

Jihadism in Norway: a Typology of Militant Networks in a Peripheral European Country

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Abstract

Jihadism in Norway has witnessed a huge shift from consisting primarily of foreign ethnically homogenous networks with a low capacity for mobilization, to the current situation where a loose country-wide network of domestic extremists have demonstrated a considerable capacity for foreign fighter recruitment over the past four years. In this article we introduce a typology for better understanding how jihadism takes root in Europe's periphery.

Keywords: Jihadism; Norway; IS; periphery

Introduction

What characterizes jihadi networks in Norway, a European periphery country in terms of geographical location, political weight, and demography, and also marginal with regards to exposure to jihadi terrorism?

Over the past two decades, European Jihadism has clearly had certain geographical points of gravity, London being a main hub. Even if Jihadi networks in Europe have always been transnational in nature with numerous nodes in many countries, the terrorism threat emanating from European Jihadism has historically been much greater in places like Paris, Brussels or London, than in Oslo. Hence, when examining jihadi networks in Norway, it might be helpful to integrate *a periphery perspective* in our analysis. We may accomplish this by introducing *a typology of militant networks* that captures the variations of militant Islamist activism beyond the immediate attack cells, and which *describes manifestations of jihadism in regions where attacks occur rarely*.

If one were to sum up the history of jihadism in Norway in one sentence, it would be like this: Jihadism in Norway has witnessed a huge shift from consisting primarily of foreign ethnically homogenous networks with a low capacity for mobilization, to the current situation where a loose country-wide network of domestic extremists have demonstrated a considerable capacity for foreign fighter recruitment over the past four years.

In order to better understand this shift, this brief article[1] explores Jihadism in Norway through the lenses of an analytical framework – more precisely a typology – in which militant Islamist networks are classified according to criteria such as organizational structure, activity, degree of overtness and outreach, and recruitment base. The five archetypes constituting the typology are as follows: (i) “militant exiles”, (ii) “diasporic support networks”, (iii) “militant visitors”, (iv) “(al-Qaida) attack cells” and (v) “homegrown extremists”.

When applied to the empirical evidence of jihadism in Norway since the mid-1990s, one finds that the first type of networks (“militant exiles”) was dominant in the early phases while the “diasporic support networks” became a serious concern in the latter part of the 2000s. Both were, however, confined by ethnic-linguistic barriers and they hardly interacted with mainstream Norwegian society. During most of this period, there were isolated examples of the third and fourth types, i.e. “militant visitors” and “al-Qaida attack cells”. By 2012, however, jihadism in Norway had matured sufficiently to give birth to a significant network of “homegrown extremists”. The latter milieu consisted of Norwegian-speaking youth of multiple ethnic origins, including a number of Norwegian converts. They had a high capacity for outreach and recruitment, making contacts and linking up with counterparts in Europe and the Muslim world and participating as foreign

fighters in jihadi war theatres, particularly in Syria. These homegrown extremists were part of a generation of young Muslims who grew up with the war on terror and were fully exposed to the media frenzy surrounding “Islamic terrorism” and the difficult identity issues that came in the wake of the securitization of Islam in European discourse.

In theory, the five network types may all produce or inspire foreign fighter recruitment and international terrorism. In practice, however, they differ significantly with regards to such a capacity. In the Norwegian case, we find that both “diasporic support networks” as well as “homegrown extremists” have been very capable of mobilizing fighters to conflict areas in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Their involvement in international terrorism plotting has been limited, however, and attack plotting in Europe by Norway-based networks has remained the exception.

This article seeks to explain the evolution of Norway-based jihadism drawing upon this new typology and as such it offers a theoretically grounded assessment of why Norway has faced a limited threat.

Militant Exiles: the Case of Mullah Krekar

Militant exiles resemble politicians more than guerrillas. They 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. From the late 1980s onwards a number of such militant exiles sought and obtained refuge in Norway. Their activities have often been relatively overt, and they have sometimes even served as go-to guys and informants for Norwegian authorities at various stages.[2] Still, by virtue of their involvement with militant Islamist movements, these exiles have faced the threat of loss of residency rights, scrutiny by the security services and anti-terrorism investigations.

Although there have been quite a few such militant exiles in Norway, most of them have remained unknown to the general public. One of them, the Afghan Pashtun politician Abdul Rauf M., came to Norway via the UNHCR as a refugee from Peshawar around 2000. He was a former Deputy Minister of Education in the Taliban government, and styled himself as an Islamist preacher with his own program on an Afghan TV Channel, speaking mostly in Dari and Pashto. Another was Qaribur R. S., an Afghan Pashtun politician, who had served as spokesman for Gulbuddin Hekmatiyar and his *Hezb e-Islami* guerrilla faction in Afghanistan and Pakistan since the late 1980s. A third example was Abdirahman A. O., a leading supporter of the *Islamic Courts Union* (ICU) in Somalia, and important fundraiser for the organization until his arrest in 2007, on terrorism fundraising charges. There were also North African exiles with leadership positions in militant Islamist groups in Morocco and Algeria. Mohsine B. had issued statements from Oslo in his capacity as spokesman for the Moroccan *Chabibah* movement during the 2000s, while Djamel S. acted as spokesman for the Algerian Islamist party *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) in Norway in the late 1990s.

The most famous of these militant exiles is of course Najmuddin Faraj Ahmed, better known as Mullah Krekar. He was the only militant Islamist figure in Norway with a significant international standing and an extensive network of contacts and supporters. Mostly known for being the first *emir* of the hardline Islamist group *Ansar al-Islam*, founded in Iraqi Kurdistan in December 2001, Krekar had a long history of political and military involvement in the Kurdish Islamist movement since the late 1980s. In the early 1990s, he obtained permanent residency in Norway with his family via the UNHCR quota system, but continued to visit Northern Iraq to pursue his political and military involvement with *the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan* (IMIK), while also traversing Europe for proselytization and fund-raising purposes.

Ansar al-Islam's role in the run-up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 put Krekar in the international spotlight. Following his return to Norway in early 2003, Krekar was subject to numerous court cases and judicial processes, initially over his suspected (financial) involvement with terrorist networks and subsequently over his right to residency in Norway. In Internet chat rooms, he issued relatively specific

calls for violence and suicide attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq, and his alleged role in inspiring attacks in Iraq reportedly provoked U.S. authorities sufficiently that specific plans were made in 2003 to organize a snatch operation (“extraordinary rendition”) to spirit him out of Norway.[3] Krekar was placed on the list in late 2006.[4] Over the past five years, Krekar has also been convicted and imprisoned for making threats and inciting violence. He was subject to an assassination attempt in 2010, whose perpetrators have not yet been identified. Despite being prevented from travelling outside Norway, Krekar has engaged in extensive proselytization via Internet chat rooms. He began reconstituting parts of the international *Ansar al-Islam* network through a new organization called *Rawti Shax* in the late 2000s. According to Italian prosecutors, a *Rawti Shax* cell in Italy plotted acts of violence in revenge of Krekar’s imprisonment in 2012. [5] Italian authorities filed formal requests to have Krekar extradited from Norway. The case traversed the judicial system in Norway only to be withdrawn by Italian authorities in late November 2016, days after the Norwegian Supreme Court had endorsed the extradition request.[6]

