley compared to the thousands of innocent muslims being slaughtered daily by filthy US"[514] and "I feel proud to be part of Doula [sic]! more beheadings, please".[515] On the latter, she tweeted "I was happy to see the beheading of that kafir [Sotloff], I just rewound to the cutting part. Allahu Akbar! I wonder what he was thinking before the cut."[516] Further, writing about the 'War on Islam', she invited all Muslims to defend the ummah by choosing to be "either with us [IS] or against us."[517] She was likely present in an

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[512] Perešin (2015), p. 30.
[513] See e.g. Leon Dische Becker, "Photos of the Islamic State Fighters with Their Favorite Sweets." VICE, 23.12.2014.
[514] Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett, p. 43 (Note 15).
[515] Alexandra Bradford, "Western Women Who Join the Islamic State." Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor, Volume 13 Issue 9 (2015).
[516] Åsne Seierstad, "Two Sisters: A Father, His Daughters, and Their Journey into the Syrian Jihad." New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux (2018), p. 253.
[517] Perešin (2015), p. 24.

interview conducted by a Finnish investigative journalist Antti Kuronen in 2019, where a group of Finnish women denied knowing anything about IS's violence – although it is not clear whether she personally expressed those views.[518] Equally, it is unclear whether she has managed to escape Al-Hol camp as other Finland-originated women have in 2020.

Additionally, in her article "How I Came to Islam" in the 15th issue of Dabiq (see above), Umm Khaled incited violence against the IS enemies, echoing the group's spokeperson's – Abu Muhamed al-Adnani's – call to war in September 2014. She wrote "[a]s for those people who cannot perform hijra, I advise you to attack the Crusaders and their allies wherever you are, as that is something that you are able to do."[519]

One of the women has issued verbal and visual threats targeting Finnish Muslims.[520] In June 2014, Umm Shu'ayb, the wife of Abu Shu'ayb, threatened Shia Muslims living in Finland on her Facebook account, while posting a picture of a woman niqab wearing an apparatus resembling a suicide vest and handling an automatic rifle. She wrote that she had gone to Syria because there were many Shias to kill. Posing with a weapon and possibly a suicide belt, she wrote "u just keep caaling [sic] supo. I know your family names."[521]

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[518] Antti Kuronen & Teemu Juhola, "Isis-leirin naiset Ylelle: Kaksi suomalaista miestä on Isis-vankeina Syyriassa, toinen matkusti maahan teini-iässä perheensä kanssa." YLE Uutiset, 28.5.2019.
[519] "Women in Islamic State Propaganda: Roles and incentives" (2019), p. 24.
[520] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöisssä" (2018), p. 27.
[521] "Suomalainen mahdollinen naisjihadisti uhkailee shiiamuslimeja netissä." YLE Uutiset, 19.6.2014.

Recruiters

As stated by the Ministry of Interior's situational overview on violent extremism in Finland in 2017, many of the women who had travelled to Syria and Iraq from Finland were part of the same extremist networks in Finland, within which peer recruitment occurred.[522] It is likely that at least some of the women have continued their recruitment efforts from the conflict zone. On reported case is above-mentioned Umm Salamah, who was reportedly the first woman from Finland to travel to Syria. She reportedly had a significant impact on her friend, a fellow Finnish convert, who decided to travel to the conflict zone in late 2012, leaving her three children behind.[523] She had converted to Islam and married a Muslim man earlier. The husband had reportedly tried to stop him, without success.[524] Umm Salamah's friend would later marry Nero Saraiva and have three children with him. She has returned to Finland after escaping from al-Hol camp in late 2020.

Current status of the Finnish foreign fighter contingent

What has happened to those over eighty adults who left from Finland to Syria and Iraq? As of late 2020, the Finnish authorities believe that approximately 30 adults have died in the conflict zone.[525] Official confirmations are non-existent as even the authorities struggle to confirm

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[522] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöisssä" (2018), p. 27.
[523] Sillanpää (2019b).
[524] Vaittinen (2019).
[525] "Radikaali-islamistinen terrorismi on yhä merkittävä uhka Euroopassa." Suojelupoliisi website (2017), https://supo.fi/radikaali-islamistinen-terrorismi. [last accessed 20.12.2020]

casualties in the conflict zone, and if the authorities have been able to confirm any deaths, the information has not been released to the public. At least thirteen of these alleged deaths have been reported in the media. These include, as has been described above, Abu Salamah al-Finlandi, his wife and brother, the Roihuvuori convert Abu Anas al-Finlandi, the Finnish-Somali cousins Abu Mansour and Abu Shuayb, the Bangladeshi friends Abu Musa and Abu Ismael, two Rawti Shax members from Finland,[526] and Abu Hurairah. Additionally, one Finnish individual has allegedly perished in American airstrikes,[527] and one Finnish Somali fighter for Hayat Tahrir al-Sham was assassinated by IS in 2017. A potential fourteenth death is a Swedish foreign fighter with a Finnish convert mother. The foreign fighter, Kamal Badri, was born in Espoo in the 1990s, and died in Syria in early 2013.[528] Interestingly, his sister was one of the reported Finnish women in al-Hol Camp. In addition, at least two children belonging to Finnish mothers have been reported to have died in the conflict zone.[529]

It is likely that at least 9 Finland-originated individuals are detained or imprisoned in the conflict zone. All of the publicly known cases have been detainees captured by SDF as it liberated areas previously under the IS' control. Consequently, many – if not all – of the Finnish women and minors were relocated to Al-Hol camp, where at least 11 adults and 33 children with Finnish citizenships or right to a Finnish citizenship (children born in the conflict zone) allegedly resided

[526] On the death of the the other Finnish Rawti Shax member, see e.g. Rigatelli (2016).
[527] Antti Kuronen & Päivi Kerola, "Suomalaisesta Mikaelista tuli kalifaatin lapsi: "En tiennyt, että mulle tulee käymään elämässä näin." YLE Uutiset, 25.8.2019.
[528] Tuomas Peltomäki, "Epäily: Suomalaissyntyinen kuoli Syyriassa." Helsingin Sanomat, 5.3.2013.
[529] "Isisin propagandalehti julkaisi tarinan "suomalaisnaisen" radikalisoitumisesta: kehottaa hyökkäyksiin." MTV3, 31.7.2016; Aishi Zidan, "Isoäiti odottaa perhettään kotiin Vantaalle, mutta tytär ja lapsenlapset ovat Syyrian aavikolla – Suomi vatvoo yhä, mitä al-Holin leirin naisille ja lapsille pitäisi tehdä." YLE Uutiset, 17.8.2019.

from early 2019 to summer 2020 according to several Finnish women in the camp.[530] It is possible that other Finnish women and minors have been in similar camps, e.g. Roj, although there is no data to confirm this. Authorities have only confirmed that over 10 adult individuals with "connections to Finland" were detained in al-Hol camp.[531] Out of those 11, it is likely that seven are still detained in al-Hol camp as four adult women accompanied by their children have escaped and returned to Finland in summer 2020. However, the possibility of further escapes since then cannot be excluded. Two individuals are possibly in SDF prisons, and Supo has confirmed there are a few individuals imprisoned in the conflict zone, who have travelled there from Finland,[532] but it is unclear whether the Syrian or Iraqi authorities currently hold, or have held at any time, Finnish or Finland-originated foreign fighters as detainees or prisoners. One is the brother, a Somali-Finnish IS fighter, of a woman in al-Hol camp,[533] and the other is only known as "Mikael". He was 14 years old when he travelled to the conflict zone with his mother and siblings. He was 17 when he was detained by the SDF in Deir ez-Zoir around February 2018.[534] His current status and whereabouts are unknown, but two of his sisters and mother were in al-Hol camp in 2019.[535]

At least one individual has left the conflict zone and travelled to a third country. He was arrested in Ankara, Turkey in a counter-terrorism operation targeting local IS cells.[536] While there is no

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[530] Antti Kuronen, Päivi Kerola & Mika Mäkeläinen, "Suomalaisnaiset kertovat poikkeuksellisessa haastattelussa elämästään Syyriassa: "Lapset ovat kaikki, mitä minulla on." YLE Uutiset, 24.5.2019.
[531] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2020: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa 2019 ja kehityksen suunta" (2020), p. 24.
[532] Kuronen & Juhola (2019).
[533] Ibid.
[534] Kuronen & Kerola (2019).
[535] Kuronen & Juhola (2019).
[536] Jaakko Isoniemi, "Suomalainen pidätetty Isis-yhteyksistä epäiltynä Turkissa." Iltalehti, 6.10.2020.

data to suggest it, the possibility cannot be excluded that some foreign fighters have moved on to other conflict zones as the IS fortunes turned in Syria and Iraq in 2015–2016. To date (December 1st, 2020), there are likely at least 24 to 34 adult returnees to Finland, which leaves at least 21 to 31 individuals unaccounted for.

Returnees to Finland

Not much is known about the 24 to 34 adult returnees to Finland. The first returnees from the conflict zone had returned to Finland by 2014.[537] By October, there were already approximately 20 returnees, according to Supo.[538] The official estimates have stayed the same until 2019.[539] However, unofficial estimates suggest that approximately 10 additional individuals from the conflict zone may have returned to Finland between 2014 and 2019, putting the overall number of returnees by late 2019 at approximately 30 – although it is not clear whether this estimation includes minors, who have accompanied their parents back to Finland.[540] In addition to the 20-30 adult individuals who had returned to Finland before October 2014, Finland has repatriated two reportedly orphaned boys from al-Hol camp in December 2019. Their mother was Umm Salamah. The elder boy's father was his first husband, Abu Salamah. According to Umm Salamah's friend, the younger boy's father may still be alive, although the two publicly known husbands of Umm Salamah – Abu Salamah and his Finnish compatriot Abu Mansour al-Somali

[537] "Security police eyeball fighters returning from Syrian conflict." YLE News, 10.1.2014.
[538] Kokkonen (2014).
[539] Miika Viljakainen, "Isisin alueilta on palannut Suomeen jo noin 20 henkilöä – "Osa ei ole luopunut radikaalin ideologian kannattamisesta." Ilta-sanomat, 18.12.2019b.
[540] See e.g. Sillanpää (2019b).

