EMERGING FORMS OF RELIGIOUSLY-MOTIVATED FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA: RISKS AND PROJECTIONS FOR THE 2025-2030 PERIOD

Dr. Iulian DINULESCU

"Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, Bucharest

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In recent years, Europe and North America have witnessed the intensification of emerging forms of religiously motivated extremism that diverge from traditional paradigms. This article examines five of the most relevant phenomena in 2025: the Nordic Resistance Movement (neo-pagan racial mysticism), sovereign citizen networks (pseudo-legal religiosity), the "Russian World" ideology (Orthodox-imperial synthesis), QAnon-type conspiratorial syncretisms (apocalyptic Christianity), and Christian Identity/Tradwives currents (biblical fundamentalism and patriarchy). The study employs a comparative approach to highlight their ideological foundations, recruitment mechanisms, transnational networks, and potential trajectories up to 2030. The conclusions emphasize the growing risks these movements pose to democratic institutions, social cohesion, and security, identifying sovereign citizens, QAnon, and the "Russian World" ideology as the most significant impact vectors for the near future.

Keywords: religious extremism; sovereign citizens; Russian World ideology; radicalization; 2030 projections;

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, far-right extremism has become one of the most dynamic and complex challenges to the internal security and democratic order of Western states. Unlike religiously motivated jihadist extremism, which dominated the international security agenda after the September 11, 2001 attacks, recent years have shifted attention toward movements that combine nationalist, racist, and xenophobic ideologies with religious or spiritual references drawn from Christianity, neo-paganism, or conspiratorial syncretisms. This form of far-right extremism, fueled by social and economic crises, political polarization, and recent geopolitical transformations, has gained unprecedented visibility in Europe and North America (Mudde, 2019, pp. 24-48; Ravndal, 2016, pp. 9-10). A distinctive feature of these movements is the use of religion as a source of legitimacy and political mobilization. Whereas in the twentieth century religion was often perceived as a secondary factor within far-right movements, it is now instrumentalized as an integral part of their discourse. Whether through reinterpretations of pre-Christian Nordic traditions, Christian fundamentalist visions promoting *"white race"* supremacy, or geopolitical constructs that link religion with imperial projects, these movements legitimize themselves by appealing to a *"sacralized"* past and to a struggle perceived as spiritual against the *"enemies of civilization"* (Juergensmeyer, 2017, pp. 19-47, 149-181).

Several crises have contributed to the consolidation of these phenomena. First, the 2008 financial crisis and its impact on middle and working classes fueled the anti-system rhetoric of radical right-wing movements (Eatwell, Goodwin, 2018, pp. 180-183). Second, the 2015 migration crisis was instrumentalized to construct narratives of a *"foreign invasion"* and to justify calls for ethnic and religious purity. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities for the proliferation of religiously infused conspiracy theories, particularly in the United States and Germany, where QAnon and affiliated groups integrated apocalyptic Christian elements into anti-vaccine and anti-government discourses (Miller-Idriss, 2020, pp. 45-62). More recently, the war in Ukraine reactivated the *"Russian World"* ideology, which merges Orthodox religiosity with a neo-imperial geopolitical project. This discourse is dangerous not only for states in Russia's immediate neighborhood

but also for diasporic communities in Western Europe, where it is propagated through churches and media networks (Suslov, 2024, pp. 234-274).

A critical aspect of religiously motivated far-right extremism is its transnational character. The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), for instance, though rooted in Sweden, has established branches in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, while its propaganda circulates freely online (Bjørgo, Ravndal, 2020, pp. 37-38). Similarly, the Sovereign Citizens movement, which emerged in the United States, has begun to influence groups in Europe, where its pseudo-religious, anti-state discourse finds fertile ground in contexts of institutional mistrust (Sarteschi, 2020, pp. 1-6, 37, 61). QAnon, initially an American phenomenon, globalized at record speed, and is now present in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and even Romania, where conspiratorial myths blend with elements of traditional spirituality and religiosity (Argentino, 2025; Dinulescu, 2022, p. 72).