Although Krekar’s case is complex and intriguing, he very much falls within the category of a militant exile. All these militant exiles had in common that their constituency was mostly limited to their country of origin and their countrymen in exile. They preached in their native language, and their eyes were set on the political scene in the countries from which they had fled. Foreign fighter recruitment from these networks was minimal (with the exception of the Somali network addressed below) and plans for violent action in Europe rarely materialized. When such plans did surface, as in the case of Mullah Krekar in 2012-2014, the attempts were halfhearted and were meant to put pressure on the authorities to release the imprisoned Mullah. Compared to the ongoing ISIS campaign of terrorism in Europe[7], Krekar’s *Rawti Shax* network was a small nuisance. Hence, when Italian prosecutors in 2015 described their investigation against *Rawti Shax* as “the most important police operation in Europe in the last 20 years”, it sounded like a bad joke.[8]

There were overlapping connections between Krekar and a new network of Norwegian “homegrown extremists”, called *Profetens Ummah* (“The Prophet’s Ummah”, PU). Krekar was never part of that group, but some young Norwegian radicals nevertheless looked to Krekar and other “veterans of jihad” living in Norway as religious teachers and role models, and they turned up in court in a show of solidarity whenever Krekar or other senior militants were on trial.[9]

Support Networks in Diasporas: The Case of Shabaab

Diasporic 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 scale. Diasporic support networks represent social movements and often have significant capacities in terms of fund-raising, mobilization and propaganda outreach. One of the Norway-based militant exiles who clearly was part of a diasporic support network was the Somali Islamist politician Abdirahman A.O.. He was one of several prominent Somali politicians who had found refuge in Norway since the late 1990s. However, Abdirahman A.O. was also a key figure behind a fund-raising campaign to support the Islamist resistance against the Federal government in Somalia, in the wake of the Ethiopian invasion in late 2006. When Abdirahman A.O. was arrested on terrorism financing charges in 2007, hundreds of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo rallied in demonstrations to protest against what they perceived as a highly unfair treatment of a respected political figure in the Somali diaspora. At the time ICU and its militant offshoot group, the *Shabaab* militia, enjoyed widespread support. This popularity was linked to *Shabaab*’s ability to promote itself as a military resistance group defending the country from Ethiopian aggression. However, as the movement’s suicide operations and atrocities became more well-known and the group gravitated towards global jihadism and subsequently joined al-Qaida, the *Shabaab*’s support in the diaspora also dropped.[10]

During the late 2000s, the *Shabaab*-linked diasporic support network in Norway demonstrated not only a capacity to rally popular support and run fundraising campaigns, but also to recruit fighters from the Somali diaspora in Norway. An estimated 30 young men from the Somali community in Norway reportedly joined the *Shabaab* guerrilla movement.[11] This was not a uniquely Norwegian network. In fact, *Shabaab* has maintained strong ties to all of Scandinavia, and especially to Sweden.[12] Swedish-Somalis have figured prominently in the movement's leadership, and Swedish-, Danish- and Norwegian-Somalis have committed suicide attacks on its behalf.[13]

Although *Shabaab*-controlled areas in Southern Somalia became a "jihad-front" destination for a number of non-Somali foreign fighters, there was no evidence of non-Somali Norwegian militants traveling there. *Al-Shabaab's* diasporic support network remained very much "a Somali thing" in Norway, and Somalia's appeal as a "land of jihad" was never close to that of Syria and the ISIS "Caliphate" half a decade later. As a diasporic support network, the Somali *Shabaab* supporters were linked to a larger international network which connected Norwegian-Somali nationals to *Shabaab* recruitment websites abroad, and, in some cases, to leading international terrorist operatives. The following empirical examples may be illuminating:

Around 2009 "Abdi", a 27-year-old Norwegian-Somali and former soldier of the Norwegian Royal Guard, joined *Shabaab* as a military trainer. "Abdi" had arrived in Norway as a seven-year-old refugee at the end of the 1990s.[14] Being part of the Somali community in Oslo, he went to school, participated in sports, and made Norwegian friends. Yet, he struggled to adapt to Norwegian society, and started accessing Islamist forums online, consuming video-sermons by the infamous militant American-Yemeni preacher Anwar al-Awlaki, the most popular preacher for young jihadi sympathizers in the West at the time. "Abdi" contacted *Shabaab* via e-mail and was urged to join the struggle for an Islamic state in Somalia and al-Qaida's war on the U.S.. At a mosque in Oslo he encountered a *Shabaab* representative who spent time in Norway's capital on behalf of the movement's Scandinavian recruitment network operating out of Rinkeby and Gothenburg in Sweden. Encouraged by the recruiter's offer to assist with contacts and travel expenses, "Abdi" decided to leave for Somalia after ending his military service in the Royal Guard.[15] In March 2011, he was reported to have been killed in clashes with government forces in Somalia.

Recruitment of Norwegian-Somalis for *Shabaab* received renewed attention in wake of the attacks on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2013, where 67 people were killed. It turned out that a 23-year-old Norwegian-Somali raised in Norway, Hassan Abdi Dhuhulow, was among the attackers.[16] Unlike "Abdi", Dhuhulow had a troubled childhood. He was orphaned in Somalia and came to live with a relative in Norway in 1999. He was bullied and exposed to racism in school, struggled with his temper, and made few friends. Dhuhulow did not drift into crime or drop out of school, but found comfort in Islam. His online postings on Muslim discussion forums display a sad story of loneliness and of a gradual turn to religious extremism.[17] As he "prayed to Allah/God to give me some friends", he also blamed media and politicians for making it difficult for him to be accepted as a Norwegian. While surfing websites associated with *Shabaab* and al-Qaida, and listening to the sermons of Anwar al-Awlaki, Dhuhulow grew increasingly religious and politically radical. Gradually, he embraced the idea that there was a global war on Muslims, and became obsessed with the war in Somalia while eulogizing *Shabaab*.

Dhuhulow did not radicalize all by himself. He acquainted radical Muslims online and got to know Mohyeldeen M., a central figure in the increasingly more organized extremist milieu in Norway. Both of them hailed from Larvik. At some point Dhuhulow also got in touch with a *Shabaab* recruiter in Rinkeby, Sweden. When the latter called upon all visitors on a Swedish-based pro-*Shabaab* web forum (al-Qimma) to swear allegiance to *Shabaab*, Dhuhulow did so promptly. The Sweden-based facilitator later traveled to Somalia where he continued to recruit and organize the influx of foreign fighters. Upon finishing high school in 2009, Dhuhulow also went to Somalia, returning in March 2010. By then Dhuhulow had already been on the watch list for some time. In fact, the security service was concerned about him already when he was in

second grade of high school. The PST questioned him on his arrival back in Norway, and again when he was heading for Somalia for the last time in August 2010.[18] In response to the PST's concerns about his links to *Shabaab*, he merely responded "do I look like a terrorist?" Two years later he surely did, on the CCTV footage of the Westgate massacre.

An even more important *Shabaab* militant residing in Norway in the late 2000s was Mohamed Abdikadir Mohamed, better known as Ikrima al-Muhajir. He rose in *Shabaab*'s ranks from being a skilled bomb-maker to become a key commander with responsibility for the movement's operations in Kenya. When Ikrima came to Norway in 2004 as a political refugee, he does not seem to have had connections to militant networks. However, during a trip back to Somalia in 2006, Ikrima reportedly established ties to *Shabaab* for the first time, after which he began recruiting for the movement in Scandinavia and Europe. He repeatedly traveled forth and back to Somalia, Kenya and Scandinavia and was also instrumental in establishing ties between *Shabaab* and AQAP.[19] Ikrimah was also reportedly involved in developing a Kenyan arm of *Shabaab* dubbed *al-Hijrah*, suspected of having orchestrated multiple plots and attacks in Kenya, including the deadly Westgate mall attack in September 2013. Ikrimah was deemed so dangerous by authorities that a U.S. Navy Seal team was dispatched to Baraawe, Somalia, to kill or capture him in October 2013, a raid which ultimately failed.[20] By then his links to Norway was past history, however. He had left the country for the last time in 2008 pending a final decision regarding his asylum application, and most of his terrorist plotting occurred after his departure.