– are both dead.[541] And lastly, 4 female escapees from al-Hol accompanied by their children returned to Finland between May and August 2020.[542]

According to a classification by the Finnish Ministry of Interior, the returnees can be divided in to three categories: low risk individuals, who travelled to the conflict zone early and quickly returned; mid-risk individuals who were in the conflict zone during the IS' peak years (presumably 2013-2015); and high-risk individuals who stayed in the conflict zone until the fall of the Caliphate in 2019. It is likely that at least a minority of the returnees, particularly among those who have returned between October 2014 and late 2020, belong in the high-risk category. Indeed, in 2016 Supo has confirmed that there were individual foreign fighters with combat experience among the returnees,[543] and that some had accrued all kinds of skills "related to warfare".[544] The organisation has also confirmed that some of these returnees still actively support jihadist ideology.[545]

These activities do not appear concerning enough or authorities do not have enough evidence for criminal prosecution, since very few charges on returnees have been brought to date. However, several pre-investigations targeting the returnees that are ongoing. The Finnish National Bureau of Investigations has confirmed as much in October 2020 regarding the recent returnees, the four

[541] See e.g. Vaittinen (2019).
[542] Burtsoff & Mattila (2020); Rigatelli (2020).
[543] Kreeta Karvala, "Supo: Suomesta lähtenyt henkilö tehnyt itsemurhaiskun Irakissa." Iltalehti, 22.11.2016.
[544] Tuomas Massinen, "Supo: Ääri-islamistit aktivoitumassa omaksi verkostoksi Suomessa." Vantaan Sanomat, 12.4.2016.
[545] Viljakainen (2019b).

women who escaped from a-Hol.[546] However, investigating and prosecuting individual returnees has proven exceedingly difficult in the past. Only three returnees, one of whom never actually made it to Syria, have prosecuted for terrorist crimes - unsuccessfully. The prosecution presented pictures of the men in Syria, armed and taking part and standing in formation during a meeting of KaM fighters. The judges ruled that the intention to commit and the offences themselves in Syria had not been sufficiently proven.[547] They were, however, found guilty of financial crimes. The lack of trials and successful prosecutions in particular have caused some consternation from Supo, the organisation in charge of countering terrorism in Finland. In 2019, the organisation's Director Antti Pelttari commented that Finland had an issue with weak criminal accountability for terrorism offences, and that it may attract radicalised individuals to Finland in the future.[548]

The lack of accountability is particularly troublesome as the returnees are reportedly classified by both the Ministry of the Interior as potential high-risk individuals.[549] Similarly, Supo estimates in its current terrorism threat assessment that returnees from Syria and Iraq "pose both immediate and indirect security threats in the short and long term."[550] While it is likely that the returnees, even the recent ones, are traumatised and possibly somewhat dejected by their experiences in Syria and Iraq – possibly leading them towards distancing themselves from participating in jihadist activism, if not deradicalising entirely – there are still those among the returnees who remain radicalised and are eager to re-integrate to the Finnish jihadi milieu. In these cases, Supo is concerned that these the individuals have spent significant periods of time in

[546] Niko Ranta, "KRP:n esiselvitys Al-Holin leiriltä Suomeen palanneiden osalta on yhä kesken." Ilta-sanomat, 29.10.2020.
[547] Jokinen (2018).
[548] Härkönen (2019).
[549] Viljakainen (2019b).
[550] "The terrorist threat assessment is an overview of terrorism" (2020).

the conflict zone and have formed extensive networks there, they may have a lower threshold for violence as a result of being indoctrinated and exposed to violence.[551] They may have also learnt useful skills through their experiences, and may transmit those to other domestic activists.[552]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the foreign fighter mobilisation from Finland to Syria and Iraq, which largely occurred between 2012 and 2016. While the Finnish mobilisation and foreign fighter contingent – approximately 80 to 96 adults – is meagre in size compared to most western European countries,[553] it is notable because it represents one of the largest, if not the largest national mobilisation relative to Muslim population size in the world.[554] The significance of this should not be exaggerated though, although its causes and meaning should be explored as will be done in the next chapter. Foreign fighting has still been by far the most important form of jihadist activism in Finland in the 2010s, and it reflects many of the transformative quantitative and qualitative developments the country's jihadi milieu has gone through in the past decade.

Indeed, the mobilisation is a key cause in the increase in the counter-terrorism target individuals as many have become radicalised and involved in jihadism in that context.[555] Additionally, the foreign fighter mobilisation, particularly in the context of the IS state-building project and self-

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[551] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020).
[552] See e.g. Chelsea Daymon, Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewin & David Malet, "Career Foreign Fighters: Expertise Transmission Across Insurgencies." RESOLVE Research Report, Resolve Network (2020), https://www.resolvenet.org/system/files/2020-04/RSVE_CareerForeignFighters_April2020%20%281%29.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[553] van Ginkel & Entenmann (2016).
[554] Benmelech & Klor (2020).
[555] "The terrorist threat assessment is an overview of terrorism" (2020).

declared caliphate, has acted as a key conduit for women to become more interested and active participants in jihadi activism than before.[556] The ethnic characteristics of the contingent also demonstrate how the increased rates of indigenous radicalisation, as noted by Supo,[557] have partly broken down generational and ethnic barriers within the milieu, which have likely contributed significantly to the relative underdevelopment of the Finnish jihadi milieu in the 2000s by keeping it small and atomised. The mobilisation has both the cause and consequence of this development. In a more multi-ethnic and inter-generational extremist landscape, small groups and networks can and have been able to emerge since mid-2010s.[558] These types of network, as their members and individuals in its peripheries have likely grown up in Finland or lived there most of their lives, are more focused on Finland and local activism that first generation networks focused on their fellow countrymen and countries of origin. These types of networks have broader recruitment bases and an increased capacity for support activity,[559] and as noted by Lia and Nesser, and a considerable capacity for foreign fighter recruitment,[560] although largely within their own social circles in the Finnish case.

Additionally, the mobilisation has also created a situation, where active members of Finland-based networks are or have been fighting abroad,[561] thus accruing valuable foreign fighter experience. Indeed, an increasing percentage of Supo's counter-terrorism target individuals have

[556] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 24.
[557] "National Security Review 2018" (2018), p. 1.
[558] E.g. see Virta (2017).
[559] "National Security Review 2020" (2020), p. 3.
[560] Lia & Nesser (2016), pp. 129–130.
[561] "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018), p. 10.

taken part in conflicts abroad or received terrorism training.[562] This experience carries with it significant risks, including the risk of terrorist plots and attacks in which they might participate are more destructive and harder to foil – although only a small minority of foreign fighters tend to participate in domestic attacks after their return.[563] A much more significant risk is the result is that the foreign fighters can evolve into key jihadist entrepreneurs within their respective milieus. Jihadist entrepreneurs with foreign fighter experience have historically played a key role in how jihadism has emerged and evolved in Europe over time. They operate transnationally, both within Europe and in Muslim majority countries, interact with local militants and armed groups, and form key nexuses within local milieus, which easily evolve into radicalisation hubs.[564]

A pessimistic estimate is that the unprecedented mobilisation of Finnish foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq has laid the groundwork for how the Finnish jihadi milieu will develop in the future. It already has increased the number of domestically active individuals who participate in jihadi activism, increasing number of whom have foreign fighter experience or terrorist training.[565] Any further Finnish returnees, men or women, are likely to enjoy increased legitimacy and charisma due to having "walked the walk" by joining the fight in Syria and Iraq. Should they choose to re-engage with jihadist activism in Finland, they may become key entrepreneurs. Additionally, they are likely to have accrued skills that make their activities harder to identify and disrupt by domestic counter-terrorism officials. Indeed, these types of key activists have often played a central role in how the key nexuses within the broader European jihadi milieu – e.g. France, the

[562] "National Security Review 2020" (2020), p. 3.
[563] Hegghammer (2013).
[564] Nesser (2019).
[565] "National Security Review 2019" (2019), p. 3.

United Kingdom, Belgium – evolved.[566] Further, foreign fighters have undoubtedly strengthened transnational ties between local activists and networks within Finland to their counterparts abroad, both in Europe and the conflict zone. Indeed, Supo estimates that these connections are now more common and direct than previously.[567] This will likely mean that transnational trends related to jihadism will be reflected in Finland increasingly in the future, and that jihadi activism will continue to become grow and evolve. Additionally, as a result of the mobilisation, jihadist actors abroad now have a better knowledge of Finland than before, the country has a "strengthened profile" in jihadist propaganda (i.e. jihadist propaganda is created in Finnish, and being targeting Finland), and the country and its jihadi milieu has begun attracting more interest and activity from individual activists, networks and armed jihadist groups abroad.[568]

Yet the Finnish jihadi milieu is still a peripheral area in the broader European jihadi milieu, one that has traditionally had an underdeveloped jihadi milieu and low levels of jihadist radicalisation, activism, and violence. While there are substantial grounds for pessimism in terms of how jihadism has developed and will continue develop in Finland – and in Europe more broadly[569] – in the future, Finland still appears to have a lack local radicalisation hubs, notable jihadist entrepreneurs, and large, active networks. Yet, the potential for their development – particularly in a more multi-ethnic jihadi milieu – has undoubtedly increased significantly compared to the situation in the 2000s. However, to understand the potential impacts of the foreign fighter mobilisation, and the broader developments within the jihadi milieu, it is necessary to analyse the developmental trajectory of jihadism in Finland in its entirety, and to

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[566] See e.g. Nesser (2015).
[567] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[568] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018), p. 10.
[569] See Hegghammer (2016).

identify its main driving factors throughout the 2000s and 2010s to examine whether there are ample grounds for similar pessimism in the Finnish case as there in the broader European case.

Chapter 6: Jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland, 2012–2020

This chapter examines the jihadism developmental trajectory in Finland and its underlying causes. Specifically, it identifies and analyses key macro-trends, which in combination largely explain both why jihadism emerged in Finland somewhat later than elsewhere in the region and in a smaller scale – compared to elsewhere in the region – in the 2000s, and why the phenomenon has evolved so significantly in the 2010s compared to the situation in Finland during the previous decade. The chapter argues that in the Finnish case five relevant macro-trends with varying relevance, impacts, and explanatory power can be identified.

The first macro-trend is the evolving demographics of Finland's Muslim population, particularly in terms of ethnic fragmentation, socioeconomic underperformance, and generational shift. The second macro-trend is the increasing quantity and quality of available entrepreneurs and networks within the Finnnish jihadi milieu. The third macro-trend is the persistence and appeal of conflicts in Muslim countries, and the fourth is Finland's evolving profile in jihadist propaganda. The fifth and final macro-trend is the operational freedom provided by the Internet. None of these trends by themselves explain the Finnish trajectory but in combination they paint a clearer picture.

The five identified macro-trends all touch on elements prominent in "resource mobilization" approaches to socio-political activism. As stated by Thomas Hegghammer, "[r]esource mobilization [sic] is a perspective from the social movements literature that views surges of activism less as a response to broader socio-political strains and more as a function of the ability of entrepreneurs to craft activist networks and exploit protest technologies."[570] The first addresses the potential availability of recruits. And the second relates to availability of entrepreneurs and networks, and fifth to their operational freedom in an evolving environment. The third and fourth macro-trends relate to exploitable political grievances and strains. Each of these variables is important and part of a broader picture. Collective and effective activism requires entrepreneurs and networks; these in turn need manpower from a broader pool of recruits; manpower comes more easily with political grievances; and both recruitment and operations are improved by operational freedom.