Although far-right extremism is often associated exclusively with secular political ideologies, its religious dimension has become increasingly visible. In the United States, the Christian Identity movement has reinterpreted the Bible to support the idea of white supremacy, while recent currents such as the Tradwives movement employ religious arguments to justify patriarchy and traditional gender roles (Barkun, 1994, pp. 7-8). In Europe, the radical neo-paganism of the NRM sacralizes the struggle for a *"white Europe"* (Dinulescu, 2024-b, pp. 380-381), while the *"Russian World"* ideology merges Orthodox elements with an imperialist political discourse (Dinulescu, 2024-a, p. 68). Religion, therefore, is not merely a discursive ornament but becomes a symbolic and ideological weapon through which these movements construct legitimacy and justify violence. This dimension is essential to understanding why they succeed in mobilizing supporters beyond purely political or economic arguments.

The academic literature on far-right extremism continues to expand. Cas Mudde (2019) and Roger Griffin (2000) have analyzed the ideologies and fascist genealogies of this phenomenon, while Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2020) has studied youth radicalization in the digital age. However, the religious dimension of these movements remains relatively underexplored, even though Mark Juergensmeyer (2017) has demonstrated how religion and violence intersect in multiple contexts. There is thus a clear need to integrate research on far-right radicalism with studies on political religion, in order to better understand how these movements structure their discourse and mobilization.

This article seeks to contribute to this literature through a comparative analysis of the most relevant forms of religiously motivated far-right extremism manifesting in Europe and North America in 2025:

- The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM);
- The Sovereign Citizens movement;
- The "Russian World" ideology;
- QAnon and conspiratorial syncretisms;
- Christian Identity and the Tradwives currents.

By examining these cases, the article highlights security risks, modes of religious instrumentalization, and possible trajectories through 2030. The analysis goes beyond description to investigate the mechanisms by which these movements become attractive to an increasing number of individuals and the ways in which they manage to transcend national boundaries.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Defining Religiously Motivated Far-Right Extremism

The study of far-right extremism is a complex field situated at the intersection of political science, sociology, anthropology, and religious studies. In the academic literature, the term *"far right"* is used to describe movements and ideologies characterized by radical nationalism, xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, authoritarianism, and opposition to liberal democratic values (Mudde, 2019, pp. 1-9). In its extremist form, this ideology does not merely express political opinions but promotes violent activism or the systematic subversion of institutions. What distinguishes religiously motivated far-right extremism from other forms is the explicit integration of religion or religious symbols into identity construction and the justification of political action. This religious dimension can take different forms:

- Christian fundamentalism reinterpreted in racist terms (e.g., Christian Identity);
- sacralized neo-paganism (e.g., the Nordic Resistance Movement, which revalorizes Norse mythology);
- Orthodox political religion (e.g., the *"Russian World"* ideology);
- conspiratorial syncretisms with religious accents (e.g., QAnon, which recasts political struggle in apocalyptic terms);
- pseudo-religious legal-conspiratorial frameworks (e.g., sovereign citizens, who invoke biblical quotations or spiritualized interpretations of legal texts).

Mark Juergensmeyer (2017, pp. 25, 202) argues that, in such contexts, religion functions as a *"cosmological scheme"* that transforms social and political conflicts into *"sacred wars",* where violence is perceived as legitimate and even sanctified. From this perspective, religiously motivated far-right extremism is not merely an expression of political dissent but a form of total mobilization that transcends rational discourse and enters the mythological sphere.

Theoretical Genealogy: Fascism, Nationalism, and Political Religion

Roger Griffin (2000) defines fascism as *"palingenetic ultranationalism",* that is, an ideology based on the myth of national rebirth following a period of decline. This dimension of *"collective salvation"* is essential for understanding the link between fascism and religion: both promise total regeneration, a return to an *"auroral beginning".* In this sense, contemporary far-right extremism reprises fascist elements, reinterpreting them in religious terms: the struggle for *"purity"* becomes a sacred mission (Griffin, 2000, pp. xiii, 32, 169, 197). Emilio Gentile (2006, p. 1) conceptualized the notion of *"political religion",* referring to how totalitarian ideologies use rituals, symbols, and quasi-religious beliefs to mobilize the masses. In the contemporary context, movements such as the *"Russian World"* or the NRM construct a veritable political religion, where Christian or pagan symbols are reinterpreted for political purposes. Robert Bellah (1967) introduced the term *"civil religion"* to describe how modern nations sacralize their institutions and histories. This idea has been extended by Iulian Dinulescu (2024-a), who shows how Russia transforms Orthodoxy into an instrument of imperial ideology. Similarly, Miller-Idriss (2020) notes that in the West, religion is mobilized by radical movements to contest liberal and multicultural hegemony.