The Somali case exemplifies how diasporic support networks may produce high levels of fund-raising and recruitment to conflict zones, but it also highlights their limitations. Despite being linked to an Islamist guerrilla movement, the *Shabaab* supporters in Scandinavia hardly ever recruited fighters beyond the Somali diaspora. Furthermore, the near absence of *Shabaab*-orchestrated attacks outside the East African conflict zone (Somalia, Kenya, Uganda), despite threats by the group to carry out Westgate style attacks in Western cities, also suggests that this type of diasporic support networks are unlikely to evolve into a truly global terrorism force.[21]

Militant Visitors: The Case of Algerian Extremists

Compared to the above-mentioned network types, a more likely candidate for producing international terrorist attacks, but not foreign fighter mobilization, is what we term "militant visitors", or "outer ring militants". They entered Norway for a temporary stay and/or for a specific purpose, and were not integrated into a Norwegian Islamist extremist milieu. Instead, they operated on the periphery of jihadi networks whose core members were located abroad.

While such militant visitors may act on their own and carry out acts of violence, for personal or political reasons, they are very unlikely to carry out any sustained campaigns of terrorism. For countries at the periphery of European jihadism, such cases are nevertheless a significant challenge for the security services. When suspected jihadi operatives in Europe are placed under surveillance, a wide network of contacts is often discovered, providing leads to a large number of individuals, from the inner tiers to the periphery. Some of them might happen to be residing in a provincial Norwegian town, and making sense of their actual importance and future risk may be quite difficult.

From what is known in open sources, there have been a significant number of militant visitors in Norway over the past fifteen years. The most well-known cases have involved Algerian nationals. In the early- to mid-1990s, a small number of Algerian militant Islamists were believed to have sought refuge in Norway, including sympathizers from the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) and the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA).[22] The latter operated networks for propaganda, fundraising and recruitment in France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden and other places at the time.[23] However, in contrast to the situation in these countries,

the few individuals in Norway were too few and peripheral to be categorized as a diasporic support network. [24]

By the early 2000s, individuals with ties to international jihadi networks came under increased scrutiny, and an Algerian national named Rabah Idoughi was found to be hiding in Norway. He had ties to an important al-Qaida-linked terrorist cell plotting attacks against U.S. targets in France, Belgium and other European countries in 2001, but was a relative peripheral affiliate involved in logistics. Attempting to escape prosecution in the Netherlands, Idoughi sought refuge in the Southern Norway coastal town of Mandal where he eventually was detected, held in custody and later deported.[25]

Another example of militant visitors involved two Algerian nationals based in Italy; they were believed to be supporters of the Algerian insurgent group *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC), a GIA successor group with a European-wide network of sympathizers. By the mid-2000s, the GSPC was actively supporting the jihadi insurgents in Iraq and assisted in foreign fighter recruitment to the country. During the summer of 2004, the two Algerian militants showed up in Oslo, where they appeared to be seeking recruits for the Iraq insurgency among Oslo mosque visitors. Italian authorities also suspected the two Algerians of plotting attacks, either in Oslo or in Italy. They were later arrested and convicted in Italy.[26]

Yet another version of the militant visitor was Omar Cheblal, an Algerian national who had spent ten years in a Moroccan jail for arms trafficking on behalf of Algerian Islamist rebels. Upon his release in 2004, he was resettled to Norway with the assistance of the UNHCR, and remained relatively anonymous until *The Prophet's Ummah* emerged in 2012. His role then shifted from that of a former militant and Islamist prison veteran to becoming a key organizer and mentor for the first extremist Islamist group to engage in public activism in Norway.[27]

While all these cases of militant visitors are different, they share some commonalities. Since they were all Algerian nationals, the Algerian civil war and its repercussions were a common backdrop. So were their common experiences as refugees and their desire to escape Algeria and help others escape, by legal or illegal means. Norway has never been a preferred destination for militant Islamists, given its periphery location and small Muslim community. For the militant visitors, however, Norway held a certain attraction as a place where one might seek refuge from judicial prosecution and police crackdowns in Algeria, France or other Europe countries.

Attack Cells: Mikael Davud's Mini-Network and the AQAP Convert

Almost by definition, attack cells linked to *al-Qaida* or IS would be the most likely to carry out terrorist attacks on Norwegian soil. After all, they emerge specifically with the purpose of plotting attacks on behalf of those militant organizations. However, precisely due to their contacts with known organizations and top-level handlers, this network type is also the most likely to attract surveillance and be detected. In the current European context where security services are being overwhelmed by too many IS-linked networks, the chances for attacks inevitably increase. However, in the context of a periphery country the number of direct connections between individuals residing in Norway and *known al-Qaida* or IS operatives or organizational structures has remained relatively low; hence attack cells will have a limited chance of success. This assumption seems to be corroborated by the historical evidence of a near absence jihadi terrorist attacks and plots in Norway.

The only *al-Qaida*-directed attack cell to be detected on Norwegian soil was the small Mikael Davud network, intercepted in the summer of 2010. At the time, it was the most developed terrorist plot by jihadis in Norway. The three-man-cell was headed by a Norwegian citizen of Uyghur origin, Mikael Davud, previously known as Mohammad Rashidin.[28] It was part of a *wider al-Qaida* network, which involved multiple attack plots across several continents, including the so-called New York subway plot and plans to bomb

shopping malls in Manchester. By the time of the arrest of Davud in July 2010, however, most of the other network nodes had been captured.[29] During the trial, it transpired that the Davud cell was plotting attacks in Denmark, from its safe haven in Norway.[30] Hence, while this particular attack cell initially seemed to confirm a long-held concern that Norway, despite its geographical and political distance from continental Europe, could no longer escape the jihadi terrorism threat, the actual attack plans nevertheless demonstrated the opposite. The attack cell did not intend to avenge Norway's military involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, or elsewhere, but aimed instead at the most popular terrorism target at the time, the *Jyllands-Posten* Newspaper in Copenhagen, and its main cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. Again, the Muhammad cartoon affair was the motivating factor, not Norway's role as a close U.S. ally.

While the Davud cell members were able to carry out a good deal of preparation in Norway for the attack before being arrested, another *potential al-Qaida* attack cell with a Norwegian element never got that far. The latter example refers to Anders D., a Norwegian convert in his early thirties, who joined al-Qaida's most potent franchise in terms of international terrorism, *Al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula* (AQAP) in Yemen in late 2011. According to US authorities, Anders D. had attended AQAP training camps where he was "taught to make bomb-belts, improvised explosive devices, and larger explosives used in car bombs".[31] Western intelligence services feared that the Norwegian AQAP recruit had been designated as suicide bomber in a plan to down trans-Atlantic airliners, or participate in attacks targeting the London Summer Olympic in 2012.[32] His case attracted massive media attention, not only because of his unusual background, but also because of dramatic terrorist plots in which he was suspected of being the star actor. Two years later, in July 2014, Anders D. was listed by U.S. authorities as "Specially Designated Global Terrorist", and the Norwegian convert suddenly had his mugshot alongside that of the top al-Qaida leaders.[33] As for his potential role in an attack cell, this possibility was probably much reduced by the fact that he had joined and trained with AQAP in Yemen. By doing so, especially as a "white" convert, with a Norwegian passport, he quickly attracted so much attention that Western intelligence services red-flagged him worldwide.