Macro-trend 1: Evolving Muslim demographics in Finland

A common explanation in Finland for the relative underdevelopment of the local jihadi milieu and historically low levels of jihadist activities in the country is that the Finnish Muslim population is small, fragmented, and moderate.[571] Hence, the potential recruitment pool for jihadists was small and shallow. While this is undoubtedly true, a small and atomised jihadist milieu did nonetheless emerge in Finland in the 2000s, and it has been growing ever since – at a relatively significant rate around between 2012 and 2017. While the vast majority of Finnish

[570] Hegghammer (2016); See also John McCarthy & Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." American Journal of Sociology, Volume 82 Issue 6 (1977), pp.1212–1241.
[571] See e.g. "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa - tilannekatsaus 2/2014" (2014), p. 11.

Muslims have not become involved in jihadist activism, there are three elements within Muslim demographics in Finland, which may in part explain jihadism's developmental trajectory in the country: *Ethnic fragmentation*, *socioeconomic integration deficit* and *generational shift* of Finland's Muslim population may have each contributed to the development by either limiting or expanding the potential pool of available recruits within a growing Muslim population.

Ethnic fragmentation and boundaries

While there has been a miniscule Muslim minority, the Tatars, in Finland since the late 1800s, the presence of even a meagre Muslim population in Finland is largely a recent phenomenon, and one largely connected to migration. In the early 1990s, there were approximately 1000 Muslims living in Finland. By the end of the decade, the number had risen to approximately 15-20 000, with refugees and asylum seekers arriving from the Balkans, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, and especially Somalia.[572] Since then, the Muslim population in Finland has been steadily growing. By 2006, Finland had a Muslim population of approximately 45-50 000, with Somalis, Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Persians and Bosniaks creating the largest minority groups.[573] In 2015 it was estimated somewhere around 60 000.[574] And by 2017, its size was considered to be somewhere around 70 000.[575] One estimate from 2020 puts the number somewhere between 110-120 000.[576] The growth between 2015 and 2020 is at least partly explainable by the unprecedented arrival of

[572] "Muslims and Religious Equality in Finland." University of Helsinki website, http://www.helsinki.fi/teol/pro/musref/intro.html. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[573] Saarinen (2013).
[574] See e.g. "Suojelupoliisin toimintaympäristö vuosina 2015–2016" (2015).
[575] Teemu Pauha & Tuomas Martikainen, "Lausunto Oasis-hankkeesta." Siirtolaisinstituutti (2017), p. 4, https://dev.hel.fi/paatokset/media/att/75/75b3fed8170be4f2f214ca4c11ef537ff90688c0.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[576] Teemu Pauha, "Islam uskonnontutkijan elämässä." AntroBlogi, 24.3.2020.

asylum-seekers to Finland in 2015 – over 32 000 – vast majority from conflict areas with active armed jihadist groups, e.g. Iraq, Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan.[577] Approximately half of them had settled in Finland or had their asylum applications rejected but still remained in the country.[578] Due to the multi-ethnic character of Finland's Muslim population, there is no one single Muslim community in Finland. Instead, the Muslim population is fragmented into multiple communities, divided between and within themselves by various boundaries, linguistic, ethnic, religious (including sectarian), political lines. For instance, in 2015 there were 42 registered Islamic communities and 80 mosques or prayer rooms in the country.[579]

Indeed, the multi-ethnic character – and the related historical patterns of immigration – of the Finnish Muslim population is a likely relevant factor, which significantly limited the potential for the phenomenon to grow and develop in the 2000s. While "homegrown" extremism has been present within Finnish Muslim converts since at least mid-2000s,[580] the early history of jihadism in Finland shows that immigration from countries with ongoing armed conflicts with armed jihadist groups in the 1990s was a key mechanism for jihadism to take root and develop in Finland. However, the phenomenon was for many years limited to scattered individual extremists and small ethnically homogenous networks of Somali and Iraqi Kurdish descent connected to armed conflicts and groups in their respective countries of origin.[581] The focus of the first-generation activists, whether militant exiles or visitors, was often squarely in the conflicts in their

[577] "The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014–2016: Member State responses – National Report of Finland." EMN Study 3 | 2017, European Migration Network (2017), pp. 4–5, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/09a_finland_changing_influx_en.pdf. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[578] Jussi Konttinen, "Vuoden 2015 turvapaikanhakijoista puolet jäi Suomeen, ja noin viidentuhannen tilanne on yhä auki." Helsingin Sanomat, 5.12.2020.
[579] Pauha & Martikainen (2017), pp. 4–6.
[580] See e.g. "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa - tilannekatsaus 1/2013" (2013), p. 6.
[581] See e.g. "Kansallisen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010).

countries of origin, and fellow diaspora members in Finland targets of their activities.[582] The diversity and fragmented character of the Finnish Muslim population would have been a significant obstacle for any attempts at organising a broader jihadist network or community transcending ethnic boundaries, particularly among first-generation Muslims. The same dynamics may be relevant in the arrival of a relatively large number of asylum-seekers from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan to Finland in 2015 and to a lesser extent in 2016. While there have been current or former members of armed jihadist groups, including the IS, among the arrivals,[583] there is no available information on whether they have become active in the Finnish jihadi milieu. While it is highly likely there still is variance in the levels of jihadist radicalisation and activism between various Muslim ethnicities in Finland, for the second-generation Muslims – who were either born in Finland or grew up in the country – these boundaries are much less relevant, as will be discussed below.

Socioeconomic integration deficit

The challenge of integration has been suggested to be the "root cause" of Muslim radicalisation in Europe.[584] Host societies' racism and Islamophobia affecting Muslim minorities' manifest themselves in socioeconomic discrimination, and result in increased vulnerability to socioeconomic marginalisation. For instance, Muslim minorities' unemployment rates are consistently higher than national averages, and they have fewer education opportunities. There is ample empirical evidence to suggest that the majority of European jihadis are young Muslim

[582] "Kansallinen terrorismin torjunnan strategia" (2010).
[583] See e.g. de Fresnes (2015); "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), pp. 20–21.
[584] See e.g. Robert Pauley Jr., "Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?" London: Ashgate, 2004; Leiken (2011).

men of immigrant background from the lower half of the socioeconomic ladder.[585] Indeed, as stated by Thomas Hegghammer, socioeconomically underperforming Muslim youth is the primary target audience from which European jihadis have been recruited.[586] Equally, other studies attribute low levels of jihadist radicalisation and activism in more peripheral countries in the broader European jihadi milieu, e.g. Norway and Switzerland, to relatively successful social, economic and cultural integration.[587]

As is the case elsewhere in Europe, Finland's Muslim population and its Muslim youth underperform socioeconomically. Muslim minorities – particularly from Somali and Middle Eastern backgrounds – tend to suffer from significantly higher than average unemployment rates, and the youth from these ethnic backgrounds are significantly more vulnerable to socioeconomic marginalisation.[588] There is not enough data on the socioeconomic characteristics of Finnish jihadists to empirically examine how prominent a recruiting pool socioeconomically underperforming Muslim youth are or have been for jihadist activists in Finland. This is the case particularly in the 2000s. In this context, it is worth highlighting that socioeconomic underperformance is a significant issue, affecting thousands of Finnish Muslims and Muslim youth. However, only a tiny – albeit growing – fraction of them have become involved with jihadism.

[585] See e.g. Hegghammer (2016b).
[586] Hegghammer (2016), p. 159.
[587] Lorenzo Vidino, "Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland." CSS Studie, Center for Security Studies (CSS)/ETH Zürich, (2013), p. 38, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/172401/CH_radicalization_report.pdf; Lia & Nesser (2016), p. 129. [last accessed 20.12.2020]
[588] See e.g. Maria Stenroos & Matti Tyynysniemi, "Somalinuorista liki puolet syrjäytymisvaarassa." YLE Kotimaan Uutiset, 26.4.2012; Tuomas Kerkkänen & Eetu Pietarinen, "Yle selvitti: maahanmuuttajamies työllistyy hyvin – naiseen verrattuna." YLE Uutiset, 24.10.2015; Petra Ristola, "Joka toinen työvoimaan kuuluva Suomen somalialainen on työtön – lasten tulevaisuus huolettaa." YLE Uutiset, 18.8.2017.

In the 2010s, one broad observation can be made. The Ministry of the Interior's Situation Overview on Violent Extremism in Finland in 2018 states there are two profile categories in the Finnish jihadi milieu. The first category are individuals who are strongly committed to the jihadist ideology and approve the use of violence. The second are less "ideological" and are part of the milieu and involved in jihadi activism for other reasons.[589] The latter group tend to come from socially deprived backgrounds. They may have life-management or psychological issues, history of substance abuse or criminal pasts. While this gives very little information about the relative sizes of these two categories, in a report in 2016 Finland's Ministry of the Interior estimated that approximately twenty five percent of counter-terrorism target individuals in the Finnish jihadi milieu had been suspected of at least one crime.[590] This suggests that socioeconomic underperformers constitute at least a substantial minority within the milieu. Yet, it should not be assumed that they have become involved in jihadist activities or militancy solely or even mainly because of these challenges.

Socioeconomic underperformance alone cannot account for the relatively significant increase in interest and participation in jihadist activism among Finland's Muslims in the 2010s, nor the relative underdevelopment of the Finnish jihadi milieu or low levels of activism in the previous decade. The relevance and impact of economic underperformance on the developmental trajectory of jihadism in Finland appears to be limited at best. However, it cannot be discounted

[589] Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2018: Arvio väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilanteesta Suomessa vuonna 2017 ja kehityksen suunta. Erikoistarkastelussa naiset ja lapset radikaali-islamistisissa terroristijärjestöissä" (2018), p. 17.
[590] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 1/2016. Teematilannekatsaus: Väkivaltaiseen ekstremismiin liittyvät rikokset 2015" (2016), p. 17.

either. As Hegghammer states, socioeconomic "deprivation is clearly neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for radicalization. The causal effect, if there is one, is likely probabilistic, not categorical, meaning that it predisposes for radicalization [sic]."[591] Indeed, the relationship between socioeconomic underperformance and involvement in jihadist activism is likely affected much more by other factors, such as the availability of jihadist entrepreneurs and recruitment networks.[592] Still, the socioeconomic characteristics of Finnish jihadists is an important topic of study, in which future research should focus, but access to sufficient biographical data will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future.