The Transnational and Digital Dimension

A central aspect of religiously motivated far-right extremism is transnationalization. While historical fascisms were largely nationalist and localized, contemporary movements employ the internet to construct global networks. Social platforms, online forums, and encrypted applications (such as Telegram) enable the rapid circulation of narratives, transforming local movements into transnational networks (Conway et al., 2019, p. 16). QAnon is the most striking example: from an obscure conspiracy on American forums, it evolved within a few years into a global movement, adopted in Germany as part of the *"Querdenker"* protests and in France as a driver of anti-pandemic restriction demonstrations (Argentino, 2020, pp. 1-12). This adaptability is largely due to its religious dimension: conspiracies are framed as a *"cosmic struggle between good and evil"*,

a universal narrative that transcends national borders. Another example is the Nordic Resistance Movement, which has built a complex online infrastructure including publications, podcasts, and social media channels. Bjørgo and Ravndal (2020, p. 40) point out that although the movement limits the use of violence in public actions, it allows for symbolic radicalization in the digital space, where Norse mythology is reinterpreted as an ideological weapon. Thus, one can speak of a digital ecology of religiously motivated far-right extremism, in which myths, symbols, and narratives circulate, combine, and generate new hybrid forms of radicalism.

Research Methodology

The article adopts a comparative approach, analyzing five representative movements:

- The Nordic Resistance Movement – radical neo-paganism and racism.
- Sovereign Citizens – pseudo-legal frameworks with religious and anti-state foundations.
- The *"Russian World"* ideology – Orthodox political religion and imperialism.
- QAnon – apocalyptic conspiracism with religious syncretisms.
- Christian Identity/Tradwives – biblical fundamentalism and patriarchalism.

CASE STUDIES

The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM)

The Nordic Resistance Movement (Nordiska motståndsrörelsen – NRM) is regarded today as the most influential neo-Nazi organization in Scandinavia and as an emblematic case of how far-right extremism integrates religious and mythological dimensions. Founded in 1997 by Klas Lund, a former militant of the group Vitt Ariskt Motstånd *("White Aryan Resistance")*, the NRM emerged from the ambition to create not merely a political organization, but a revolutionary movement capable of undermining liberal democracy and establishing a pan-Nordic National Socialist state (Lööw, 2015, pp. 38-44). Over nearly three decades, the NRM has expanded its activities from Sweden into Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland, thereby building a transnational network. In Finland, the expansion was strong enough that authorities banned the movement in 2020, with the Supreme Court upholding the verdict on grounds of incitement to hatred and violence (Finnish Supreme Court, 2020). In Norway and Denmark, NRM's presence is less pronounced but still visible, particularly through marches, public displays, and propaganda campaigns (Bjørgo, Ravndal, 2020, p. 38). What differentiates the NRM from other

European neo-Nazi groups is not merely its antisemitic or racist rhetoric – common across this ideological spectrum –, but the way it legitimizes and motivates itself through a constant appeal to Norse mythology. The organization reinterprets runic symbols, mythological figures, and pagan concepts, turning them into a sacralized language of political struggle. The Tyr rune (ᛏ), the arrow associated with the Norse god of war, is used as a central emblem, symbolizing heroic sacrifice and cosmic justice (Gardell, 2003, p. 156). For members and sympathizers of the NRM, political struggle thus becomes an almost religious mission, a confrontation between the pure forces of tradition and the corrupting influences of modernity.

This mythological dimension is not a mere decorative element but functions as a powerful mechanism of radicalization. Mark Gardell (2003, p. 220) emphasizes that the appeal to Norse neopaganism addresses a need for identity and belonging, offering a symbolic framework that turns activism into a spiritual vocation. In this sense, the NRM comes close to what Emilio Gentile (2006, p. 78) described as *"political religion",* where myths and rituals are instrumentalized to generate loyalty and mobilization. The organization combines street activism – marches in green uniforms, rune banners, posters in public spaces – with a strong online presence. Its websites, podcasts, and social media channels provide not only propaganda but also an alternative culture, including articles, pamphlets, music, and documentaries that consolidate collective identity (Askanius, 2021, p. 148). The Internet thus functions as a genuine *"digital ecology of extremism"* (Conway et al., 2019, p. 5), where symbols and myths are recycled and re-signified, feeding into a globalized collective imaginary. Despite its symbolic appeal, the risks associated with the NRM are tangible. While the leadership officially denies promoting terrorism, cases such as that of Finnish militant Jesse Torniainen – convicted after killing a passerby during a 2016 altercation – demonstrate that individual violence remains a constant reality (YLE, 2018). Europol (2024, p. 38) lists the NRM among groups with a high potential for violence, warning of the possibility that radicalized members might engage in lone-actor attacks.

