During the 1990s there was a worldwide decline in the number of terrorist attacks, whereas political crime in general increased in most Western liberal democracies. The study analyses the emergence of radical alternative movements in Finland in the 1990s and their illegal underground activities as a phenomenon of the late modern risk society. Since reflexivity is an essential feature of late modernity, the study also discusses ways in which law enforcement can manage risks posed by political crime.

Secrecy influences the character of radical alternative movements. In the context of late modern social flux they are better understood as communitarian movements than social ones. Belonging to the community is more important to their supporters than the activities of the community. Furthermore, radical alternative movements consist of beliefs non-typical to mainstream society. They are part of the so-called cultic milieu; the dynamics of which is influenced by its relationship to mainstream society and the ideology of ‘seeking’.

Finnish society in the 1990s provided a fertile breeding ground for the emergence of radical movements and illegal underground activities. However, international influences which were adopted played a significant role. Radical alternative movements did not have to subscribe to illegal underground activities since their political agenda was not illegitimate. Illegal underground activities were organised based on the strategy of leaderless resistance. Nevertheless, structures had to be created to provide for resources and to mobilise illegal underground activities. The refrain of violence against persons was the most important strategic choice. For instance, it prevented the use of effective law enforcement counter-measures. However, no short or long-term political goals were achieved by illegal means. The tactics seemed to have served mainly organisational maintenance.

Illegal underground activities impinge directly upon the rights and liberties of others. However, balancing between liberty and order is a major challenge as democratic values are preserved by adopting the very means that tend to subvert them. Analysis is a new tool for law enforcement and can be used to assess threats and risks, set priorities and formulate counter-strategies.

Avainsanat - Nyckelord: political movement - protest - 1990s - Finland
political crime - terrorism - 1990s - mobilisation - strategy - Finland
law enforcement - analysis - counter-strategy