

THE NORDIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT AS A THREAT TO EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) is a Scandinavian neo-Nazi organization that promotes a violent, National Socialist ideology, supported by a hijacking of Nordic religious symbolism. The article examines how the NRM reinterprets pre-Christian mythology and symbols, such as runes and Viking myths, to legitimize ideas of racial superiority and motivate its followers to take violent action. The NRM not only distorts Nordic spirituality, but uses this symbolism to construct an exclusive racial identity and a form of heroic “sacrifice” that justifies violence against ethnic minorities and political opponents. In addition, the article highlights the transnational impact of the NRM, noting its links to other extremist groups and its designation as a terrorist organization by the United States Department of State. This designation reflects global concerns about right-wing extremism and the associated security risks. The misuse of religious symbols amplifies the risk of radicalization and violence among disillusioned youth, drawing them towards violent ethnic nationalism. The article also offers an analysis of international efforts to counter violent extremism and the need for expanded cooperation to combat this threat.

Keywords: terrorism; extreme right; Nordic Resistance Movement; ideology; violence; religion;

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Theoretical foundation. The study draws on several relevant theoretical frameworks from the field of security and extremism studies with the aim of better understanding how the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) uses religious and mythological symbolism to justify and propagate extreme violence. A relevant theoretical approach is the Securitization Theory (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 1998, pp. 21-47), which analyses the process by which a state transforms certain situations into security issues through official discourse and actions. In the case of the NRM organization, securitization can be interpreted as an analytical framework for understanding how authorities in the Nordic states, the USA, and other countries view the group as a threat to national security. Thus, the authorities’ use of the concept of securitization reflects concerns about the ideology and international activities of NRM, with potential implications for transnational stability and security.

Also, Radicalization Theory (McCauley, Moskaleiko, 2008, pp. 415-433) provides a solid theoretical framework for understanding the psychological and social processes by which disillusioned youth are drawn to extremist ideologies. The NRM uses a combination of mythology and symbolic violence to build a strong collective identity, giving young people a sense of belonging and purpose. This is a form of identity mobilization, specific to radical groups, which exploits the fear of cultural and social changes to justify violent acts. In addition, the Theory of Asymmetric Conflict (Kaldor, 2006, pp. 1-18) can be discussed, which explains how smaller and poorly organized groups, such as the NRM, resort to violent and terrorist strategies to undermine democratic institutions. These theoretical frameworks are essential to understanding how the NRM not only distorts religious symbols, but also instrumentalizes these symbols to create a global security threat. In the context of security theories, the right-wing extremism of the NRM is not just an isolated phenomenon, but one that causes political and social instability at the international level.

The theoretical and methodological background section clarifies that this paper analyses the Nordic Resistance Movement as a threat to European and international security. The central research question is to investigate how the NRM instrumentalises Nordic symbolism to legitimize a violent ideology with the aim of influencing and destabilizing social and political structures. For this

purpose, the paper coherently applies three theoretical frameworks. Securitization theory explains how certain states view NRM as a security threat by analysing the discourses through which the organization is publicly presented as a risk to social order. Radicalization theory helps to identify the psychological and social processes by which the NRM attracts supporters, using Nordic symbols to confer a sense of belonging. Finally, the theory of asymmetric conflict underpins the analysis of the strategies through which the NRM causes instability and promotes its extremist agenda, undermining democratic institutions. This integrated theoretical framework facilitates deep and grounded analysis, providing coherent and structured answers to the stated research questions.

Methodology. This article uses a qualitative research methodology based on documentary analysis and case study to investigate the actions and ideology of the Nordic Resistance Movement. The research draws on extensive secondary sources, including security reports, academic studies, media documents and field reports produced by international organizations that monitor the activity of extremist groups. A central element of the methodology is discourse analysis, whereby official NRM publications, websites and online propaganda materials are examined to understand how religious and mythological symbolism is used as a tool for recruitment and mobilization. An important aspect of the method is the case study of extremist violence committed by NRM members. The article examines several major violent incidents, such as the 2016 and 2017 Gothenburg bombings, which involved members of the NRM. By investigating these cases, it aims to demonstrate the direct link between the extremist ideology promoted by the NRM and the violent actions they inspired. It allows not only to understand how extremist discourse is transformed into concrete actions, but also to identify patterns of radicalization among group members. In terms of source selection, the research is based on reports produced by recognized organizations such as the Counter Extremism Project and ADL, which provide a detailed assessment of NRM activities and its transnational impact. Another important methodological element is comparative analysis. The NRM is analysed in relation to other similar extremist movements in Europe and the United States of America, such as the Russian Imperial Movement and Der Dritte Weg. It provides the context and allows the identification of common strategies used by these groups, such as the use of online propaganda and religious symbols to mobilize and radicalize new members.