Looking ahead to 2025–2030, possible scenarios are varied. In a pessimistic scenario, online radicalization could fuel the formation of clandestine cells capable of violent attacks, particularly in the context of geopolitical tensions. A moderate scenario suggests that the NRM will remain numerically marginal but symbolically influential within the transnational far-right network. An optimistic scenario would involve fragmentation and weakening under legal pressure and declining ideological appeal. The most plausible trajectory, however, is the middle-ground scenario: while the NRM is unlikely to become a mass organization, it will continue

to exert cultural and symbolic influence, serving as a radicalization model for other extremist groups in Europe. Its attractiveness lies less in explicit political programs and more in the promise of a heroic, sacralized identity that transforms militants into *"warriors of tradition".* In conclusion, the NRM illustrates how contemporary far-right extremism merges political ideology with religious mythology, constructing a hybrid vision with long-term radicalization potential. Although numerically small, its symbolic influence and ability to inspire sporadic violence make it a significant actor for understanding the European extremist landscape in the coming decade.

The Sovereign Citizens Movement

The movement known as the Sovereign Citizens Movement represents one of the most complex and difficult-to-classify forms of contemporary extremism. Emerging in the United States in the final decades of the twentieth century, it has evolved from a marginal phenomenon into a diffuse, highly adaptable transnational network with ramifications in Europe and beyond. At its core lies a quasi-religious and mystical conception of law and sovereignty, which reinterprets both the Bible and modern constitutions in ways that challenge the legitimacy of state authority. This fusion of esoteric legalism, conspiracy thinking, and appeals to civil religion makes the Sovereign Citizens a distinctive case within the landscape of right-wing extremism. The roots of the movement can be traced back to the 1970s, particularly to the Posse Comitatus founded by William Potter Gale, which blended elements of Christian Identity with a radical discourse against the U.S. federal government. Gale claimed that ultimate authority in the United States belonged to the *"county sheriff"* and that all other levels of governance – state or federal – were illegitimate. From this ideological base emerged a broader current of opposition to state sovereignty, which gradually developed into what is now called the Sovereign Citizens Movement (Barkun, 2003, p. 95).

During the 1980s and 1990s, fueled by economic crises and disputes over taxation, the movement attracted followers especially in rural states. Its members refused to pay taxes, to acknowledge the legitimacy of courts, or to comply with licensing requirements for driving or business. In 1996, Timothy McVeigh – the perpetrator of the Oklahoma City bombing – was linked by some sources to sovereignist ideology, although he was never a formal member of the movement. This incident placed the movement firmly on the radar of federal authorities (Chermak, Freilich, Simone, 2010, pp. 1019-1041). What makes the Sovereign Citizens academically significant is not only their rejection of authority but also the religious and mystical framework through which they justify their positions. According to Michael Barkun (2003, pp. 2-20), the movement feeds on a mixture

of conspiracy theories, pseudo-legal interpretations, and biblical references, constructing a narrative in which the individual possesses a "divine" sovereignty that precedes the state (Barkun, 1994, p. 5). A central doctrine is the distinction between the *"flesh-and-blood person"* and the *"legal person"* or strawman, a legal fiction allegedly created at birth through the issuance of a birth certificate. In this view, the "real" individual is not bound by state laws, which apply only to the *"fictional*" persona. This doctrine resembles a kind of legal gnosis, whereby initiates discover the *"hidden truth"* and free themselves from state domination (Sarteschi, 2020, pp. 9-29).