The case of Anders D. is perhaps more interesting in terms of understanding the next and last category of jihadi networks in Norway according to our five-legged typology, namely the "homegrown (or domestic) extremist" type. Anders D.'s radicalization occurred at a time when the *Prophet's Ummah* was emerging, the first overtly organized extremist Islamist milieu in Norway, a network which gradually became a key conduit for Norwegian foreign fighter recruitment to Syria.

Anders D. was clearly different from the average European jihadi; his case seemed to suggest that global jihadism may also find sympathizers and recruits among the average Norwegian upper middle class of non-Muslim origin. Being a white convert was not an obstacle. In fact, over the past few years, a dozen or more Norwegian converts have travelled to Syria as foreign fighters and joined IS. Also from a European perspective, the background and the links attributed to Anders D., although uncommon, were not entirely unique.

The Norwegian AQAP member grew up in the suburban town of Nesodden near Oslo. He hailed from a relatively privileged family and, contrary to most Islamist extremists in Norway, he had no criminal record. Anders D. worked in construction and at a kindergarten, while pursuing indie-music and left-wing activism. [34] He was drawn to philosophy and conspiracy theories, staunchly rejecting the official accounts of 9/11. [35] Anders D. has been characterized as a quiet impressionable "seeker", who seemed gloomy, maybe depressed at times.[36] As a youth he developed an interest in punk rock and started playing in a hardcore band of Oslo's alternative music scene. He also joined a Marxism-oriented "working group", and contributed to its anti-Capitalist fanzine.

In 2008, Anders D. converted to Islam as he married the daughter of a Moroccan diplomat. The couple had met when both worked at the same kindergarten. His friends described his conversion to Islam as part of the "love story" rather than heartfelt belief, as he had always been a fervent atheist.[37] He had courted the

woman for a long time before eventually asking her father for her hand. The marriage was held in Morocco in 2010. Soon, the convert cut ties with old friends and habits and concentrated fully on Islam. He quit drinking and spent much time in the large mainstream Rabita mosque in Oslo and a mosque in Drammen. At the latter, he reportedly joined “an extremist milieu”, which had caught PST’s attention.[38] In the late fall of 2008 he travelled to Yemen for religious studies and Arabic training. After staying in Yemen for nearly one year, Anders D. returned as an austere believer carrying a Quran and a prayer bead, announcing that he had pleaded loyalty to Islam and located the truth in its philosophy. At this time, in late 2009, he also participated in the so-called “Gaza-riots” in Oslo, violent street protests against Israel’s air campaign targeting the Hamas government in Gaza. A number of youth participating in those riots later became part of the *Prophet’s Ummah* (PU).

Anders D. subsequently undertook several trips to the Middle East, including a visit to Egypt, where he was flagged by the security services for interacting with Islamists who were under surveillance. When the convert went missing, failing to return from Yemen in 2012, an investigation into his activities was launched. It revealed that he had taken active steps to remove online information about himself.[39] While there are few clues as to the exact reasons why he radicalized, an interview with him by the Norwegian state broadcaster NRK showed him to be an identity-seeking individual critical of the political status quo and materialism, finding truthfulness and purity in Islam.[40] Moreover, contact points with extremists in Drammen, Oslo and in Muslim countries seem significant.[41]

Homegrown Extremists: The Case of the Prophet’s Ummah

Homegrown Muslim extremism in Norway first caught headlines in 2006. In September that year, eleven shots were fired at the Jewish synagogue in Oslo, and Arfan B., a former gangster-turned Islamist, was suspected; later he was convicted of complicity.[42] A Norwegian national of Pakistani origin, B. had been drawn towards radical Islam since the early 2000s. Following his release from prison in 2009, he emerged as a central recruiter and leader for young Islamist extremists in Norway, a milieu that later became known as *The Prophet’s Ummah* (PU).

The group’s origins can be traced back to the so-called “Gaza Riots” in 2009. A peaceful antiwar demonstration against the Israeli air campaign in Gaza in 2008-2009 got out of hand and turned violent, with numerous participants being injured and many arrested. Several young Muslims who had taken part in those riots came to form the core of the PU, some of them apparently radicalized by the violent confrontation with the police. In this atmosphere of discontent, B. began mobilizing youth, together with Mohyeldeen M., a young Norwegian-Iraqi student from the city of Larvik. The latter had spent some time at religious seminaries in Saudi Arabia, but was dismissed due to his political activism. M. became an important ideological voice among the PU’s followers. The group included entrepreneurial figures, who were well-versed in Norwegian politics and culture, and far more capable of engaging Norwegian youth than the militant exiles of the past.

From early 2012 onwards, this small extremist Islamist milieu constituted itself as an organized group. On 20 January 2012, nearly forty demonstrators gathered in front of Norway’s Parliament building in Oslo. They gathered to voice their protests against the deployment of Norwegian troops to Afghanistan. All men, the majority well under the age of 30, they donned a typical combination of Islamic robes and Norwegian winter wear, some also sporting camouflage garments. Speeches were held, some more militant than others, in which themes and languages were borrowed from jihadi textbooks. A YouTube video was distributed just days before the event, containing threatening language aimed at the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and even the Crown Prince.[43] The public was shocked. Norwegian Muslims had never publicly displayed extremism in such a manner. The extremists would receive massive attention in the media and public discourse during the following months, –and years. The demonstrators later came to be known *The Prophet’s*

Ummah (PU), initially the name of a Facebook group used to mobilize supporters.[44] The group quickly became more organized with an identifiable leadership, an emir, spokespersons, religious study classes, public *da'wa* activities, a website, YouTube productions and PalTalk chatrooms.[45] While public demonstrations and local proselytization (*da'wa*) dominated their early activities, by early 2013, foreign fighter facilitation, and war-fighting in Syria and Iraq had become an all-consuming issue for its followers.

In short, the PU became the most visible manifestation of the activities of a small, but hardcore network of extremists who came together in the late 2000s. Around a critical mass of experienced activists and authority figures, a wider web was spun to Scandinavia and other parts of Europe. They interacted closely with the radical preacher Omar Bakri Muhammad, an important militant preacher in the UK who had left London for Lebanon in 2005, and his protégé Anjem Choudary, who remained in London. PU members established direct contacts with more experienced counterparts in Scandinavia and other European countries, especially with the *Islam4/Sharia4*-movement and Anjem Choudary's British network. Through mutual visits and cooperation on Internet proselytizing on PalTalk chatrooms, the Norwegian extremists resembled a local branch of the *Islam4/Sharia4*-movement, even when they operated under their own name. As such, the PU was part of a new generation of European jihadis, which grew out of the remnants of Europe-based jihadi networks formed back in the 1990s as these gained new traction by the Iraq war and the U.S.-led Global War on Terror.