Limitations of the research. Although this analysis provides a detailed picture of NRM activities and ideology, there are some limitations. One of them is restricted access to the group's internal primary sources, such as their internal communications

and organizational strategies, which are difficult to obtain due to the clandestine nature of the organization. Also, the article is largely based on secondary sources, which may bring the risk of subjectivity on the part of the authors of these reports. However, by triangulating sources and selecting internationally recognized studies and reports, these limitations are minimized.

THE NORDIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT – A THREAT TO EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) represents an alarming phenomenon in the landscape of contemporary extremism, with deep roots in nationalist and neo-Nazi ideologies. Although founded in Scandinavia, this far-right organization has transformed over the course of more than two decades into a well-organized transnational network known for its radical rhetoric and violent actions. Through a combination of propaganda, paramilitary recruitment and direct attacks, the NRM poses a serious threat to national and international security, being involved in a constant effort to destabilize democracy in the Nordic countries.

The NRM is a far-right organization with deep roots in the racial nationalism and far-right traditions of Scandinavia. Kacper Rekawek and Morgan Finnsiö say the NRM is a revolutionary neo-Nazi group that aims to overthrow democracy in the Nordic countries and replace it with a Nazi dictatorship. Despite their claims of preference for legal methods, they are prepared to resort to violence to achieve their goals. The group reveres historical figures such as Adolf Hitler and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and, with minor modernizations, remains a classic exponent of eo-Nazi ideology (Rekawek, Finnsiö, 2024). The NRM poses a significant security risk due to its extremist ideology, violent actions and paramilitary structure. The group promotes deeply anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant rhetoric, attempting to spread these ideas through propaganda and violent actions, including bombings and physical attacks (Counter Extremism Project, 2024). Over a quarter of a century, the NRM has evolved into a complex transnational organization with a strict hierarchical structure and paramilitary elements. The group has been responsible for violent attacks against citizens, minorities, and democratic institutions, posing a major threat to public security (ADL, 2022). Founded in 1997, the NRM has survived various difficulties and divisions that could have destroyed other similar groups. The group has a rigid and hierarchical structure, being known for its violence in both rhetoric and practice. It has carried out brutal attacks in the Nordic countries, including lethal actions (Rekawek, Finnsiö, ib.). The NRM uses propaganda effectively and presents itself as a bold and feared organization, taking advantage of the relatively

lax Swedish context regarding right-wing extremism. It allows them to capture the attention of extremist observers and inspire other like-minded groups (Ib.). After a peak in 2018, the NRM suffered from internal divisions and recruitment problems, but stabilized in 2024, under a new leader, Fredrik Vejdeland. Although smaller compared to the peak period, they remain an active and violent threat (Ib.).

On 14 June 2024, the US Department of State designated the NRM and three of its leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. The action highlights racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist threats and the transnational impact of violent white supremacy. The decision is the result of in-depth consultations with the US's European partners and is intended to intensify international measures against these threats (Miller, 2024). Designation as a terrorist group will affect the NRM's financial interactions and increase international monitoring. This designation will complicate the group's activities and consume their resources (Rekawek, Finnsjö, ib.). It marks the first time the Biden administration has labelled a far-right organization in this way. Previously, the only far-right organization so designated was the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), in April 2020, during the Trump administration (Blazakis, 2024-a). The NRM designation was made against a backdrop of increased right-wing extremism violence in Europe, including recent attacks and the rise in political influence of far-right groups. This action reflects a more proactive approach by the Biden administration in combating international threats (Blazakis, 2024-b). The NRM maintains links with various extremist groups in Sweden, but also in other European states, such as Der Dritte Weg, and they have participated in extremist events in several European countries. In the past, they had relations with the Russian Imperial Movement, but these contacts became more discreet after the designation of the Russian Imperial Movement as a terrorist group (Rekawek, Finnsjö, ib.). NRM and RIM had close connections, including collaborations in paramilitary training and attending conferences with anti-Semitic content. These links point to a complex international network of right-wing extremism that shares resources and ideologies (Blazakis, 2024-a).