At this level, there is a clear overlap with Emilio Gentile's concept of political religion. The state is demonized and portrayed as a corrupting force, while the individual is presented as the bearer of a God-given sovereignty. Thus, refusing to pay taxes or comply with licensing rules is not merely a political act but almost a sacramental gesture – a reaffirmation of divine freedom (Gentile, 2006, pp. xiv-xv). Some adherents cite biblical passages to justify their defiance of authority, insisting that only *"God's law"* holds absolute validity, while state legislation represents illegitimate "usurpation." In this way, the Sovereign Citizens situate themselves at the intersection of religion, law, and conspiracy, producing a form of radicalism distinct from other strands of the far right (Gentile, 2006, pp. 23-25). The movement has no centralized hierarchy but functions as a decentralized network. Followers gather in small groups, cells, or act as lone individuals. Their practices vary, but well-known examples include refusal to pay taxes and fines; issuance of fraudulent documents such as *"sovereign passports"* or *"driver's licenses*"; attempts to establish *"people's courts"* or *"common law tribunals"*; and confrontations with authorities, sometimes escalating into violence (Dinulescu, 2023-b, pp. 62-66).

In 2010, the FBI classified the movement as a domestic terrorist threat, noting that some of its adherents had carried out armed attacks on law enforcement. For example, in 2010, two police officers were killed in Arkansas by movement members Jerry and Joseph Kane (FBI, 2011). Such incidents demonstrate that, although most sovereign activities are non-violent, the potential for violent radicalization remains significant. While the movement has deep roots in the United States, it has also manifested in fragmented forms in Europe. In Germany, the Reichsbürger *("Citizens of the Reich")* phenomenon bears striking similarities to the American Sovereign Citizens. Adherents deny the legitimacy of the Federal Republic of Germany, claiming instead that the Third Reich or earlier state forms still legally exist. Many issue false documents, such as *"Reich passports"* or *"Reich driver's licenses",* and refuse to pay taxes. In 2016, a major incident occurred when a

Reichsbürger adherent fatally shot a police officer in Bavaria, confirming the violent risks associated with the movement (Dinulescu, 2023-a, pp. 141, 146; Counter Extremism Project, 2023, p. 9).

Similar groups exist in Austria and Switzerland, inspired by both the German and American models. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, Freemen on the Land currents have gained traction, promoting similar mystical-legal arguments that reject state legitimacy and produce their own documents. France and Nordic countries have reported isolated cases, while in Eastern Europe – including Romania – echoes of the movement appear on conspiracy forums and social media groups, where the idea of *"absolute individual sovereignty"* takes on a spiritual aura and is combined with theories about the New World Order (Dinulescu, 2023-a, p. 139; BfV, 2022, pp. 32-33; Le Sueur, 2011; Europol, 2024; Agache, 2025). Thus, the Sovereign Citizens Movement represents a transnational phenomenon, with local variations united by the same matrix: rejection of the modern state and the sacralization of individual sovereignty. Looking ahead, several scenarios can be envisioned. A pessimistic scenario would involve the transnational consolidation of the ideology, fueled by economic crises and distrust of democratic institutions, with more radical groups potentially shifting from legal nonconformism to organized violence. A moderate scenario suggests that the movement will remain largely marginal yet continue to produce sporadic violent incidents and undermine public institutions. Here, the major risk lies in *"extremist lone wolves"* – radicalized individuals inspired by sovereign doctrine who carry out isolated attacks. An optimistic scenario would involve reducing the appeal of the ideology through a combination of legal, educational, and security measures. However, the past decades show that whenever public institutions experience crises of legitimacy, movements like the Sovereign Citizens tend to re-emerge with renewed strength.

Between 2025 and 2030, it is unlikely that the phenomenon will disappear. Rather, it will adapt to geopolitical and digital contexts. The emergence of hybrid variants, where legal-mystical sovereignism intersects with other forms of far-right extremism or religious conspiracism, appears plausible and worthy of ongoing analysis. The Sovereign Citizens Movement thus exemplifies a form of extremism with religious and conspiratorial foundations that challenges the very basis of the modern state while sacralizing individual freedom. Its American origins have generated a phenomenon that has spread across Europe in various forms, carrying real risks of violent radicalization. Despite its diffuse and decentralized character, the symbolic impact and its capacity to inspire defiance and violence make this movement an actor that requires close monitoring in the coming decade.