The PU quickly became part of European-wide Islamist efforts to mobilize support and recruit fighters for the Syrian conflict. Beginning in late 2012, an increasing number of Norwegian youth, many of them affiliated with PU, departed for Syria. Initially they joined the ranks of the Syrian al-Qaida affiliate *Jabhat al-Nusra* (JAN), *Ahrar al-Sham*, or insurgent groups operating under *Free Syria Army* (FSA).[46] While typically claiming to be providing humanitarian aid only, many of the Norwegian "Syria farers" (as they became known) were armed and took part in military operations. As the *Islamic State* (IS) launched its "Caliphate" in the summer of 2014 and outcompeted JAN as the dominant jihadi fighting force in Syria, a number of Norwegian foreign fighters reportedly switched their loyalty to IS. In December 2015, it was estimated that some 90 Norwegians had spent time in Syria and Iraq as foreign fighters. The number was high, when compared to Norway's small population of only five million and a relatively small Muslim diaspora.

How come Norway ended up producing so many "Syria farers"? The Norwegian case contradicts common wisdom about why radicalization occurs, such as socio-economic deprivation and lack of integration. The Norwegian welfare state has repeatedly been crowned as "the world's best country to live in" by the UN's "Human Development Index".[47] It has a rock solid economy, low levels of socio-economic inequality, and relatively few problems related to integration. Also, Norway is geographically far away from Middle East conflict zones, and unlike other countries such as the UK, Norway has not been a favored destination for radical Islamists, seeking refuge in Europe. Moreover, although Norway has participated militarily in Afghanistan and, for brief periods, in Iraq, it lacks the colonial history of those countries most exposed to jihadism in Europe (UK and France in particular). Lastly, Norway is not known for any high-profile events, attracting the jihadis' attention such as the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons, which put the Danes in the jihadis' cross hairs.

The astonishing upsurge in foreign fighter (FF) recruitment in Norway is perhaps less surprising if one conceptualizes violent radicalization as a diversified phenomenon with many possible outcomes. Hence, FF participation and international terrorism plotting may be seen as end points in two relatively different trajectories. This is especially true for large-scale FF recruitment to a civil war zone. The Norwegian case provides some evidence for this assumption. Even if Norwegian "Syria farers" embraced violent rhetoric, joined jihadi insurgent rebel groups and took part in an extremely violent civil war in Syria, there was hardly any public evidence of terrorist plotting in Europe involving these young men and women. In fact, when the PST informed the public that a possible terrorist attack in Norway had been thwarted in early 2015, the

suspected plotter was reportedly “not part of the Norwegian Islamist milieu”, and the individual had been apprehended and expelled.[48] Hence, the plotter seemed to fit one of the other archetypes outlined in this study, such as that of a “militant visitor” model or an “attack cell” member, but not that of homegrown extremists.

As in many other European countries, the sharp increase in foreign fighter recruitment in Norway from 2012 onwards resulted from a combination of internal and external factors. The spread of militant Salafism among the millennials was partly a result of the post-9/11 climate affecting a generation who came of age and became politically conscious and active during the Global War on Terror.[49] The opportunity structure for foreign fighter participation also radically changed in the Middle East with the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the policies pursued by Syria’s neighbours facilitating easy access to a jihadi war theatre.[50] For a brief period after 2011, “participation in jihad” had been never been easier for Western Muslim youth, and it paved the way for the largest foreign fighter mobilization from Europe, Norway included, a trend that only recently abated.[51]

There is little doubt that PU played a key role in encouraging and facilitating foreign fighter recruitment to Syria. Its leading activists participated on social media platforms in which the Syria conflict and humanitarian aid efforts were discussed, in particular on a Facebook group called “Support and Dua to our Siblings in Syria”, whose rhetoric was more mainstream than the PU’s own Facebook site. In both forums, however, participants were encouraged to support the Syrian insurgency through prayers, money and humanitarian efforts. On a few occasions, postings would also call upon participants to supply “mujahidin” with money and weapons. There were few examples of explicit calls for joining the insurgents, but those who did travel and subsequently died on the battlefield in Syria were celebrated as heroes and role models. Moreover, photos of martyred fighters were used as avatar pictures by a number of forum participants.[52]

In addition to its online activities, the PU contributed significantly, in cooperation with its sister organizations abroad, in facilitating foreign fighter recruitment. In October 2012 PU-leader Ubaydullah H. revealed that the group had assisted “many” in going to Syria and that around ten members had gone to “protect and defend the civilian population”.[53] The shift on the part of the PU from street proselytization and demonstrations in Oslo to Syria foreign fighter facilitation came in the wake of a high-profile visit to the PU in Oslo by Anjem Choudary and his disciples in late 2012. This connection was significant in more than one respect. Not only did it provide the PU with a new *raison d’être* at a time when internal conflicts and scandals threatened the organization.[54] It also linked the PU more explicitly to high-profile jihadi organizations abroad and to the emerging Islamic State project. The PU’s closest European counterparts – the various *Islam4/Sharia4*-movements, and its leading figures Omar Bakri Mohammed and Anjem Choudary – had sided with the Islamic State following the escalating rivalry between IS and al-Qaida in Syria. Its network held sway over many European extremists, ensuring that foreign fighter mobilization in Europe over Syria benefitted the Islamic State more than any other insurgent group.

There exist several open-source surveys in which the background of Norwegian Islamist extremists, including the Syria farers, is described in some detail.[55] The majority were young men from Muslim families of foreign origin, with more than 60 per cent having immigrated to Norway in their childhood or teens.[56] Nearly three quarters were Norwegian nationals, and they also included a substantial share of converts, perhaps as many as 18 percent.[57] The extremists were mostly young men, some of them still teenagers and as many as 65 per cent under the age of 30 years.[58] Women remained a small, but growing minority, constituting some 12 percent of the Islamist extremist milieu by mid-2016. The family backgrounds varied, but there was a high over-representation (21 percent) of young people who have lost one of their parents, or both, during childhood. The latter segment also had high scores on maladjustment, drug abuse, and lack of upper secondary education.[59] According to several estimates, the majority of the Islamist extremists have low education, very little formal employment, and a high percentage of them also have criminal records.

[60] In fact, one survey suggested that 50 percent of Norwegian Islamist foreign fighter returnees had been legally prosecuted for crimes.[61] The PST's most recent assessment found that as many as 68 percent of male Islamist extremists in Norway "have been suspected of, charged with or sentenced for criminal acts prior to the time of radicalization", especially in drug related and violent crime.[62] Furthermore, a significant portion (17 percent) of the Islamist extremists had begun their criminal career before the age of 15 years. Female Islamist extremists were also far more likely to have been involved in crime prior to their radicalization than the average population.[63]

Initially, the Islamist extremist milieu was concentrated around Oslo and in cities relatively close to the capital in South Eastern Norway, including Drammen, Skien, Larvik, Moss and Fredrikstad.[64] The latter city attracted world media attention when it turned out that nearly a dozen Norwegian foreign fighters all originated from the city, many of them living in the same city district.[65] The Syria farers were also recruited from many parts of the country, including in Mid-Norway (Trøndelag), Western Norway (Vestlandet) and even the far north. A majority of Islamist extremists were not born in Norway, and a large number of nationalities were represented. Those with an immigrant background tended to have family ties to North Africa (mainly Algeria), Kosovo, North-Caucasus, Iraq (including Iraqi Kurdistan), Pakistan and Somalia, while at least one central figure originates from Eritrea, and another from Chile. As for the Islamist extremist milieu as a whole, estimated at between 100 and 200 individuals, the two largest Muslim diaspora groups in Norway, the Pakistanis and Somalis, were significantly underrepresented while other smaller Muslim minority groups were overrepresented as were also Norwegian Muslim converts.[66]