Generational shift

A key aspect of Muslim population's demographic evolution is the coming of age of Finland's second generation of Muslims around the turn of the decade. The second generation of Muslims, who have grown up and come of age in Finland have tended to have broader social circles and fewer linguistic obstacles than their parents, in large part because of growing up in the country and going through the Finnish school system. They have also tended to lack a connection to the politics of their parents' countries of origin.[593] The generational shift has coincided with the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the advent of social media, creating new avenues and opportunities for participation in jihadist activism in ways the 2000s could not offer. Indeed, as argued by Brynjar Lia, between between 2012 and 2015 – facilitated by the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the rise of the IS – participating in jihadist activism, especially as a foreign

[591] Hegghammer (2016b).
[592] Hegghammer (2016).
[593] See e.g. Marko Juntunen, "Matkalla Islamilaisessa Suomessa." Helsinki: Vastapaino (2020).

fighter, had never been more appealing and logistically less challenging.[594] Indeed, those who came of age within three years of the civil war are the most significant age group among the Finnish foreign fighter contingent.[595]

Indeed, the generational shift within the Finnish Muslim population has had a significant impact on the Finnish jihadi milieu, greatly increasing the recruitment pool for jihadist extremists and networks. Indeed, it has had three observable effects on the Finnish jihadi milieu. First, as Supo notes, there are rising rates of homegrown radicalisation.[596] Second, there is increased variance in the ethnic backgrounds of Finnish jihadists, as exemplified by the presence of 19 different ethnicities among Finnish foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, who mobilised between 2012 and 2015.[597] And lastly, there has been an emergence of multi-ethnic and inter-generational jihadist networks by 2014–2015.[598]

Macro-trend 2: Availability of entrepreneurs and networks

A more likely explanation for jihadism's development in the 2010s – and relative underdevelopment in the previous decade – is the availability and quality of jihadist entrepreneurs and extremist networks. Indeed, a recruitment pool – regardless of size or key characteristics – cannot be exploited unless there are entrepreneurs and networks with the

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[594] See e.g. Brynjar Lia, "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011: Explaining its Expansion." Middle East Policy, Volume 23 Issue 4 (2016), pp. 74–91; Lia & Nesser (2016), p. 130. See also Thomas Hegghammer, "Syria's Foreign Fighters." The Middle East Channel, Foreign Policy, 9.12.2013b.
[595] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2/2015" (2015), p. 16.
[596] See e.g. "National Security Review 2018" (2018).
[597] "Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin tilannekatsaus 2/2015" (2015), p. 16.
[598] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2016." Suojelupoliisi (2017), p. 21.

capability to do so through radicalisation and recruitment. Several studies highlight the importance of jihadist entrepreneurs – particularly foreign fighters and charismatic activists – in how the phenomenon has emerged, manifested itself – particularly in the context of terrorist cells – and evolved in Europe.[599] Similarly, other studies have identified the lack of high-profile entrepreneurs as a key cause for relatively underdeveloped jihadi milieus and low levels of jihadist activism or violence in various peripheral western countries in the global jihadi milieu, e.g. Austria, Australia, and Canada.[600]

A persistent feature within the history of jihadism in Finland has been the relative lack – or at minimum the appearance of a lack – of jihadist entrepreneurs. Yet, the Finnish jihadi milieu has consistently grown and developed internal structures as well as connections to other milieus, networks, and armed jihadist groups abroad, suggesting there have been entrepreneurial figures, who have functioned as network-builders. Further, in the 2010s their quantity and capability appears to have evolved significantly in the 2010s, leading to the emergence of homegrown networks with broader recruitment bases and improved capability for activism, particularly foreign fighter recruitment.

Availability of domestic activists

As noted by Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "*[in] today's Europe, militant Islamism does not replenish its ranks by means of a centrally organized and top-down recruitment effort. Instead*

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[599] See e.g. Nesser (2015); Hegghammer (2016); Nesser, Stenersen & Oftedal (2016); Nesser (2019).
[600] See e.g. Vidino (2013); Shandon Harris-Hogan, Lorne Dawson & Amarnath Amarasignam, "A Comparative Analysis of the Nature and Evolution of the Domestic Jihadist Threat to Australia and Canada (2000-2020)." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 14 Issue 5 (2020).

entrepreneurial leader-types recruit on their own initiative among family, friends, and members of their social network."[601] In the core areas in the broader European jihadi milieu, former foreign fighters and other veteran activists have historically played a key role in how local cells, networks, and milieus have emerged and evolved.[602]

The same social dynamics can be observed in peripheral areas in the broader European jihadi milieu, although to a lesser extent. Indeed, in the Finnish case there appears to be a significant difference – at least in the 2000s – both in the quantity and quality of available network-builders. While Finland has hosted at least some former members of various armed groups with combat experience or terrorist training,[603] it is unclear whether there were any true entrepreneurs with foreign fighter experience active in the country during that decade. Instead, many seem to be self-starters, particularly in the homegrown extremist milieu – both among convert men and women.[604] It should be noted – however – that this lack of entrepreneurs may be a case of absence of evidence rather than evidence of absence as there is scarce data available on the domestic activists in Finland during the 2000s. One likely candidate is the Moroccan-Finnish veteran of the Afghan jihad, who was deported to Finland from Sweden in 2008 due to his alleged involvement in the local jihadi milieu in Sweden.[605] Yet, this comparative absence of highly influential individuals dedicated to propagating the ideology helps explain Finland's relatively low rate of jihadist activism in the 2000s.

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[601] Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010), p. 807
[602] See e.g. Nesser (2015).
[603] See e.g. "Supo Annual Report 2008" (2009); "Supo Annual Report 2009" (2010).
[604] See e.g. Mattinen (2017); Marttinen & Kilpamäki (2019).
[605] "Terroriepäilty suomalaismies karkotettiin Ruotsista" (2009).

The situation in the 2010s appears starkly different for several reasons. Indeed, the number of activists has increased significantly as signified by the increase in Supo's counter-terrorism target individuals from approximately 200 in 2012 to 400 by 2020.[606] Only a minority of these individuals likely fit the profile of a jihadist entrepreneur. However, an increasing number of them have experience in foreign fighting or receiving terrorist training according to Supo,[607] which is a key attribute which many high-profile jihadist entrepreneurs have in common. Some of these individuals are Finnish returnees from Syria and Iraq, some of whom have gained useful skills from the conflict zone and re-activated in the domestic milieu after their return and likely gained elevated charisma and stature among domestic extremists due to having "walked the walk" of participating in the Syrian jihad or the IS caliphate project.[608] Others are current or former members of armed jihadist groups who arrived in Finland as asylum-seekers from countries with ongoing conflicts, particularly Iraq and Syria,[609] although in these cases it is unclear how engaged they are in jihadist activities or how integrated they are to the Finnish jihadi milieu or its active networks.

Further, there is some anecdotal evidence that high-profile activists have temporarily relocated to or visited Finland to network with local activists. Most notably these include British citizen and senior Rawti Shax figure Awat Hamasaleh, who lived in Finland in 2013-2014 before being deported as a threat to national security.[610] Among the visitors were at least Anjem Choudary, who in Spring 2013 came to establish Sharia4Finland, albeit unsuccessfully, and Balkan-based

[606] See e.g. "Supo Annual Report 2014" (2015); "Supo National Security Review 2020" (2020).
[607] See e.g. "Supo National Security Review 2019" (2019); "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32.
[608] Karvala (2016); Massinen (2016); Viljakainen (2019).
[609] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), p. 21.
[610] See e.g. Nousiainen (2015).

foreign fighter recruiter Bilal Bosnic in summer 2014 according to Italian researcher Alessandro Boncio.[611] And lastly, Supo estimates that their counter-terrorism target individuals in Finland have begun to have more serious and significant connections to jihadist entrepreneurs, networks and armed groups abroad – both in Europe and conflict zones in Muslim majority countries,[612] suggesting Finnish activists have become much better networked than before. This has been facilitated both by the foreign fighter mobilisation from Finland to Syria and Iraq, as individuals who have spent time in the conflict zone have networked there with like-minded foreign fighters from other countries[613]– and likely facilitated contacts between domestic activists and like-minded individuals in the conflict zone – and the emergence of domestic networks, whose active members have taken part in the conflict.[614]

Availability of domestic networks

As noted by Supo, jihadism has spread in Finland through social connections and networks.[615] The lack of available entrepreneurs and effective network-builders – both in quality and quantity – appears to be a key cause for the underdevelopment of the Finnish jihadi milieu and low levels of activism in Finland during the 2000s. While there were individuals with connections to armed groups, e.g. among the Finnish Somali and Iraqi Kurdish diaspora, the collectives which emerged around them were likely few in number, isolated from each other, and they appear to have been small in size and lacking in capacity for outreach and activism.[616]

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[611] Boncio (2020).
[612] "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32; "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[613] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[614] See e.g. "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).
[615] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017) p. 20.
[616] "Kansallinen terrorismintorjunnan strategia" (2010), p. 6.

These early networks were predominantly focused on their members' countries of origin – at least Somalia and Iraq – and exhibited some signs of supporting activities for armed groups there, including fundraising and foreign fighter recruitment. However, the quantity and quality of these activities appears to have been limited as official reports at the end of the decade as official reports stated there were only indications of the existence of such activities in Finland.[617] Indeed, these networks appear to have mainly operated within the immediate social circles of the members, including family members, friends and relatives. Even the Finnish Ansar al-Islam cell appears to have been rather closed and inverted in its activities regarding recruitment and radicalisation despite indications of limited outreach attempts in Kurdish prayer rooms in Turku. Similar dynamics also apply within self-starters as well, at least among the convert-dominated Salafi milieu in Helsinki. Anecdotal evidence suggests these "bunches of guys" – and girls – had low capacity for activism, and the "guys group" social dynamics was hampered by social friction and disputes.[618] This limited scope of homegrown radicalisation, and its later arrival to Finland may partly explain low levels of jihadist activity in the country, as has been the case in Italy.[619]

In the 2010s Finland has experienced the emergence and growth of extremist networks. The emergence of these networks, associated with the conflict in Syria and Iraq, the rise of the IS, and the foreign fighter mobilisation to the conflict zone, was one of the key causes for the increase in the number of Supo's counter-terrorism target individuals.[620] While the networks

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[617] Ibid.
[618] Mattinen (2017).
[619] See e.g. Lorenzo Vidino, "Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics." Instituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale – Milano (2014).
[620] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 13.

vary in size, composition, structure, and external connections among others,[621] on average they exhibit better capacity for outreach and activism,[622] including radicalisation and recruitment of new members.[623] Indeed, by 2019 Supo estimated that there is significant support activity in Finland related to these networks, e.g. related to fundraising and dissemination of propaganda.[624] In large part this increase in their outreach and capacity for activism is caused by the networks' multi-ethnic and multi-generational composition. Second generation extremists are likely better versed in Finnish politics and culture, and far more capable of engaging Finnish Muslim youth – from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds – than their first-generation counterparts.[625] As these networks have increased capacity for activism, and have in part made the Finnish jihadi milieu larger, internally more structured, and transnationally connected, the milieu is still somewhat fragmented, and radicalisation is still a marginal phenomenon relative to other European countries. Indeed, no clear radicalisation hubs – recruitment locations, extremist organisations, e.g. Sharia4Finland, or high-profile entrepreneurs – seem to have emerged in Finland despite these developments.