The "Russian World" (Russkiy Mir)

When we speak today about the *"Russian World"* – Russkiy Mir – we are not merely referring to a cultural expression. We are dealing with a geopolitical and religious vision that has gradually been transformed from an intellectual discourse into an active instrument of foreign policy and an ideological justification for state objectives. For many observers, Russkiy Mir functions as a bond between imperial nationalism, politicized Orthodoxy, and projects of external influence. In both official and semi-official narratives, the *"Russian World"* includes Russian speakers, adherents of Russian culture, and members of the Russian Orthodox Church — but its elastic nature allows it to be used as a moral argument for political and military interventions in the *"Russophone space".* Analysts often describe it as the regime's *"civil religion"* (Laruelle, 2024, pp. 14, 17). The terms and ideas that led to Russkiy Mir emerged in various intellectual circles at the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s: philosophers, publicists, and clerics sought to articulate a vision of Russian identity in the face of the Soviet Empire's collapse. The concept was gradually taken up and *"institutionalized"* – from cultural institutes and foundations (such as the Russkiy Mir Foundation) to the official discourse of the Kremlin and certain church figures. This transition from idea to policy made Russkiy Mir a flexible tool: cultural export in peacetime and ideological justification in times of crisis (Laruelle, 2015, pp. 5-9).

Marlène Laruelle and other scholars have stressed that although Russkiy Mir might appear in public discourse as similar to notions such as Francophonie in its cultural intent, in reality it contains revisionist elements that predispose it to revanchist geopolitical interpretations when placed in the hands of authoritarian actors. In practice, the *"Russian World"* is not a single fixed set of ideas – it operates as a *"geopolitical imaginary"* that can shift from being an instrument of soft power to serving as justification for coercive actions (Laruelle, 2024, pp. 9, 21-22). A defining element of Russkiy Mir is its close connection to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). Patriarch Kirill and certain clerical segments have contributed to the sacralization of geopolitical discourse, transforming certain formulations of foreign policy into spiritual terms – even labeling conflicts as *"holy missions"* or *"the protection of the brethren in faith".* Recent documents and conventions of ecclesiastical bodies have employed language framing war and the *"defense"* of the Russian cultural space in sacred terms, thereby changing the nature of legitimized violence: it ceases to be merely strategic and acquires eschatological meaning for its adherents (Kilp, Pankhurst, 2025, p. 1). This *"sanctification"* of political action has practical consequences: it legitimizes actions that would otherwise appear strictly

geopolitical (annexations, interventions, support for pro-Russian movements) through appeals to the protection of *"Russian communities"* and *"traditional values".* Recent studies show how discourses within the WRPC (World Russian People's Council) and other bodies have incorporated religious elements into the moral justification of conflict (Kilp, Pankhurst, pp. 1-8).

Russkiy Mir has been promoted through an organizational mix: cultural foundations, educational programs, media networks, church funding in the diaspora, and *"civic"* NGOs. These elements function as an infrastructure of soft power. State-funded or state-inspired foundations and institutes distribute grants, textbooks, Russian language programs, and cultural projects that build identity ties among diasporas. In parallel, pro-Kremlin media channels and disinformation ecosystems amplify messages whenever political impact is required. Thus, Russkiy Mir acquires not only rhetorical but also institutional and logistical coverage (Laruelle, 2015, pp. 5-9). These instruments serve a dual purpose: in *"normal"* times they operate as cultural bridges, while in times of tension they may be used to generate *"local support"* or provide normative justifications within targeted communities. The annexation of Crimea (2014) and, even more so, the large-scale attack and invasion of 2022 fully illustrated Russkiy Mir's potential to become a justificatory tool for aggression. Contemporary analyses have shown that Kremlin rhetoric and pro-state actors deliberately employed the concept to *"naturalize"* interventions: Russophone populations would – in the discourse – be *"protected"*

by the motherland, and intervention would be an act of restoring a shared civilizational space. This rhetoric was echoed and amplified by church networks and pro-Kremlin media, providing a moral framework for actions that would otherwise have been framed solely as military operations (Meienberger, 2023, pp. 15, 19).

Scholars such as Anton Shekhovtsov have situated the *"Russian World"* within the broader analysis of how Russian ideology is used to construct historical and geopolitical justifications for revisionism. He demonstrates how cultural narratives can degenerate into political directives with tangible effects on the ground (Shekhovtsov, 2014). In Ukraine, discourses about *"Russian brothers"* or *"civilizational protectorates"* have been used to justify operations to *"protect"* Russophone populations – ranging from *"referendums"* to military actions. In the Baltic states and other countries with Russian-speaking minorities, propaganda based on the *"Russian World"* attempted to exploit either real or fabricated grievances in order to undermine trust in local governments and foster enclaves of loyalty. In many cases, these efforts involved influence infrastructures (media, NGOs, friendly clergy) that prepared the ground for more aggressive actions

when necessary. Comparative studies conducted in recent years document this practice across multiple countries in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space (Orzechowski, 2024, pp. 21-25).