Despite domestic challenges and international pressure, the NRM remains a strong exponent of violent far-right extremism. With its designation as a terrorist group in 2024, the United States of America signals an intensification of global efforts to combat white supremacy and extremist groups. However, its paramilitary structure, transnational ties, and commitment to violence continue to make the NRM a dangerous force capable of influencing and destabilizing security both locally and globally.

The Manipulation of Nordic Religious Symbols in the NMR's National Socialist Ideology: A Distorted View of Spirituality and Race

A central aspect of the movement is religious and mythological symbolism, which is used to reinforce ethnic identity and racial ideology. NMR uses pagan myths and symbols, especially from Norse mythology, such as the Tiwaz/Tyr and Yngvi/Ing runes, which reflect Norse gods and warrior dynasties (Kenes, 2020, p. 12). The NMR uses the "Viking image" to differentiate itself from European far-right ideologies that defend "Christian civilization", replacing this tradition with a view focused on Norse mythology and culture (Ib.). The NRM articulates its ideology as a form of "racial revolution", which is not only limited to political and social aspects, but also includes a religious component, promoting an anti-religious vision based on the rejection of traditional values and religious diversity (ADL, 2022). The main symbol of the NRM is the Tiwaz rune, which has links to Nazi-era religious symbolism, also used in the context of far-right ideology. It highlights the fact that National Socialist ideologies are often linked to perverted religious concepts (Ib.). The NRM considers traditional religion to be a tool of the "global Zionist elite" and part of structures it considers corrupt and hostile to the Nordic race. NRM ideology rejects traditional religious values and views them as part of the global problem they challenge, namely Jewish control of humanity (Ib.).

One of the founders of the NMR who led the organization between 1997 and 2015, Klas Lund, was also the editor-in-chief of *Folktribunen*, a magazine that between 1997 and 2002 was used by the Swedish Resistance Movement – the predecessor of the NRM, as a communication platform to disseminate the positions and the activities of the organization (Kenes, 2020, p. 7). *Folktribunen* promoted Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the one who founded and led the Iron Guard, an ultra-nationalist and strongly anti-Semitic movement, founded in 1927 in Romania. Initially, this "terrorist" organization was called the Archangel Michael Legion, and its leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "a Christian fanatic", wanted the formation of a state controlled by "an elite", similar to "a religious sect" (Kenes, p. 8). Its ideology entailed the formation of a "new man", and the Iron Guard was to play a central role in this revolution. Under his leadership, the organization was involved in numerous political assassinations and violent attacks, especially against Jews (Ib.). After carrying out a scientific research, Iulian Dinulescu concluded that neo-legionary religious fanaticism, based on the ideology of the Iron Guard, continues to be relevant through the combination of religious and ultra-nationalist ideas, the rejection of foreigners and anti-Semitism, and the promotion of a state based on white and Christian identity (Dinulescu, 2020, pp. 173-177).

The Vikings are presented as a central symbol in *“Nordic National Socialism”*, representing the *“Nordic race”*, ideals of masculinity and a cohesive male community, reinterpreted in a Nordic context. The Vikings are used to make Nazi ideology more acceptable in the Nordic context, removing exclusive associations with Germany and orienting it towards a Nordic cultural-historical identity (Kenes, p. 12). *“The religion of the Norse and Germanic gods”*, such as Odinism, *“is popular among skinheads because of its violent and warlike ethos”*, says Pollard (2016, p. 409). It is presented as *“a religion of warriors”*, in contrast to Christianity, considered *“a religion of slaves”* in *“Nietzschean terms”* (Ib.). The NRM rejects Christianity as a *“contagious mental disease”* and a *“form of spiritual AIDS”* that has weakened society’s natural defences against external influences. Christianity is seen as a threat *“that must be fought by all means”* (Riis-Knudsen, 2010, p. 13; Lodenius, 2020, p. 152).