Yet, these networks are better connected to jihadist actors abroad in both Muslim-majority and Western countries compared to their predecessors in the 2000s,[626] increasing their ability to recruit foreign fighters and facilitate access to armed groups in various conflict areas for eager recruits. Indeed, active members of these networks have participated in the conflict Syria and

[621] Saarto (2017).
[622] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017) p. 20; "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[623] "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32.
[624] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12; See also "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).
[625] For a similar argument, see Lia & Nesser (2016).
[626] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.

Iraq as foreign fighters.[627] Supo has also expressed concern that some of these networks – as they grow larger – could seek to take part in violent activism in Finland or elsewhere in Europe. In 2019, the organization stated it had "identified groups… …who have both motivation and capacity to carry out a terrorist attack."[628]

Macro-trend 3: Appeal and persistence of armed conflicts in Muslim countries

The emergence and evolution of jihadism in Europe – and in Finland – has always been closely intertwined with political developments and armed conflicts in the Muslim world.[629] Appeal of conflicts and the groups operating within them has ebbed and flowed over time, but many have proven persistent. Conflicts, which have involved military intervention from western countries in particular, have tended to have a strong mobilising effect on European jihadism, including Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s and Syria and Iraq in the 2010s.[630] These conflicts can affect the broader European jihadi milieu in two central ways. First, they provide grievances that attract interest from Muslim immigrants in Europe, and they provide an opportunity for jihadist entrepreneurs and networks in Europe and jihadist groups in the conflict zone to frame these conflicts in a way that gives "resonance to jihadi narratives about an Islam under attack from infidels and apostates."[631] And second, these conflicts can facilitate the emergence – or re-emergence – of armed jihadist groups that attract and host foreign fighters from Europe.[632] These

[627] "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32.
[628] See e.g. "Supo National Security Review 2019" (2019).
[629] See e.g. Nesser (2015); Hegghammer (2016); Nesser (2019).
[630] Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen & Emilie Oftedal, "Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect." Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 10 Issue 6 (2016), p. 3–24.
[631] Hegghammer (2016), p. 161.
[632] Hegghammer (2016).

foreign fighters, in turn, may become important activists in their respective milieus after returning to Europe. Indeed, the conflict in Syria shows that international events can have a significant radicalising and mobilising effect even in peripheral and relatively underdeveloped jihadi milieus with low levels of jihadist radicalisation and activism.

In the 2000s the main conflicts and foreign fighter destinations were Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.[633] These conflicts, and western interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq fuelled grievances against the West but seemingly not against Finland – despite the country participating in the peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan. Regardless, the mobilising effect of these conflicts and interventions within the Finnish jihadi milieu – or Muslim population more broadly – were limited, largely because there were few extremists and networks with significant capacity to exploit the opportunities and recruit foreign fighters or facilitate access to armed groups for potential eager self-starters. The conflicts in Somalia and Iraq affected primarily individuals from Somali and Iraqi Kurdish backgrounds, without broader resonance in the milieu. Somalia attracted a small number of foreign fighters from the Somali diaspora in Finland from 2006 onwards,[634] and there have been allegations that Iraqi Kurds from Finland participated in the conflict in the mid-2000s.[635] Additionally, a small number of converts appeared interested in participating in the conflict in Chechnya in the mid-2000s.[636] An unknown number of Muslims residing in Finland also reportedly attended terrorist training camps in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.[637] Each of these mobilisations requires further study, especially regarding social

[633] See e.g. Hegghammer (2013).
[634] Valkeeniemi (2013).
[635] See e.g. “Finsk gruppe skal ha fått penger fra Krekar” (2004); “Korkein oikeus kovensi MOT-ohjelman tuomiota” (2010).
[636] See e.g. Parkkonen (2006); Peltonen (2007).
[637] Kammonen (2010).

dynamics and mobilisation pathways. However, lack of data is likely to remain a significant obstacle.

In the 2010s, the first and most obvious case was the eruption of the Syrian civil war in 2011, which provided European – and Finnish – extremists and jihadists with particularly resonant cause célèbre – amplified by proliferation of smartphones, mobile broadbands, and various social media and file-sharing platforms.[638] The conflict, and later the emergence of the IS and its caliphate project, energized local milieus and networks, focused their attention on a singular battlefield, and increased the appeal of the jihadist cause, leading to the expansion and development of jihadist milieus across the region.[639] Syria and Iraq, and later the IS self-declared caliphate also provided a particularly accessible foreign fighter destination. Approximately 5 000–7 000 foreign fighters have travelled to the region from Europe to join the ranks of the IS and smaller jihadist groups.[640] Analysis of the overall causes of this mobilisation is beyond the scope of this study and they have been examined elsewhere.[641] In the Finnish case, as many other European cases, the foreign fighter mobilisation from 2012 onwards resulted from a combination of internal and external factors. These include the resonance of the cause – particularly the protection of the Syrian Sunni Population and the IS caliphate – and ease of accessing the conflict zone.[642] In the Finnish case, social dynamics have played a key domestic role in the mobilisation. Indeed, peer-to-peer recruitment and activation of multi-ethnic extremist networks with larger capacity for recruitment, a small Muslim population, and the appeal of the Syrian

[638] See e.g. Lynch, Freelon & Aday (2014).
[639] Petter Nesser, "Europe hasn't won the war on terror." Politico, 5.12.2018.
[640] Nesser (2019).
[641] See e.g. Hegghammer (2013b); Neumann (2016).
[642] Hegghammer (2013b).

conflict and the IS largely explain the relatively large size of the Finnish mobilisation, although the mobilisation also reflects the growth and evolution of the Finnish jihadi milieu. With more activists and networks with better capacity for recruitment, more Finnish Muslims became involved in jihadist activism and militancy.

As noted by Hegghammer, "[f]oreign fighting fuels European jihadism by transferring military skills to the foreign fighters, by radicalizing some of them, and by giving them a social status they can exploit for recruitment purposes when they return."[643] Further, by spending time in the conflict zone, they have likely created extensive networks among like-minded militants. A small number of returning foreign fighters may also constitute a direct security threat as they are "overrepresented among plotters of jihadi attacks in Europe, that their attacks are deadlier on average than other attacks."[644] Indeed, foreign fighters who have joined "global" jihadi groups, such as al-Qaida and Islamic State or their respective regional affiliates, are particularly concerning to domestic security authorities as they have joined armed groups who systematically view western countries as enemies and seek to commit terrorist attacks targeting them. As is the case with the IS, they have recruited and trained European foreign fighters for sophisticated attack missions, such as the attack in Paris in November 2015. In the Finnish case the potential threat from returnees is limited due to their low number, but individual returnees with foreign fighter experience and enhanced charisma may evolve to become key entrepreneurs, furthering the development of the phenomenon in the country. Indeed, this shows that conflict zones in Muslim countries function as "safe havens and capacity-boosters for European jihadis,"[645] which

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[643] Hegghammer (2016), p. 162.
[644] Hegghammer (2016), p. 162. See also Hegghammer (2013).
[645] Hegghammer (2016), p. 162.

may have unforeseen impact in local milieus, also in peripheral countries where the number of returnees is relatively low.

Outside of foreign fighter mobilization and returnees, the domestic spillover effect of both the conflict in Syria and the rise of the IS have already facilitated significant qualitative changes in the Finnish jihadi milieu, including the emergence of jihadist networks in Finland,.[646] These in turn accelerated the mobilisation of foreign fighters to the conflict zone before it fizzled in 2016. The mobilisation has strengthened armed jihadist groups' knowledge about Finland, and elevated the country's profile and visibility in jihadist propaganda.[647] It has also enhanced both networking and the ability and capacity of returnees to engage in acts of violence.[648] The group's global call to action in August 2014 also resulted in a wave of directed, inspired, and networked attacks in Europe.[649] An inspired terrorist attack in Finland occurred three years after its former spokesperson Abu Muhammed Adnani's call to arms in September 2014,[650] and Supo estimates there are now individuals and small groups in Finland with the willingness and capacity to carry out a domestic terror attack.[651]

Macro-trend 4: Finland's evolving profile in jihadist propaganda

[646] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020) p. 13.
[647] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018).
[648] "The terrorist threat assessment is an overview of terrorism" (2020).
[649] Nesser (2019).
[650] See Haroro J. Ingram, Craig Whiteside & Charlie Winter, "The ISIS Reader: Milestone Texts of the Islamic State Movement." London: Hurst & Co (2020), pp. 178–186.
[651] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.

The country's remoteness and neutral foreign policy have been typical explanations put forward for the small scale of jihadist activism in Finland before the 2010s.[652] These factors have undoubtedly played a role. Even though the West as a whole is often presented as an enemy, jihadist activism has primarily targeted those Western countries that have a colonial history in the Middle East or South Asia and/or those that have taken part in armed conflicts in these regions (such as the United Kingdom, France, and the United States). Moreover, the influential role of these countries in world politics is enough to make them familiar to jihadist movements.

Finland's history of neutral foreign policy and lack of colonial past or presence in Muslim countries has likely made it more difficult for domestic activists or armed jihadist groups to create and exploit grievances against Finland. Further, Finland is a small and remote country, giving jihadists very few incentives to agitate against it compared to other, larger countries. Simplifying the causal relationship between a country's foreign policy and its levels of jihadist radicalization and activism is unwise, however. Indeed, in the past jihadists have been relatively active in neutral countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland – even if their levels of jihadist radicalisation and activism have been low.[653] Further, the war in Iraq in 2003 increased interest in jihadism and increased levels of radicalisation and activism in several core nexuses in the broader European jihadi milieu, like Germany, Belgium and France despite the fact that they opposed the war.[654] And lastly, the Mohammed cartoon controversy in 2005 is an ample

[652] Malkki & Saarinen (2019), p. 112.
[653] See e.g. Magnus Ranstorp, "Terrorist Awakening in Sweden?" CTC Sentinel, Volume 4 Issue 1 (2011); Vidino (2013); Lia & Nesser (2016).
[654] See e.g. Guido Steinberg, "German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism." New York: Columbia University Press (2013); Holman (2015).

reminder that even peripheral countries with small Muslim populations may attract considerable attention from jihadist actors in the wrong circumstances.[655]

In the 2000s Finland was scarcely seen in jihadist propaganda or targeted by external activists, despite the fact that the country was participating in peacekeeping operations in two Muslim countries, Lebanon and Afghanistan. In the latter half of the decade, Supo has expressed its concern that participating in peacekeeping operations in Muslim countries would increase the threat of terrorism targeting Finland. [656] However, Finland was scarcely mentioned in the communiques of armed groups operating in either country, although its peacekeepers were occasionally targets of insurgent attacks in Afghanistan. The only time when Finland was mentioned was in a text written by al-Qaeda's then-deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who noted that the group does not "attack Brazilian tourists in Finland."[657] Finland, however, attracted some attention from an opportunistic cyber activist and self-identified al-Qaeda member known as Abu Sulaiman al-Nasser in 2011. He threatened Finnish peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan and claimed – mendaciously – credit for two incidents in Finland in June 2011.[658] Aside from this, Finland appeared not to attract interest from external activists, networks or jihadi groups during the decade.