While being somewhat geographically scattered and from different ethnic origins, a common feature was that friendship and kinship had played a role in the recruitment process. Quite a few were brothers, belonged to the same family, hailed from the same area in a country of origin, or had attended the same school. Through social networks and social media, the foreign fighters sought to convince others to join them. Veterans shared their experiences from the conflict zone with relatives, friends and acquaintances, bringing it all to life with the use of images and videos, religious justifications and practical advice on how to access the battlefield. The veterans have also provided recruits with contacts to facilitation networks in Norway, Turkey and Syria.[67]

Of the five network types discussed in this article, the "homegrown extremists" category is clearly the most challenging and time-consuming for the authorities, not necessarily because they represent the greatest potential for terrorist attacks, but because they involve Norwegian nationals, and they are far more numerous than the other network types. These are mostly young members of society with a troubled past, and whose reintegration into Norwegian society is both costly and demanding. It also requires finding the right balance between punitive coercive means, including arrests and legal prosecution and soft preventative strategies in which rehabilitation, not punishment, is prioritized. The near absence of Norwegian foreign fighter recruitment since late 2015 may suggest that the current strategies have been relatively successful.

Conclusion

Jihadism in Norway has evolved considerably since the 1990s. From being mainly an imported phenomenon, manifesting itself in the shape of political refugees acting as militant politicians in exiles, jihadism in Norway today has taken on a distinctly Norwegian character. While the militant exiles would distribute paper copies of Arabic-language military communiqués written by jihadi insurgent groups in faraway countries, or run websites of little known militant Islamist groups from their safe haven in Norway, the young Islamist extremists of today interact directly with Norwegian society and recruit successfully from different segments of mainstream society, defying the limits of class, ethnicity and geographical distance. Norwegian language jihadi propaganda is no longer such a rarity, helped by factors such as the social media revolution. This shift towards homegrown jihadism is partly the product of the global war on terrorism and the securitization of Islam and identity issues. More important, however, is the youth rebellion which is part and parcel of the

jihadism success story.[68] The generational shift from middle-aged Islamist politicians to youth activists involved in aid work and foreign fighter participation have created new avenues for youth participation in a way militant Islamist activism in the past did not.

Although the future of jihadism in Norway also depends on the ability to strike a fine balance between coercive and soft means in countering radicalization and foreign fighter participation, it is important to bear in mind that events and dynamics beyond Norway's border will also greatly influence the scope of the threat. European jihadi networks are extremely transnational, with attacks being planned in one country and occurring in another. Furthermore, the geopolitics of the Middle East and the actions of Norway's allies will also influence the terrorism threat level in Norway.

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Notes

[1] The empirical part of this article is taken from our book chapter: Petter Nesser and Brynjar Lia, "Norwegian Muslim Foreign Fighters", to be published in the forthcoming volume M. Ranstorp and F. Reinares (Eds.), *Jihadist Mobilization in Western Europe*.

[2] See e. g. "- Møtte Osama bin Laden: Eks-minister: Mätte rømme fra Taliban", VG Nett, 7 June 2009; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/moette-osama-bin-laden/a/554605/>

[3] "CIA tror Krekar beordrer aksjoner", NRK.no, 24 January 2004; URL: <https://www.nrk.no/norge/cia-tror-krekar-beordrer-aksjoner-1.511942>; and "- CIA-agenter ville kidnappe mulla Krekar", Dagbladet.no 6 November 2009; URL: http://www.dagbladet.no/2009/11/06/nyheter/innenriks/mulla_krekar/cia-agent/8908485/

[4] "Krekar på FN's terrorliste", NRK.no, 8 December 2006; URL: <https://www.nrk.no/norge/krekar-pa-fns-terrorliste-1.1459634>

[5] The Italian investigation claimed that Rawti Shax may have plotted to kidnap Norwegian and British diplomats with a view to exert pressure on Norwegian authorities to release Krekar from prison. The Italian authorities also suspected the network to plan unspecified terrorist attacks in Italy and Norway. See e. g. "Suspects held across Europe in alleged plot to kidnap Norwegian diplomats," The Guardian, 12 November 2015; URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/12/suspects-detained-across-europe-in-anti-terror-operation>; and "Dette mener politiet er Krekars nye terrorgruppe," Aftenposten, 12 November 2015; URL: <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/Dette-mener-politiet-er-Krekars-nye-terrorgruppe-8240330.html>

[6] "Lagmannsretten: Krekar kan utleveres til Italia", NRK.no, 21 October 2016; URL: https://www.nrk.no/norge/lagmannsretten_krekar-kan-utleveres-til-italia-1.13189500; "Anken avvist: Krekar kan utleveres til Italia", VG Nett 23 November 2016; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/anken-avvist-krekar-kan-utleveres-til-italia/a/23854293/>; and "Italia trekker begjæringen om utlevering av mulla Krekar", Aftenposten.no, 30 November 2016; URL: <http://www.aftenposten.no/norge/Italia-trekker-begjæringen-om-utlevering-av-mulla-Krekar-610151b.html>

[7] See statistics in "How Many People Have Been Killed in ISIS Attacks Around the World", New York Times, 16 July 2016; URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/25/world/map-isis-attacks-around-the-world.html>

[8] "Jihadist cell in Europe 'sought recruits for Iraq and Syria'", BBC.co.uk, 12 November 2015; URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34802317>.

[9] "Bhatti bortvist fra Krekar-rettsak", VG Nett, 7 August 2012; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/mulla-krekar/bhatti-bortvist-fra-krekar-rettsak/a/10052356/>

[10] "Advarer mot norsk-somalier i Al-Shabaab," VG, 20 March 2014; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=10146546>.

[11] "Advarer mot norsk-somalier i Al-Shabaab," VG, 20 March 2014; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/artikkel.php?artid=10146546>

[12] "The Swedish Connection," Hate Speech International, 18 January 2016; URL: <https://www.hate-speech.org/the-swedish-connection-2/>

[13] Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[14] "Muslimer blir behandlet som jødene etter annen verdenskrig. Vi blir angrepet," Aftenposten, 14 May 2011.

[15] Ibid.

[16] The most thorough account of Dhuhulow's background is Lars Akerhaug, *En norsk terrorist. Portrett av den nye ekstremismen*. Oslo, Kagge forlag, 2015.