NRM focuses on reinterpreting old Nordic religious symbols to construct a *völkisch* identity, a concept that combines ethnicity with nationalism and mythology (Butters, 2023, pp. 60-61). This movement uses symbols from pre-Christian religions, especially Norse mythology and Norse paganism, in a process of re-signification that attempts to connect the idea of racial purity with the ancient beliefs of the Vikings (Ib., pp. 61-62). In this context, religious symbols are not only visual signs, but vehicles for transmitting an identity and spiritual message, being associated with esoteric beliefs that resonate with the idea of the superiority of the white race (Ib.). For example, the Norse runes, especially the Týr rune, are re-signified to symbolize courage, sacrifice and fighting for a cause deemed *“just”* by the movement. These symbols serve to construct a group religiosity, where spirituality is linked to ethnicity and belonging to a so-called pure Nordic race. The use of these symbols deepens the separation from the Christian religion, often criticized by NRM members, who prefer values related to Norse mythology and a glorified past, supposedly noble and unaltered by external influences (Ib., pp. 65-67).

This movement succeeded in using nationalist and national socialist ideology to define a *“religion”* of race and blood, linking spirituality to ethnic purity and racist ideas (Ravndal, 2019, pp. 21-22). The NRM is not a religious movement in the traditional sense, but embraces a National Socialist ideology centred on the creation of a white Nordic state. In the NRM view, religion is subordinated to extreme nationalism, and spiritual elements are marginalized in favour of the struggle for racial purity and the war against the perceived enemies of the white race (Bjørge, Ravndal, 2020, p. 37). However, NRM members do not completely reject spirituality; they sometimes adopt a rhetoric related to Nordic identity, loosely connected to Nordic mythology and pagan traditions, but without an explicit religiosity.

Instead, the focus is on the idea of struggle and sacrifice for the *“survival of the Nordic race”* (Ib., pp. 39-40). The NRM is described as a radical nationalist movement that is not explicitly based on a formal religion, but on a belief system that invalidates human equality and promotes violence to protect an ethnically homogeneous state (Ranstorp, Ahlin, 2020, pp. 2-3). Although there is no formal religion associated with the movement, there is a rhetoric of *“sacrifice”* for the racial cause, which can be seen as a form of distorted spirituality used to legitimize violence against other ethnic and cultural groups (Ib., pp. 3-4). Religion plays an important role in NRM through the use of symbols associated with Norse mythology and Germanic paganism. These symbols, considered sacred by some, are used by others to promote a nationalist and supremacist vision. Some pagan communities, known as *“Heathenry”*, view these symbols as part of their spiritual identity, while other extremist groups use them to spread messages of racial hatred (Nikitins, 2020, p. 1). The spiritual ideology of the NRM is rooted in ancient Nordic mythologies, used not to express genuine religiosity, but to justify a false historical past based on racial purity (Ib., p. 6). This falsification of history includes the distortion of the relations between the Scandinavian peoples and the other ethnic groups, highlighting a racist ideology that denies the historical diversity and multiculturalism of ancient Scandinavia (Ib., p. 7).

Symbols such as the runes Týr, Sig and Odal are extremely important in the discourse and aesthetics of the NRM, having a dual function: on the one hand, they are used as identity symbols of the movement and, on the other hand, as means of legitimizing claims about racial superiority (Butters, pp. 65-66). For example, the Týr rune, which symbolizes war and victory, is used as the official emblem of the NRM, becoming a substitute for Nazi symbols, such as the swastika, which are banned in many countries (Ib.). Other symbols, such as the Odal rune, which symbolizes *“blood and soil”* (Blut und Boden), are directly associated with Nazi ideologies, being recontextualized to promote a nationalist and racist ideology based on racial purity and the ancestral connection to the land (Ib., pp. 66-67). Likewise, the Valknut, an ancient Viking symbol associated with heroic death and the afterlife in Norse mythology, was re-signified by NRM members to represent sacrifice and struggle for the white race, becoming a symbol of racial identity (Ib., pp. 67-68).