During the 2010s Supo estimates that Finland's profile in jihadist propaganda has strengthened. Indeed, the country – while still comparatively rarely mentioned – has been given unprecedented visibility in the content created by the IS, particularly between 2014 and 2017. Indeed, the

[655] Nesser (2015), pp. 200–202.
[656] "Supo: rauhanturvaoperaatiot voivat nostaa terroriuhkaa." Turun Sanomat, 8.5.2008.
[657] Wright (2008).
[658] Berger (2011); "TS: Al-Qaida uhkaa suomalaisia Afganistanissa" (2011).

country has been specifically targeted in both video and text format. One Finnish foreign fighter of Somali descent appeared on an IS video in August 2014, appealing to Muslims in Finland and elsewhere in the West to travel to the conflict zone and join the IS.[659] Two women have authored articles in its English-language magazines, Dabiq and Rumiyah, one of them beseeching Muslims in Europe to either move to the Caliphate or commit terrorist attacks targeting the group's enemies.[660] More broadly, Finland is viewed as an enemy in IS propaganda because it is a Western country and part of the anti-ISIL coalition, but it has not been singled out as a primary target for attacks by the group.[661] It would be simplistic to portray this visibility solely as a reaction to military intervention, i.e. Finland's participation in the anti-IS coalition.

Indeed, much of the visibility Finland has had in jihadi propaganda has originated from either domestically active extremists or foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. Domestically active extremists have produced propaganda in Finnish language, some of it inciting attacks in Finland.[662] Other content has encouraged "Finnish-speaking jihadists" to travel to the conflict zone and join the IS.[663] Several Finnish foreign fighters have also been particularly active in creating jihadist content online.[664] They have expressed pro-jihadist – and particularly pro-IS – views in various online fora and social media, and disseminated official propaganda of the groups they had joined, particularly the IS. As argued by Leena Malkki and Matti Pohjonen in their study on jihadist online communication targeting Finland, in the early stage of the conflict, many openly expressed their support for various armed groups fighting against Bashar al-

[659] Stern & Berger (2015).
[660] "Women in Islamic State Propaganda: Roles and incentives" (2019), p. 10, 24.
[661] "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 28.
[662] See e.g. "Supo: Finnish-language radical Islamic propaganda spreading" (2017).
[663] Mäntymaa (2018).
[664] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), p. 20.

Assad's regime, and later for the IS. They also kept in touch with their friends living in Finland through their accounts on various social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, and thus contributed to sharing content produced by the groups they supported to their online followers and friends in Finland. The situation, however, changed after summer 2014 as the companies running these platforms began to adopt more effective countermeasures against profiles sharing extremist content.[665] Indeed, most active public profiles of Finnish foreign fighters identified by the author were deleted between summer 2014 and late 2015.

Aside from producing content, Finnish foreign fighters have contributed to the developmental trajectory in two significant ways. First, they have taken with them knowledge about Finland and the Finnish jihadi milieu. Indeed, due to the foreign fighter mobilisation, Supo estimates that "foreign radical Islamists have a better knowledge of Finland than before."[666] This knowledge can be used for several purposes, e.g. foreign fighter recruitment, fundraising, and propaganda dissemination. And second, Finnish foreign fighters, particularly those foreign fighters who belonged to active "radical Islamist" networks operating domestically in Finland and who "continue to be linked to people living in Finland who support or endorse terrorist activities,"[667] have likely networked with like-minded militants, and facilitated contacts between domestic extremists and armed groups or militants abroad.[668] Indeed, the foreign fighter mobilisation is a key cause as to why the contacts between domestic counter-terrorism target individuals and international terrorist organisations are more numerous, serious, and direct than before.[669] Both

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[665] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 54.
[666] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), p. 20.
[667] "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 28.
[668] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[669] See e.g. "National Security Review 2018" (2018); "National Security Review 2019" (2019); "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).

of these have contributed to Finland becoming more integrated to transnational jihadist networks, and attracting increasing levels of attention and activism from external activists, networks, and armed groups.[670]

Macro-trend 5: Operational freedom online

Since its inception and subsequent widespread use, the Internet has been widely used by a plethora of armed jihadist groups for a wide variety of purposes, including recruitment, fundraising, and dissemination of propaganda. In the 2000s, jihadist presence online comprised largely of static websites. As noted by Malkki and Pohjonen, "[t]hese sites offered movement leaders a means to disseminate their message wider than what would have been possible before the proliferation of online communication and the social media".[671] By mid-2000s, the jihadist groups had begun to use jihadist discussion forums in their online communications, which had emerged earlier. These forums "enabled two-way interaction between activists in jihadists movements and those interested in the movements." They also enabled supporters located anywhere in the world to exchange ideas and network virtually with like-minded extremists globally, and thus create more extensive virtual peer networks.[672] This phase of jihadisphere was essentially a closed one, as many of these discussion forums were password protected, and one needed to know either the password or how to reach out and acquire it from forum administrators to gain access. The issue that countless extremists in small, atomised peripheral milieus consisting of self-starters – like Finland – faced a similar dilemma: how to gain access to these

[670] See e.g. "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 1/2014" (2014), p. 7; Lehtinen (2016); "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32; "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020) p. 12.
[671] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 24.
[672] Ibid, p. 25.

forums? Unfortunately, there is virtually no information available on the importance of these early forums on the Finnish jihadi milieu. However, few forum users from Finland have been reported to frequent jihadist forums connected to al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda.[673]

The 2010s have brought greater freedoms for clandestine actors on the Internet. It has allowed armed jihadist groups, as well as individual extremist and militants to disseminate propaganda, radicalise, recruit, network with other like-minded individuals, incite violence, and even plan operations online to an unprecedented scale.[674] As Malkki and Pohjonen highlight, "[e]specially the rapid spread of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube use since the 2010s offered unprecedented opportunities for reaching larger audiences anonymously, with smaller resources and faster than what was possible a few years earlier."[675] Indeed, extremist use – whether individuals or armed jihadist groups – of the Internet has rapidly evolved and effectively adapted to a constantly shifting online media environment.[676] For instance, the IS devoted significant resources to online recruitment,[677] propaganda dissemination, [678] inciting violence and supporting terrorist attacks globally.[679] The short-lived jihadisphere contributed to the shift in the "opportunity structure for foreign fighter participation" in Syrria and Iraq, facilitating easier access to a key "jihadi war theatre".[680]

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[673] Saarinen (2013).
[674] See e.g. Hegghammer (2016).
[675] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 26.
[676] Meleagrou-Hitchens & Khaderbai (2017), p. 6.
[677] See e.g. Berger (2015).
[678] See e.g. J.M. Berger & Jonathon Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter." The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations of the Islamic World Analysis Paper 20, The Brookings Institution (2015).
[679] See e.g. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Madeleine Blackman, "ISIL's Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation." War on the Rocks, 4.1.2017; Alexander Meleagrou Hitchens & Seamus Hughes, "The Threat to the United States from the Islamic State's Virtual Planners." CTC Sentinel, Volume 10 Issue 3 (2017).
[680] Lia & Nesser (2016), p. 130.

Behind this “jihadi digital empowerment revolution” there were four separate developments.[681] First, was the proliferation of portable smart devices and mobile broadbands, which allowed people to create, upload, download, consume, and disseminate audio-visual online content with much greater ease than previously. Second was the advent of social media around the turn of the decade. Various social media platforms gave armed jihadist groups and individual jihadists a broad range of user-friendly communications avenues. Indeed, from 2010 to around 2014–2015, jihadi groups were able to distribute propaganda – particularly audio-visual content – on much larger scale than they had before, and they could post sensitive tactical information on blogs and websites without the content being taken down.[682] As noted by Thomas Hegghammer, social media also offered more security for individual extremists and militants, because governments could not hack or monitor Twitter and Facebook as easily as they had jihadi discussion forums in the 2000s.[683] Third, government authorities tasked with monitoring online content without a doubt also struggled to keep up with the enormous growth in the quantity of content as the number of active jihadists and active accounts online exploded after 2011.

A fourth key development was the increased availability of encrypted communication messaging apps, for example WhatsApp and Telegram. While the “golden age” of the open jihadisphere on various online platforms – e.g. YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook – was largely over by 2015 as the companies in charge of various social media platforms adopted more stringent

[681] Hegghammer (2016), p. 163.
[682] Ibid., p. 164.
[683] Ibid.

countermeasures to eliminate extremist content.[684] Consequently, jihadist online communication is fragmented across a number of closed channels in encrypted messaging apps, which in many cases are not openly accessible. With these apps, extremists and militants can communicate with each other more securely one-on-one and create closed communities of like-minded individuals which are hard to infiltrate and monitor by government authorities.[685] Telegram messaging service have become a particularly popular platform for communicating with supporters and disseminating content, and others, such as SureSpot, Kik, Wire, Signal and WhatsApp, to a lesser extent.[686]

As is clear in the Finnish case, many domestically active extremists and militants who had travelled to Syria and Iraq to join jihadist groups operating there, particularly the IS, have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the Internet and various social media platforms. However, estimating the broader impact of the "jihadi digital empowerment revolution" is a difficult task. Clearly, social media has been instrumental in how extremists and militants (before travelling to the conflict zone) have followed the conflict and various armed jihadist groups, and networked virtually with like-minded peers online. How important the "online dimension" has been to their radicalisation or involvement in jihadist activism and militancy remains an open question. The importance of social networks on the mobilisation suggests that online connections do not matter as much as pre-existing social connections, at least by themselves. However, as extremists and militants use the Internet and social media the same way as everyone else does,[687]

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[684] However, social media still continues to be used quite commonly for disseminating propaganda and other jihadist content, despite the fact that extensive countermeasures have made it much more difficult to disseminate and store jihadist content openly. Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 26.
[685] "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018), p. 8.
[686] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 26.
[687] Neumann (2009), p. 53.

various social media platforms and encrypted messaging apps are important to their activism, and have likely amplified the importance of social interactions in the radicalisation and mobilisation processes of Finnish jihadists. For Finnish foreign fighters, the Internet and social media have been key avenues for these militants to keep in contact with individuals in Finland for various purposes, including radicalisation, recruitment and dissemination of propaganda as has been argued earlier. For a short while, Finland experienced the emergence of somewhat visible online jihadi promoters, including @mujaahid4life and @ummirhab, although the former has deradicalised and left Islam.[688]

While much of the online content relevant to Finland has almost completely disappeared from public platforms, this does not mean that it no longer exists elsewhere. Indeed, they could be stored on various closed environments in the Darknet, and shared in closed messaging apps. Indeed, it remains an open question how the networks that have emerged in Finland communicate with each other, and how Finland-based extremists and militants keep in contact with their counterparts and peers abroad. It is likely that the messaging apps are widely used, but their importance is difficult to gauge. However, as was the case in the 2000s, gaining access to any possible material caches (whether in Finnish or in other languages), and particularly closed groups or channels in messaging apps will be difficult for radicalising individuals in the future.[689]

Conclusion

[688] "The bullied Finnish teenager who became an ISIS social media kingpin – and then got out" (2015).
[689] Malkki & Pohjonen (2019), p. 12.