[17] "Dhuhulow ble mobbet og utsatt for rasisme," NRK.no, 21 October 2014; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/dokumentar/dhuhulow-ble-mobbet-og-utsatt-for-rasisme-1.11990212>

[18] "Svensksomalier fikk Dhuhulow til å avlegge terrorred," NRK.no, 21 October 2014; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/dokumentar/svensksomalier-fikk-dhuhulow-til-a-avlegge-terrorred-1.11990259>

[19] According to the Danish informant Morten Storm, al-Muhajir cooperated with al-Shabaab's former top-leader Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame in establishing ties between the movement and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). He also corresponded with Anwar al-Awlaki about connecting the two groups, and he was also the author of an article about bomb-making in the infamous AQAP's propaganda magazine Inspire. See Morten Storm, Paul Cruickshank, and Tim Lister, *Agent Storm: A Spy Inside Al-Qaeda* (Penguin, 2015); and Inspire Magazine, issue 3, November 2010; URL: <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/inspire-magazine-3.pdf>

[20] "U.S. official: Raid's target was Al-Shabaab foreign fighter commander," CNN.com, 7 October 2013; URL: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/05/world/africa/somalia-us-shabaab-raid/>

- [21] "Al Shabaab Calls For Westgate-Style Attacks On Western Shopping Malls In New Video", Vice.com, 22 February 2015; URL: <https://news.vice.com/article/al-shabaab-calls-for-westgate-style-attacks-on-western-shopping-malls-in-new-video>. See also "Europe could be next on al-Shabaab's hit list", The Independent, 13 July 2010; URL: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/europe-could-be-next-on-al-shabaabs-hit-list-2025097.html>
- [22] For media reports about alleged GIA cells in Norway, see "Muslimske terrorceller i Norge", VG, 29 September 1995; URL: <http://vg.subnett.no/visArtikkel.asp?id=1129271>
- [23] For a discussion of GIA's European-wide network, see Brynjar Lia and Åshild Kjøk, Islamist insurgencies, diasporic support networks, and their host states: The case of the Algerian GIA in Europe 1993-2000. Kjeller: FFI, FFI-Report-2001/03789, 2001; URL: <http://rapporter.ffi.no/rapporter/2001/03789.pdf>
- [24] In 2002 the UK-based jihadi preacher Omar Bakri told Norwegian reporters that the transnational radical political Islamist movement Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) and its militant spin-off al-Muhajiroun (AM) had set up networks and cells among Muslim university students in Oslo. He added that he had been in Norway a couple of times to support this effort. See "Vil ha Norge som islamsk stat", VG Nett, 24 April 2002; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/vil-ha-norge-som-islamsk-stat/a/4749071/>
- [25] "Terrormistenk var i Norge-ble utvist", VG Nett 18 November 2005; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrortrussel-mot-norge/terrormistenk-var-i-norge-ble-utvist/a/109593/>
- [26] According to media reports, they had discussed launching an attack on the synagogue in Oslo, or a shopping mall. "Bodde i Norge i fjor sommer", VG Nett, 17 November 2005; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/krigen-mot-terror/artikkel.php?artid=109572> and "Planla terrorangrep i Oslo: Algeriske terrrorsiktede var på vei til Oslo", VG Nett 11 September 2006; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=130053>
- [27] Cheblal travelled to Syria and Iraq in 2015 where he was reportedly killed outside Mosul, presumably fighting with ISIS. See "Familien: Norsk-algerisk IS-kriger drept i Irak", VG Nett, 22 January 2016; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/syria-farerne/familien-norsk-algerisk-is-kriger-drept-i-irak/a/23601306/>
- [28] For a detailed discussion of the plot, see Petter Nesser & Brynjar Lia. "Lessons Learned from the July 2010 Norwegian Terrorist Plot". CTC Sentinel 3, no. 8 (2010): 13-17; URL: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/lessons-learned-from-the-july-2010-norwegian-terrorist-plot>
- [29] "Norway Announces Three Arrests in Terrorist Plot," New York Times, 8 July 2010; URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/09/world/europe/09norway.html>; "Terrorplaner i Oslo, London og New York kobles sammen," Aftenposten.no, 8 July 2010; URL: <http://www.aftenposten.no/norge/Terrorplaner-i-Oslo--London-og-New-York-kobles-sammen-216389b.html>; and "Han tystet om norsk terror-celle," VG Nett, 9 July 2010; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/terrorisme/han-tystet-om-norsk-terror-celle/a/10003188/>
- [30] Most likely the cell had planned a bomb attack against the Jyllands-Posten newspaper, which published cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2005, or to assassinate Kurt Westergaard, one of the cartoonists. Davud and two accomplices (one of whom was acquitted altogether) had gathered a small amount of chemicals suitable for producing the explosive TATP. They had also sought ways to obtain a handgun for the purpose of an assassination; Verdict against Mikael Davud et al., Oslo Tingrett, dated 30 January 2012. See also "Davud og Bujak dømt for terrorplanlegging", VG Nett, 20 January 2010; URL: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrorisme/davud-og-bujak-doemt-for-terrorplanlegging/a/10077183/>
- [31] Cited in "Terrorist Designation of Anders Cameroon Ostensvig Dale", U.S. Department of State, Media Note, Office of the Spokesperson, Washington, DC, July 15, 2014; URL: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/07/229277.htm>.
- [32] "Dette er den terrrorsiktede nordmannen Anders Dale (35)", TV2.no, 16 July 2014; URL: <http://www.tv2.no/a/5815714/>
- [33] "USA har satt norsk statsborger på terrorliste", TV2.no, 15 July 2014; URL: <http://www.tv2.no/2014/07/15/nyheter/5813710>
- [34] "Raddis-fortid, barnehagejobb og kone med diplomatfar," Dagbladet.no, 5 July 2012; URL: <http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/07/05/nyheter/jemen/innenriks/terror/al-qaida/22421980/>
- [35] "Trodde han ble muslim fordi han fant drømmedama," Dagbladet.no, 6 July 2012; URL: <http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/07/05/nyheter/jemen/innenriks/terror/al-qaida/22432046/>
- [36] "Raddis-fortid, barnehagejobb og kone med diplomatfar," Dagbladet.no, 5 July 2012; URL: <http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/07/05/nyheter/jemen/innenriks/terror/al-qaida/22421980/>
- [37] "Trodde han ble muslim fordi han fant drømmedama," Dagbladet.no, 6 July 2012; URL: <http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/07/05/nyheter/jemen/innenriks/terror/al-qaida/22432046/>
- [38] "Knyttes til Drammenmoské," Utrop, 7 May 2012; URL: <http://www.utrop.no/Nyheter/Innenriks/23091>
- [39] This could simply have meant that he wanted to break with his atheist, non-Muslim past, but it could also mean that he wanted to keep a low-profile as an AQAP operative.
- [40] "Jeg har aldri vært så sikker," NRK.no, 6 July 2012; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/norge/1.8235019>
- [41] "Knyttes til Drammenmoské," Utrop, 7 May 2012; URL: <http://www.utrop.no/Nyheter/Innenriks/23091>
- [42] Arfan B. was also prosecuted, but acquitted of alleged plans to hurl hand grenades at the US and Israeli embassies. See "Hvem er Arfan Bhatti?" Aftenposten.no, 16 January 2015; URL: <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/Hvem-er-Arfan-Bhatti-7864498.html>
- [43] "Video truer kronprinsen, Støre og Stoltenberg", Aftenposten.no, 17 January 2016; URL: <http://www.aftenposten.no/norge/Video-truer-kronprinsen--Store-og-Stoltenberg-167550b.html>
- [44] For a short period in mid-2012, the group also referred to themselves as "Ansar al-Sunnah".
- [45] Brynjar Lia, "Profetens Ummah og sosiale medier". In Forebygging av radikaliserings og voldelig ekstremisme på internett, edited by Inger Marie Sunde. 105-112. Oslo: Politihoyskolen, PHS Forskningsrapport No 2013:1; URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/43716ef78a2b410c9e9fb8601dff0216/rapport-forebygging-rad-eks.pdf>
- [46] In the fall of 2012 the Chief of Norway's intelligence service confirmed that seven Norwegians had joined Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), al-Qaida's arm in Syria. See "Syv personer kjemper med Al Qaida i Syria", NRK.no, 17 October 2012; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/norge/flere-norske-muslimere-til-syria-1.8361699> Then, in December 2012, an officer in the Free Syria Army (FSA) told the Arabic daily al-Hayat that 13 Norwegians were fighting in the ranks of JAN. See "Tibbar 'jabhat al-nusra' irhaban juz' min ittifaq niha'i ala al-hazm al-'askari," al-Hayat, 13 December 2013; URL: <http://alhayat.com/Details/461601>
- [47] "Best country in the world to live? Still Norway, according to the U.N.", CNN.com, 16 December 2015; URL: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/16/travel/undp-most-liveable-country/>
- [48] "PST kan ha avverget terrorangrep", nrk.no, 9 February 2016; URL: <https://www.nrk.no/norge/pst-kan-ha-avverget-terrorangrep-1.12795251>
- [49] Petter Nesser, Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History. London: Hurst, 2016, pp. 267ff.
- [50] Brynjar Lia, "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011: Explaining its Expansion", Middle East Policy 23, no.4 (2016): 74-91.