This appropriation of religious symbols from the Nordic past is a strategy by which the movement constructs an ideology that promotes a violent ethnic nationalism disguised as pre-Christian spirituality and religiosity (Ib., pp. 70-71). The use of runes and other symbols from Norse mythology, such as Valknut or Yggdrasil, is common in their public activities. These symbols are reinterpreted

and used to strengthen the link between the National Socialist ideology and the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Nordics (Ravndal, 2019, pp. 22-23). Nordic religious symbols are presented as a central element of their struggle to create a racially pure state, where ancient mythology becomes a source of legitimation for the movement's political goals (Ravndal, p. 25). Religious symbolism within the NRM is related to nationalist symbols and National Socialist ideology rather than a formal religion. The movement uses various cultural and historical elements from the Nordic past to legitimize its struggle. For example, symbols and rhetoric about "race war" are used as means of propaganda and recruitment (Bjørngo, Ravndal, 2020, pp. 39-40). This instrumentalization of historical symbols to support nationalist ideology shows how the NRM reinterprets cultural elements to promote extremism.

Although not based on traditional religious symbols, the movement uses a number of images and ideas that evoke Nordic identity and the struggle for the survival of the Nordic race. They include ideas about defending the "sacred" territory of the Nordic people, which must be protected against external influences (Ranstorp, Ahlin, 2020, pp. 4-5). Religious symbols, especially those from Nordic mythology, have been appropriated by supremacist groups, including the NRM. Among the symbols used are runes such as "othala", which symbolizes ancestral heritage, and "sowilo", associated with victory and honour (Nikitins, 2020, pp. 6-7). In the context of the NRM, these symbols are reinterpreted to promote the idea of racial purity and the creation of an ethno-nationalist state (Nikitins, p. 14). Religious symbols are diverted from their original meaning, becoming political instruments of extremism (Ib., p. 13). For example, "Black Sun", a Germanic symbol, is frequently used by the NRM for fascist propaganda purposes (Ib., p. 5).

The NRM uses symbols associated with Nazi Germany, such as the swastika, in its public demonstrations and propaganda activities. Although the group does not operate primarily on a religious basis, their ideology of racial superiority and anti-Semitic rhetoric is presented in an almost religious manner, treating their mission to defend the "Nordic people" as a sacred goal. The NRM aims to preserve the purity of the Nordic race by using a distorted mythology of the Nordics, similar to the beliefs espoused by Nazi Germany (Counter Extremism Project, 2024). These symbols were revived to support their vision of a united and pure "ethnically Nordic nation", reinforcing the idea of racial superiority. This form of religious symbolism is used as part of their ideological image, being an essential element in mobilizing supporters (The Guardian, 2024).

Thus, Nordic religious symbols such as the Týr and Odal runes are centralized by the NRM to legitimize its extremist ideology. These mythological symbols are reinterpreted to support ideas of racial superiority and ethnic nationalism, thus turning Norse mythology into a political tool of National Socialist extremism. The NRM is a neo-fascist and accelerationist organization that promotes violent ideologies and incitement to hatred, including through attacks on the rights of religious minorities. Although its primary activity is not religious in nature, the organization uses religious symbols and rhetoric to reinforce its extremist messages and influence.

The Ideology of Violence Promoted by the Nordic Resistance Movement

The NRM uses religious and mythological symbolism not only to legitimize its vision of the superiority of the white race, but also to distance itself from other European extremist movements through its Nordic and Viking specificity (Butters, pp. 71-72). By rejecting modern values and promoting a mythologized image of the Vikings as pure white warriors, the NRM promotes a form of extremism that finds its legitimacy in the idealized historical past of the Norse. It is also important to note that their ideology is not limited to the cultural level, but also includes direct calls for violent action against those considered enemies of the Nordic race (Ib., pp. 72-73). The NRM uses symbols such as the Týr rune or other Nordic runes to legitimize violence, seeing it as a form of sacrifice necessary to defend racial purity and Nordic identity (Ib., pp. 73-74). This is a recontextualization of racist ideologies from the Nazi era, where symbols were used to construct a mythology of racial superiority and the right to violence against those deemed inferior (Ib., pp. 74-75). The NRM is defined as a "militant National Socialist" movement, engaged in the "extra-parliamentary struggle" for a national revolution (Ravndal, p. 11). NRM actions include both legal activities, such as distributing leaflets and organizing marches, as well as violent acts against their political or the Nordic race enemies (Ib., pp. 26-27). Their strategy is based on the idea that they will be able to trigger radical change through violence and direct action when the time is right (Ib., p. 24). The NRM has no moral restrictions on the use of political violence, including mass murder, but refrains from acts of terrorism for strategic reasons (Bjørngo, Ravndal, 2020, p. 40). Its members are trained in street fighting and weapon handling, and some of the activists have committed acts of extreme violence, including fatal attacks (Ib., pp. 39-40).