This chapter has examined five macro-trends, which have had varied impacts on jihadism developmental trajectory in Finland. Specifically, it has identified and analysed the impact of five key macro-trends, which in combination largely explain both why jihadism emerged in Finland somewhat later than elsewhere in the region and in a comparatively small scale in the 2000s, and why the phenomenon has evolved so significantly in the 2010s compared to the situation in Finland during the previous decade.

A common explanation in Finland for the relative underdevelopment of the local jihadi milieu and historically low levels of jihadist activities in the country is that the Finnish Muslim population is small, fragmented, and moderate. Indeed, the multi-ethnic character of Finland's Muslim population has undoubtedly limited the growth of the Finnish jihadi milieu during its early years. However, a more likely explanation for jihadism's development in the 2010s – and relative underdevelopment in the previous decade – is the increase in the quantity and quality of jihadist entrepreneurs and extremist networks, who could exploit strains and grievances to mobilise individuals for collective activism. Indeed, the number of activists has nearly doubled between 2012 and 2020.[690] While only a minority of these individuals likely fit the profile of a jihadist entrepreneur, an increasing number of them have experience in foreign fighting or receiving terrorist training.[691] Simultaneously, Finland has experienced the emergence of multi-ethnic network, facilitated by increasing levels of homegrown radicalization, which tend to have a better capacity for outreach and activism [692] and are more connected to external actors.[693]

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[690] See e.g. "Supo Annual Report 2014" (2015); "Supo National Security Review 2020" (2020).
[691] See e.g. "Supo National Security Review 2019" (2019); "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32.
[692] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017) p. 20; "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32; "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[693] Saarto (2017).

Indeed, by 2019 Supo estimated that there is significant support activity in Finland related to these networks, e.g. related to fundraising and dissemination of propaganda.[694]

The key drivers for these developments have been external, i.e. the conflict in Syria, the rise of the IS and its caliphate project,[695] which have provided a strongly resonant cause célèbre for domestic extremists and networks, greatly increasing their appeal. Simultaneously, the "jihadi digital empowerment revolution" have brought greater freedoms for clandestine actors on the Internet. It has allowed armed jihadist groups, as well as individual extremist and militants to disseminate propaganda, radicalise, recruit, network with other like-minded individuals, incite violence, and even plan operations online to an unprecedented scale.[696] As is clear in the Finnish case, many domestically active extremists and militants who had travelled to Syria and Iraq to join jihadist groups operating there, particularly the IS, have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the Internet and various social media platforms. However, estimating the broader impact of the empowerment revolution on jihadism in Finland is a difficult task.

At the very least, Finland's profile in jihadist propaganda has strengthened. Indeed, the country – while still comparatively rarely mentioned –has been given unprecedented visibility in the content created by the IS. Much of this visibility has originated from either domestically active extremists or foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq.[697] The impact of Finnish foreign fighters has been particularly important.[698] Aside from producing and disseminating online content, Finnish

[694] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12; See also "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).
[695] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 13.
[696] See e.g. Hegghammer (2016).
[697] See e.g. "Supo: Finnish-language radical Islamic propaganda spreading" (2017); Mäntymaa (2018).
[698] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), p. 20.

foreign fighters have contributed to the developmental trajectory of jihadism in Finland by having taken with them knowledge about Finland and the Finnish jihadi milieu to the conflict zone.[699] Additionally, Finnish foreign fighters, particularly those foreign fighters who belonged to active "radical Islamist" networks operating domestically in Finland have facilitated contacts between domestic extremists and armed groups or militants abroad.[700] Indeed, the foreign fighter mobilisation is a key cause as to why the contacts between domestic counter-terrorism target individuals and international terrorist organisations are more numerous, serious, and direct than before.[701] Because of these developments, Finland is attracting increasing levels of attention and activism from external activists, networks, and armed groups.[702]

By December 2020, the most accelerated growth of the Finnish jihadi milieu appears all but over. By 2016, the foreign fighter mobilisation from Finland to Syria and Iraq had effectively ended. In June 2017, Supo increased its terrorism threat assessment for the last time to date. In 2020, Supo estimated that "no factors that would significantly affect the number of CT targets [counter-terrorism target individuals] in the longer term are currently visible," although "qualitative changes" may occur.[703] One such potential development is foreign fighters returning to Finland from the conflict zone. Currently, it is likely that the women detained by the SDF in its camps will be repatriated in the coming months to ensure their children's rights and welfare in

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[699] "Supo Year Book 2016" (2017), p. 20.
[700] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.
[701] See e.g. "National Security Review 2018" (2018); "National Security Review 2019" (2019); "National Security Overview 2020" (2020).
[702] See e.g. "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 1/2014" (2014), p. 7; Lehtinen (2016); "Supo Year Book 2018" (2019), p. 32; "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020) p. 12.
[703] "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 13.

line with the current government's policy.[704] At least some of these women are still radicalised, support the IS, and may be eager to re-integrate to the Finnish jihadi milieu after their return.[705] They have spent long times in the conflict zone, created extensive networks and possibly cultivated skills and charisma that will aid them in their activism.[706]

It should be highlighted that the Finnish jihadi milieu is still fragmented, and no significant radicalisation hubs have emerged even despite the developments in the recent decade. As the appeal of Syrian conflict and the IS has diminished drastically, and the golden age of an open jihadisphere is effectively over, a relevant question is whether extremists and multi-ethnic-networks in Finland have enough capacity to maintain momentum for the Finnish jihadi milieu to continue to grow? In the past international events have been a key driver of activism and expansion, particularly in peripheral milieus. It is safe to argue that domestic actors need international events to exploit and increase their appeal. However, Finnish jihadists at least appear to be much better positioned to do so compared to any time before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011.

While Finland is better positioned than most European countries, if the jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland follows broader patterns, there is cause for concern. As argued by Petter Nesser, "the unprecedented number of Europeans [and Finns] who departed for Syria will lay the groundwork for future jihadi networks that will target Europe" – and possibly Finland with their

[704] Tuomas Savonen & Saila Kuittu, "Pääministeri Marin al-Holista: Hallituksen velvollisuus toimia niin, että lasten oikeudet toteutuvat." Ilta-sanomat, 21.12.2020.
[705] See e.g. Sillanpää (2019); Sillanpää (2019b).
[706] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.

activism.[707] The foreign fighter mobilisation has clearly strengthened transnational ties between the Finnish jihadi milieu as well as their ties to extremist collectives in western countries and armed groups in multiple conflict zones in Muslim countries. When European and Finnish jihadis find new operational safe havens in conflict zones, such ties are likely to be exploited by a wide range of both domestic and foreign jihadist actors. While the most recent growth phase of jihadism in Finland has seemingly crested, Finnish authorities should prepare themselves for a future where regional trends and developments are more strongly reflected in Finland to the detriment of the country's national security.

Conclusion

How has jihadism manifested itself and developed in Finland between 2012 and 2020, and why? Jihadism in Finland has evolved considerably between 2012 and 2020. Until the early years of the 2010s, jihadism in the country was mainly an imported phenomenon, one that arrived later than elsewhere in Europe and seemed to take root on a smaller scale. While information about the early years of jihadism in Finland remains scarce, it appears to have followed a developmental trajectory, which differs somewhat from most Western European countries. Indeed, Finland has historically been one of the least exposed countries to the phenomenon in the region.[708] The jihadi milieu which emerged in the country remained small, atomised, and isolated – rarely given attention to by external actors – until early 2010s.[709] The domestic activists' and ethnically homogenous first-generation networks' capacity outreach and capacity for support

[707] Nesser (2019).
[708] "TE-SAT: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007" (2007), p. 17.
[709] "Väkivaltainen ekstremismi Suomessa – tilannekatsaus 1/2013" (2013), pp. 5–6.

activism remained low, as these actors limited their activism to their immediate social circles and sought to act fully or semi-clandestinely. While the milieu became more homegrown in the latter half of the decade as Salafi-jihadist views and activism started to emerge among self-organising Finnish converts, especially those tied to the Salafi milieu in Helsinki, the levels of activism and radicalisation remained low.

Between 2012 and 2020 jihadism in Finland has developed significantly in several ways, facilitated by the Syrian conflict and the rise of the IS and its caliphate project, and further aided by the "jihadi digital empowerment revolution." First, the Finnish jihadi milieu has grown in size, as reflected by the increase in the number of Supo's counter-terrorism target individuals from approximately 200 in 2012 to approximately 390 in 2020.[710] Second, the quality of activists has equally increased. There is a greater proportion of bona fide militants in the counter-terrorism target individual list, who have either foreign fighting experience or terrorist training. Further, some of these individuals have spent time in the conflict zone, participating in the activities of armed jihadist groups in other ways.[711] This is the sub-set from which high-profile jihadist entrepreneurs may emerge in the future. Equally importantly, a larger proportion of these activists are second generation Muslims as evidenced by higher rates of homegrown radicalisation. On average, second generation activists tend to be better versed in the Finnish politics and culture, and far more capable of engaging their peers than the first-generation peers.

Third, as the quantity and quality of activists have increased, collective activism has become more commonplace and effective. By 2015, Finland had experienced the emergence of multi-

[710] See e.g. "Supo Annual Report 2014" (2015); "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 13.
[711] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2019" (2020), p. 12.

ethnic and multigenerational extremist networks, which are spreading the ideology and seek growth by radicalising and recruiting new members.[712] These networks have exhibited increased capacity for activism, with Supo estimating there are now "significant terrorism support operations found in Finland," which include financing and dissemination of ideology.[713] Fourth, these networks and individuals within them have "significant international connections" to jihadist actors abroad, both regionally and to armed jihadi groups operating in various conflict zones in Muslim countries.[714] These connections, particularly to the IS, have no doubt been facilitated by Finnish foreign fighters, and particularly those foreign fighters who were members of active extremist networks operating in Finland.[715]

Fifth, as the milieu has grown and evolved, it has become more active. Activism has increased in quantity, as evidenced by a significant increase in the number of criminal investigations looking into suspected terrorist offences in the 2010s.[716] Further, the quality of this activism has increased. This has been the case particularly in violent activism. While Finland has only experienced one jihadist terror attack, there have been few plots as well. While these appear to be more threats than concrete plots, Supo has identified individuals and groups in Finland with the motivation and capacity to carry out terrorist attacks.[717] The commonality of foreign fighting in contrast with domestic plotting in Finland can be better understood if "one conceptualizes violent radicalization as a diversified phenomenon with many possible outcomes", as noted by Lia and

[712] "Supo Year Book 2018." Suojelupoliisi (2019), p. 32.
[713] See e.g. "National Security Overview 2020" (2020), p. 2.
[714] "National Security Overview 2020" (2020), p. 2.
[715] See e.g. "Supo Year Book 2017" (2018), p. 10.
[716] Härkönen (2019).
[717] "The terrorist threat assessment is an overview of terrorism" (2020)

Nesser, and foreign fighting is a separate endpoint from terrorist plotting.[718] Indeed, in the Finnish case – as has occurred in the Norwegian case – many mobilised foreign fighters have readily embraced violent rhetoric, joined armed jihadist groups, and took part in the hostilities in Syria and Iraq, and yet there was hardly any public evidence of terrorist plotting in Europe involving them.[719] Sixth, as a consequence of the mobilisation, the Finnish profile in jihadist propaganda has strengthened and various jihadist actors have better knowledge about Finland and the Finnish jihadi milieu. This has already attracted external attention and activism targeting the country, its jihadi milieu and Muslim youth vulnerable to violent radicalisation. Indeed, Finland is now more integrated into the global phenomenon, and regional trends are likely to be reflected in Finland to a greater degree than previously.