- [51] There was a sharp decline in foreign fighter recruitment from Norway to Syria and Iraq, beginning in late 2015. See “Drastisk fall i antall norske fremmedkrigere”, Nettavisen, 19 April 2016; URL: <http://www.nettavisen.no/nyheter/innenriks/drastisk-fall-i-antall-norske-fremmedkrigere/3423215154.html>
- [52] Brynjar Lia, “Profetens Ummah og sosiale medier”. In Forebygging av radikalisering og voldelig ekstremisme på internett, edited by Inger Marie Sunde. 105-112. Oslo: Politihøyskolen, PHS Forskningsrapport No 2013:1; URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/43716ef78a2b410c9e9fb8601dff0216/rapport-forebygging-rad-eks.pdf>
- [53] “– Et titall medlemmer av vår organisasjon i Syria”, NRK, 17 October 2012; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/norge/-er-der-for-a-forsvare-sivlie-1.8362077>
- [54] See e.g. “«Noen av mennene i Profetens Ummah har et storforbruk av koner. De finner dem på Facebook»”, TV2.no, 7 March 2013; URL: <http://www.tv2.no/a/4003937>
- [55] For example, in June 2014, the PST released an assessment based on a survey of some 50 individuals that had been to Syria. The government-owned TV Channel NRK also published a survey of 45 foreign fighters, most of them being in Syria, and some in other war theaters (such as Yemen and Somalia). A study conducted at the Norwegian Police University College surveyed the background of ten Norwegian Islamist extremists who were also converts, seven of whom were foreign fighters. Finally, in September 2016, the PST released a detailed survey of Norwegian Islamist extremists of which the foreign fighter contingency was a substantial part. Together, these sources give an overall sense of the foreign fighters’ socio-economic background as well as patterns in radicalization. See “Norske fremmedkrigere i Syria”, PST Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste Report (18 June 2014; URL: <http://www.pst.no/media/utgivelser/norske-fremmedkrigere-i-syria/>; and “Stor kartlegging: Dette er dei norske framandkrigarane”, NRK.no, 27 November 2014; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/norge/desse-vart-framandkrigarar-1.12061691>; Ruben Antony, “Ekstreme konvertitter: En dybdestudie av ti radikalisererte norske konvertitter til islam”. Oslo: Norwegian Police University College, MA-thesis, June 2015; URL: http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/id/363654/master_Antonty_2015.pdf; and “What background do individuals who frequent extreme Islamist environments in Norway have prior to their radicalisation?” PST–Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste Report, (12 September 2016); URL: http://www.pst.no/media/82364/Radikaliseringsprosjektet_rapport_ugrad_eng_12-09-16.pdf
- [56] “What background do individuals who frequent extreme Islamist environments in Norway have prior to their radicalisation?” PST–Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste Report, (12 September 2016; URL: http://www.pst.no/media/82364/Radikaliseringsprosjektet_rapport_ugrad_eng_12-09-16.pdf
- [57] Ibid. Previous estimates suggested an even higher proportion. In November 2013 NRK reported that ten out of forty Norwegian foreign fighters were converts. See “10 norske konvertitter i Syria”, NRK.no 25 November 2013; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/norge/10-norske-konvertitter-i-syria-1.11373011>.
- [58] Ibid. NRK’s foreign fighter survey found that 64 percent of the travelers were between 18 and 25 years old, “Terrorforskere om fremmedkrigere: – Mange har mislyktes i livet”, NRK, 26 November 2014; URL: http://www.nrk.no/norge/terrorforskere-om-fremmedkrigere-_-mange-har-mislyktes-i-livet-1.12066062
- [59] Ibid.
- [60] “Norske fremmedkrigere i Syria” (PST, June 18, 2014); URL: <http://www.pst.no/media/utgivelser/norske-fremmedkrigere-i-syria/>. According to NRK’s survey 33 % had been convicted of crimes and 33 % dropped out of secondary education (high school), “Terrorforskere om fremmedkrigere: – Mange har mislyktes i livet”, NRK, 26 November 2014; URL: http://www.nrk.no/norge/terrorforskere-om-fremmedkrigere-_-mange-har-mislyktes-i-livet-1.12066062. The study of ten extremist converts revealed that they typically had experienced troubled family backgrounds, performed mediocly in school and work life, and that several had dabbled in crime. Ruben Antony, Ekstreme konvertitter: En dybdestudie av ti radikalisererte norske konvertitter til islam. Oslo: Norwegian Police University College, MA-thesis, June 2015; URL: http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/id/363654/master_Antonty_2015.pdf.
- [61] “Halvparten av fremmedkrigerne som har returnert fra Syria og Irak, er straffeforfulgt”, Aftenposten.no 28 January 2016; URL: <http://www.aftenposten.no/norge/Halvparten-av-fremmedkrigerne-som-har-returnert-fra-Syria-og-Irak-er-straffeforfulgt-19644b.html>
- [62] “What background do individuals who frequent extreme Islamist environments in Norway have prior to their radicalisation?” PST–Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste Report, (12 September 2016) ; URL: http://www.pst.no/media/82364/Radikaliseringsprosjektet_rapport_ugrad_eng_12-09-16.pdf
- [63] 31 per cent of them had been suspected of, charged with or sentenced for, criminal acts prior to the time of radicalization. Ibid.
- [64] “Se hvor de norske jihadistene kommer fra”, NRK, 27 November 2014; URL: <http://www.nrk.no/norge/se-hvor-de-norske-jihadistene-kommer-fra-1.12061557>
- [65] “A Norway Town and Its Pipeline to Jihad in Syria”, The New York Times, 4 April 2015; URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/world/europe/a-norway-town-and-its-pipeline-to-jihad-in-syria.html?_r=0
- [66] “What background do individuals who frequent extreme Islamist environments in Norway have prior to their radicalisation?” PST–Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste Report, (12 September 2016); URL: http://www.pst.no/media/82364/Radikaliseringsprosjektet_rapport_ugrad_eng_12-09-16.pdf
- [67] “Slik blir de rekruttert: Nettverk i Norge etterforskes for å sende unge nordmenn til Syria”, VG Nett, 27 July 2014; URL: http://pluss.vg.no/2014/07/27/1701/1701_23261886
- [68] See discussion in Brynjar Lia, “The Jihadi Movement and Rebel Governance: A Reassertion of a Patriarchal Order?” Die Welt des Islams (forthcoming 2017).