The NRM actively promotes its National Socialist ideology through violent means. Despite claims that the movement does not engage in acts of terrorism, its members have been involved in several violent attacks on minorities and political

opponents. The NRM promotes a rhetoric of cultural and racial war, justifying the use of violence as a means of defending the Nordic race and destabilizing the existing political order (Ranstorp, Ahlin, pp. 5-6). The movement presents itself as a revolutionary alternative to parliamentary democracy, which it considers corrupt and inadequate to protect the interests of the Nordic people (Ib., pp. 6-7). The NRM uses religion as a vehicle to legitimize its extremist ideology. It is based on the myth of racial purity, a falsification of history that ignores interactions between Scandinavian peoples and other cultures (Nikitins, p. 7). This movement uses religious symbolism to promote a form of exclusivist religion, where Nordic deities and myths are reinterpreted to support the idea of racial superiority and war against the “*other*”, seen as a threat (Ib., p. 14). The group has a violent history, being involved in attacks on immigrants and political opponents. Among the most notorious attacks are bombings and physical assaults. The NRM promotes the violent overthrow of democracy and the establishment of a totalitarian regime inspired by the Third Reich. The group prepares militarily, organizes training camps and collects weapons, thus increasing the level of risk it represents. Their connections with other extremist groups in Russia increase their ability to carry out transnational violent actions (Counter Extremism Project, 2024). Examples of violent extremism in the group’s past include major incidents such as the death of a 28-year-old man in Helsinki, Finland, after being attacked by members of the NRM, and a series of bombings in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 2016 and 2017, in which several members were convicted. This spate of violence demonstrates that the group’s ideology directly manifests itself in terrorist actions, not just rhetoric (The Guardian, ib.).

The movement’s involvement in acts of violence, including explosive attacks and direct confrontations with the police, led to increased tensions in society (Ravndal, pp. 27-28). Also, the NRM’s links with other extremist groups outside of Scandinavia amplify the risks, turning them into a transnational organization (Ib., p. 15). This ability to organize and act transnationally increases security risks, especially in the context where NRM militants are willing to use violence to achieve their goals (Ib., p. 28). Although the movement avoids the use of terrorism for the time being in order not to be banned in all Scandinavian countries, it does not rule out its use in the future, depending on the evolution of the political situation. The NRM constantly tests its legal boundaries and is frequently involved in violent confrontations, especially in Sweden and Finland, where activists have been involved in attacks on minorities and political opponents (Bjørge, Ravndal, pp. 40-41). The NRM also uses intimidation tactics such as subtle threats against politicians and journalists,

leading to undermining democracy and public safety (Ib., pp. 41-42). Although the organization suffered a decline in activity after the electoral failure of 2018, its members continue to be involved in violent actions and maintain links with other extremist groups in Europe and the United States of America (Ranstorp, Ahlin, p. 8). The use of religious symbolism for violent purposes is a strategy that makes the ideology of the movement attractive to a wide audience, especially young people disillusioned and attracted to the idea of a heroic and glorious past. This rhetoric not only supports acts of violence, but also glorifies them, legitimizing them through a distorted interpretation of Nordic spirituality (Butters, pp. 73-74).

The NRM is vehemently anti-Israel and pro-Hamas, holding Israel responsible for many of the global problems and admiring Hamas for its anti-Jewish and nationalist stances (Rekawek, Finnsjö, 2024). The NRM expresses some admiration for Hamas, not from a pro-Palestinian position, but from an anti-Semitic and nationalist perspective. Although Hamas is an Islamist group, the NRM values it because it is considered an anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli resistance group, according to their neo-Nazi ideology (Ib.). NRM is not just limited to hatred of Jews, but also hatred of Muslims and Arabs. Although the NRM presents itself as a white supremacist and nationalist group, their ideology is closely tied to religious and ethnic prejudice, including promoting conspiracy theories about negative Jewish influence on the world (Ib.). The group promotes a radical Nazi ideology, focusing on anti-Semitism, biological racism and eco-fascism. In its view, the NRM sees the “*Nordic race*” as threatened by a global Jewish conspiracy and views democracy and liberalism as destructive inventions created by Jews (ADL, 2022).