The significance of these developments should not be exaggerated, however. Finland is still a peripheral and remote country in the broader European jihadi milieu by almost any criteria. Its milieu is relatively small, it lacks radicalisation hubs, and its levels of jihadist radicalisation, activism, and violence are still low and they are likely to remain so. To date, Finland has only experienced one jihadist terror attack – in Turku in 2017. And the size of its foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq, approximately 80 individuals, is meagre when compared to other European countries. Yet, compared to the situation before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, the changes have been considerable. What explains these developments?

Jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland can be best understood from a resource mobilisation perspective. This perspective "views surges of activism less as a response to

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[718] Lia & Nesser (2016), p. 129.
[719] Ibid.

broader socio-political strains and more as a function of the ability of entrepreneurs to craft activist networks and exploit protest technologies."[720] Indeed, in the Finnish case it is clear that collective activism required charismatic and skillful activists, who embrace jihadi ideology, promote it actively, and who seek out to recruit, radicalise, and socialise individuals into jihadism, often from their own social networks. Whereas not many activists were available or capable to exploit international events in the past, many new extremists became active in the Finnish jihadi milieu to craft networks and exploit the opportunities provided by international events.

These key activists and networks need manpower. In the 2010s, recruitment, particularly in the context of foreign fighting, has become much more common, although there seems to be no sustainable overt recruitment activities in Finland. Conversely, these networks rely on their members' immediate social contacts and networks to carry out radicalisation, recruitment, and other related activities. What separated current networks from those earlier is that they are multi-ethnic and multigenerational in their composition. Hence, they have a much broader base and capacity for outreach and recruitment activities than the earlier ethnically homogenous, first-generation networks, particularly among Muslim youth who have either been born in Finland or spent most of their lives there. Indeed, increasing levels of homegrown radicalization in Finland suggests that these new networks are a key element in the Finnish jihadi milieu.

Further, "manpower" comes more easily with political grievances – if there are activists and networks to effectively exploit these grievances, which appeared to not really be the case in

[720] Hegghammer (2016), p. 158.

Finland during the 2000s. Indeed, the two central events which energised the jihadi milieus in Europe – the war in Iraq in 2003 and the Mohammed cartoon crisis in 2005 – appeared to cause very little commotion in Finland's nascent jihadi milieu – although it is certainly possible this is a case of absence of evidence rather than evidence of absence. While Finland's strengthening profile in jihadist propaganda is more a consequence than a cause of increasing levels of jihadist activism in Finland in the 2010s, particularly caused by the foreign fighter mobilisation, the Syrian conflict, the IS caliphate project, and later the western-led military intervention against the group have all provided emotionally resonant causes and grievances, which the jihadists framed in a way to suit their narratives of Islam under siege from infidels and disbelievers. Indeed, the Syrian conflict and rise of the IS have resonated unprecedentedly strongly among Europe's jihadi milieus,[721] and peripheral states like Finland are no exception.

The recruitment activities of key activists and networks were further improved by online freedom, particularly between 2012 and 2015. Many foreign fighters and domestic extremists have exploited the opportunities the Internet and various social media platforms provided to incite hatred or threaten Finland, inspire, encourage and radicalise others, recruit foreign fighters, and create, translate and disseminate propaganda, greatly increasing Finland's profile in jihadist propaganda, but also increasing foreign jihadists' knowledge about Finland. As a consequence of this, external jihadist actors are increasingly targeting Finland in their propaganda and activism.

All these elements described above have played a role in jihadism's developmental trajectory in Finland between 2012 and 2020. And while significant gaps remain regarding the manifestations

[721] Nesser (2019).

and developmental trajectory of jihadism in the country during the 2000s, the same factors appear to also explain the historically low levels of jihadist radicalisation and activism in the country.

Considering Finland is a country with low levels of jihadist radicalisation, activism and violence, studying the phenomenon in the Finnish context may appear counterproductive – at least initially. Indeed, the country, like other peripheral countries, has often been overlooked in academic research. This gap is regrettable, as studying jihadism in more peripheral contexts – like Finland – may help scholars focusing on jihadism understand many aspects of the phenomenon in a European context, e.g. why the phenomenon remains underdeveloped in some countries but not in others, or how the phenomenon manifests itself outside violent activism, or why some forms of activism are more common than others. Indeed, jihadism is a phenomenon that entails a plethora of different types of activism, and violent activism is only the end point of a very broad spectrum.[722] Yet, much of the existing literature tends to focus on countries, which have strong and vibrant jihadi milieus, and where there is a lot of violent activism to explore.

This thesis' objective was to make an original and empirically substantive contribution to the study of jihadism in Europe by examining jihadism's development and varied manifestations in Finland between 2012 and 2020. The study drew its relevance from the evolution of jihadism in Finland throughout the 2010s, including an unprecedented and disproportionately high number of Finnish foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, and the need to explore the underlying causes and dynamics behind these developments. It has offered academic literature on jihadism in Europe

[722] See e.g. Prezelj & Kocjancic (2020).

new empirical insights from a previously unexplored country. Hopefully, this study can benefit comparative studies focusing on jihadism in peripheral countries in the future.

Because this thesis provides a panoramic overview of jihadism and its development in Finland, it was able to identify several areas which would benefit academic literature on jihadism in Finland, on Europe's peripheral jihadi milieus, or jihadism in Europe more broadly. The first area is the socioeconomic characteristics of Finnish jihadists. It is clear that socioeconomically underperforming Muslim youth are a key recruitment pool for jihadists. Yet, there is very little information available on the socioeconomic characteristics of Finnish jihadists. Socioeconomic underperformance appears to be a significant issue, affecting thousands of Finnish Muslims and Muslim youth. However, it is unclear whether socioeconomic underperformance and radicalisation have a causal relationship in the Finnish context. More broadly, lack of biographical data is a significant obstacle in the study on the causes of and pathways into violent radicalisation among Finnish Muslims. While such analysis would have greatly benefited this thesis and academic literature on jihadism studies more broadly, it is currently exceedingly difficult if not practically impossible to produce strong empirical analysis on the topic due to lack of data. An additional challenge to such micro-level studies is that in the context of peripheral states, they may struggle to generate enough data to provide generalisable knowledge about national-level trends and patterns.

Another key avenue of research is radicalisation and involvement in jihadism among Finnish convert women. While female participation in jihadist activism has attracted attention mostly in the context of the foreign fighter mobilisation to Syria and Iraq, radicalisation and involvement

in jihadist activism among convert women dates back to the latter half of the 2000s. Yet, this topic is largely untouched. What makes it particularly relevant considering the mobilisation is that some of the women who travelled to Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2016 were from the same early extremist convert networks that were active in thelate 2000s. Indeed, it could be beneficial to empirically examine how these women became interested in jihadism, in what types of activities did they participate, and how the Syrian conflict and the IS was initially perceived in these networks. Further, in the case of the women who travelled to the conflict zone and lived under the IS, it would be beneficial to examine in greater detail, available data permitting, what their motivations were, and what kind of activities they participated in the conflict zone. Indeed, there is likely to be more data available on these issues after the National Bureau of Investigation concludes a number of ongoing pre-investigations or criminal investigations looking at the Finnish women's activities and possible criminal offences in the region.

Third key area are the early manifestations and developments of jihadism in Finland between 2001 and 2011. There are several significant obstacles in researching the topic related to the availability of data. First, there appears to be very little information available on jihadism in Finland in public sources, although as this study has shown it is not entirely impossible to gather data from open sources. Second, there are only few official reports and documents, which only provide ambiguous overviews. Third, there are no formal criminal investigations on terrorist offences before 2009–2011. However, from 2026 onwards it is possible to get permission to access Supo's archives – or any material related to jihadism in the archives that is over 25 years old – for academic research. While it is unclear how detailed its archives are, particularly in the

years before the organisation got a unit dedicated to counter-terrorism in 2004, the archives are likely to be the most detailed source of information about jihadism's early years in Finland.

Indeed, while lack of data constitutes at times a significant obstacle in examining jihadism in the peripheral areas of the broader European jihadi milieu, like Finland, it is exceedingly beneficial to study the phenomenon in a wide variety of geographical and thematic contexts despite any challenges and difficulties. As the mobilisation to Syria and Iraq made clear, jihadism as a phenomenon is transnational and present in most if not all European countries, even in countries where jihadist violence occurs rarely if at all. Indeed, there have been several studies focusing on the mobilisations originating from peripheral countries in the broader European jihadi milieu, which were largely overlooked in the literature published before 2012. Yet, even in recent years the literature on the evolution of domestic milieus and networks in these countries have been lacking in quantity.

As noted by Petter Nesser, if jihadism's developmental trajectory in Europe follows traditional patterns "the unprecedented number of Europeans who departed for Syria will lay the groundwork for future jihadi networks that will target Europe" with their activism.[723] The foreign fighter mobilisation has clearly strengthened transnational ties between the various jihadi milieu in Europe as well as their ties to armed groups in multiple conflict zones in Muslim countries. When European jihadists find new operational safe havens in conflict zones, such ties are likely to be exploited by a wide range of both domestic and foreign jihadist actors. These issues impact largely the core areas of the broader European jihadi milieu – e.g. France, the United Kingdom,

[723] Nesser (2019).

Germany and Belgium. However, as the developments in the last eight years make clear, peripheral countries and their respective milieus can be strongly impacted by international events. While jihadism's most recent growth phase in Europe has seemingly ended, there is an acute need to understand the broader impact that the Syrian conflict and the rise of the IS have had on the European jihadi milieu, especially outside the foreign fighter mobilisation and wave of terrorist attacks linked to the IS.

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