Therefore, this extremist ideology justifies its violent actions, seeing violence as a necessity to protect the Nordic race and destabilize the current political order. The NRM carries out violent activities against minorities and political opponents, promoting the rhetoric of a “*cultural war*” to restore a society based on National Socialism.

The Structure and International Ramifications of the Nordic Resistance Movement

The organization is structured into regional divisions, known as “*Nests*”, and has a centralized leadership with a supreme leader and regional councils. Despite periods of decline and internal strife, including a leadership coup in 2019 that led to the formation of a separate group, Nordic Strength, the NRM continues to be active and influential in the far-right movement (ADL, 2022). Its recent strategy has focused on expansion and public visibility, but electoral setbacks and internal conflicts have affected the organization’s effectiveness. Anti-Semitism is a central element of NRM

propaganda, and the group uses multiple channels to spread its extremist messages (ADL, 2022). As the largest organization of its kind in this area, the NRM stands out for its transnational presence and extensive internet reach, which facilitates the recruitment of new members, their radicalization and *“incitement to violence”*. The organization has managed to maintain a core of around 200 active members in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. It also has significant supporters in Iceland and Finland. However, in Finland, the NRM was banned in 2020 due to violations of laws *“protecting human rights”* and *“minorities”*, against which the organization *“incited violence”* (Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, 2022).

The NRM represents a significant risk to people’s security, being involved in violent and terrorist activities. In Finland, the movement was banned following acts of violence and attacks on immigrants and other minority groups (Butters, pp. 70-72). However, even in the face of legal bans, members continue to operate under other names or use alternative symbols to avoid legal repercussions, which demonstrates the fluidity of extremism and the difficulty of combating it effectively (Ib., pp. 72-73). The leader of NRM is Fredrik Vejdeland, who operates from Sweden, with subordinate leaders in the various divisions in other Nordic countries. Members of the organization have been arrested over time for their involvement in acts of violence, which contributes to the general perception of the NRM as a highly dangerous organization globally (Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, 2022).

The NRM also uses social media to spread hate messages and mobilize new followers, which amplifies the risk of radicalization and violence in Swedish society. The Swedish authorities believe that the threat of right-wing extremism has increased in recent years, and the NRM remains a central actor in this extremist milieu (Ranstor, Ahlin, pp. 9-10). The use of religious symbols as tools of recruitment and radicalization makes the NRM perceived not only as a nationalist terrorist group, but also as a global threat (Nikitins, p. 15). The presence of these symbols at far-right events such as *“Unite the Right”* in Charlottesville demonstrates how sacred symbols can be hijacked to promote violence and social conflict (Ib., pp. 6-7).

Religion, especially paganism, is under pressure due to association with extremist movements such as the NRM. Pagan practitioners who reject hateful ideologies feel alienated and fight to protect their sacred symbols from misappropriation. For example, groups such as *“Heathens United Against Racism”* and *“The Alliance for Inclusive Heathenry”* began to organize protests against the infiltration of extremist ideologies into their religion (Nikitins, p. 3). At the same time, religious organizations in Sweden and Iceland have publicly stated that they do not want

their religion to be associated with racism or militarism (Ib., p. 14). Many of the religious symbols used by the NRM have become, because of their association with extremism, difficult to reclaim by pagan religious communities. For example, *“othala”* is considered one of the most contaminated runes, being frequently used in a supremacist context (Ib., pp. 6-7).

NRM is a direct security threat not only in Scandinavia, but also in the rest of Europe. The group recruits its followers, especially through online platforms, trying to radicalize vulnerable people. The spread of their extremist ideology creates a generalized threat at European level, as the group also inspires other far-right organizations, amplifying the risk of social and political destabilization through terrorist actions (Counter Extremism Project, 2024). This international expansion is part of the strategy to create a unified *“ethnically Nordic”* nation (The Guardian, ib.). The NRM movement is viewed as a significant threat to global security and, in particular, to US citizens. The United States of America has listed the NRM as a global terrorist organization because of the direct threat it poses to its citizens and to US national security. The group not only inspires violent extremism, but has also carried out terrorist attacks and actions that have endangered public safety (Ib.). The designation by the US State Department has significant implications: all of the organization’s assets in the United States of America will be frozen and its members will be blocked from accessing the US financial system. This measure is a direct reaction to the NRM’s history of violence and extremism, but also to the Biden administration’s strategy to combat domestic and transnational terrorism with ties to white supremacist movements (Ib.).

Thus, the NRM is organized into regional divisions, with a centralized leadership and local leaders, continuing to be active and influential despite internal conflicts. The group uses social media to recruit and spread extremist messages, helping to radicalize young people and escalate violence. Although banned in Finland, the organization continues to operate under other names. Its international presence and ties to extremist groups in other countries make the NRM a significant threat to global security, including for the United States of America, which has designated the group as a terrorist organization.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the activities and ideology of the Nordic Resistance Movement highlights the complexity of the phenomenon of right-wing extremism in Scandinavia and the risks it generates at the international level. Using theoretical concepts from *securitization*, *radicalization* and *asymmetric conflict*, the paper aims to explain

the mechanisms by which NRM has become a significant threat to regional and global security. The three theories offer complementary perspectives on the activities and impact of the NRM, highlighting the complex nature of this extremist organization.

Securitization theory – assessing the threat through the perspective of the Nordic states and the USA. Applying securitization theory (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, ib.) helps to understand how Nordic states and US authorities came to perceive NRM as a security threat. Securitization explains how political and social issues become subjects of security through the discourses of the authorities, influencing the adopted policies. In the case of the NRM, the organization's actions, from violent attacks to extremist rhetoric, have attracted the attention of states, which have securitized this threat through formal labelling and listing the group as a terrorist organization, as the US Department of State recently did. This theory thus explains how, by formally recognizing the threat, state authorities legitimize concrete actions to counter the group's activities. Practically, securitization allows states to allocate resources and apply special measures against the NRM and its international connections, including justifying transnational cooperation in the face of a potentially destabilizing phenomenon for democratic societies.

Radicalization theory – analysis of the psychosocial mechanisms of extremist mobilization. Radicalization theory (McCauley, Moskaleiko, 2008) provides an interpretive framework for the processes of attracting and mobilizing disillusioned youth within the NRM. By analysing psychological and social processes, the theory helps us understand how Norse symbols and mythology are manipulated to create a group identity that attracts supporters through a sense of belonging. These symbols not only have a cultural value, but function as tools of emotional and psychological manipulation, motivating NRM supporters to embrace a “pure” and heroic identity, giving them purpose and justification for violent acts. By applying radicalization theory, the study identifies the techniques by which the NRM not only recruits, but also radicalizes members, facilitating the transition from ideological support to concrete actions of extreme violence. The organization's symbols and rhetoric, based on Viking mythology, intensify the polarization between group members and the rest of society, thus supporting the logic of an inevitable conflict between “pure” and “impure” and deepening social fractures.

Asymmetric conflict theory – the strategy of destabilization and resistance to democratic authorities. Asymmetric conflict theory (Kaldor, 2006) contributes to the analysis of the tactics used by NRM to exploit the vulnerabilities of democratic societies. As a relatively small group, the NRM engages in a form of asymmetric

conflict, using violence and guerrilla tactics to undermine the democratic order and gain visibility. This theory explains the tactics by which the NRM uses isolated and well-planned attacks to destabilize governments and spread fear. In this way, the NRM manages to maximize the impact of violence despite its limited scale, turning each act of aggression into a message to intimidate and attract new supporters. Asymmetric conflict theory thus emphasizes how the NRM's decentralized structure and use of nationalist symbols contribute to the organization's survival and expansion, even in the face of restrictive measures and its designation as a terrorist organization.

The integration of these three theories highlights that NRM is not just an isolated extremist threat, but a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that requires an integrated and collaborative approach at the international level. The theory of securitization explains the state reactions and the justification of the severe measures taken by the authorities against the NRM. The theory of radicalization clarifies the attraction exerted on individuals, especially young people, who are mobilized by an identity built on the foundations of a recontextualized mythology and symbolism. Finally, asymmetric conflict theory details the strategy of destabilizing democratic institutions used by the group to maintain pressure on the state despite limited resources. NRM remains a complex threat that calls for combined and coordinated measures between national and international authorities. Only through a thorough understanding of the way these theories are applied in practice can a security framework be developed to effectively combat extremist movements of this type.

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