Another effect of the Russkiy Mir ideology is its (sometimes opportunistic) connection with segments of the European far right. Recent research shows that certain nationalist groups in Western Europe – attracted by conservative discourse or *"traditional values"* – have engaged in contacts and exchanges with pro-Russian activists, either for ideological collaboration or to develop pro-family, anti-LGBTI, or anti-globalization cultural-political agendas. This alchemy between *"traditionalist"* conservatism and Russkiy Mir rhetoric has created bridges exploitable by influence networks. The 2024 ICCT report maps the ways in which Russian ideas and organizations have built such connections in at least ten European countries (Rekawek et al., 2024, pp. 8-10). The impact of Russkiy Mir on populations has several dimensions:

- Identity: undermining the processes of building a distinct civic identity in host states by appealing to rival ethno-linguistic identities;
- Political: weakening trust in institutions through the promotion of discourses of *"belonging"* to a transnational community;
- Security: directly justifying military or paramilitary actions in the name of protecting the *"Russian World".*

In short, Russkiy Mir transforms social and cultural vulnerabilities into *"entry points"* for aggressive foreign policy, and through the sacralization of political objectives grants supporters a moral sense for actions that would otherwise appear illegal or immoral (Laruelle, 2024, pp. 23-25). The response to the danger posed by Russkiy Mir must be multi-layered: security countermeasures (monitoring influence networks and countering disinformation), cultural policies (supporting local languages and cultures inclusively), religious dialogue (drawing clear boundaries between independent confessional institutions and state policies), and legal measures when activity enters the illegal sphere (financing interventions, supporting paramilitary groups, etc.). Recent experiences demonstrate that only a combination of measures – not a single one – can limit both the ideological hard power and the cultural soft power (Laruelle, 2015, pp. 14-15).

Ultimately, Russkiy Mir is an idea with multiple forms: cultural, religious, geopolitical. What makes it dangerous is not its ambiguity, but its ability to be used as a political instrument – to create moral legitimacies for interventions, to sacralize conflicts, and to build transnational networks capable of undermining sovereignty and cohesion of states. In the post-2014 and post-2022 world, Russkiy Mir

is no longer merely academic theory: it has become political practice, and in order to understand and counter it, one must analyze it simultaneously from theological, cultural, media, and strategic perspectives (Laruelle, 2024, pp. 5-7, 22, 31).

QAnon and Conspiratorial Syncretisms

The QAnon movement represents one of the most bizarre and at the same time dangerous expressions of contemporary extremism, having a structure that blends digital conspiracism, political messianism, and elements of religious syncretism. Born in the United States in 2017, it quickly spread beyond the Atlantic, finding fertile echoes in Europe, where it intersected with local religious traditions, conspiratorial narratives, and right-wing populism. The QAnon phenomenon represents one of the most visible contemporary expressions of conspiratorial syncretism with a religious foundation, which has managed to transform disparate fragments of narratives, symbols, and doctrines into an almost theological system of interpreting reality (Rothschild, 2021, pp. 12-13). Born in the American digital space but rapidly expanding transnationally, QAnon has become a form of *"conspiratorial religion"* that combines elements of apocalyptic Christianity, Gnostic traditions, and New Age influences, offering adherents a sense of community and cosmic mission (Wessinger, 2021).

The QAnon movement has its origins in the fall of 2017, when a person or anonymous group known under the pseudonym *"Q"* began posting cryptic messages on forums such as 4chan and later 8kun (Rothschild, 2021, pp. 5-7). The first messages attributed to *"Q",* the so-called Q-drops, appeared on the 4chan forum in October 2017, and later migrated to the 8kun platform, as shown in an AFP analysis (Larson, 2021). At its core, QAnon proposes a Manichean narrative in which a single person is described as the providential leader of a cosmic battle between good and evil, while the *"global elite"* – frequently associated with Democrats, progressives, the media, and Hollywood stars – is identified with a satanic cult. The theory was initially regarded as a grotesque fiction, yet its attraction proved contagious. A journalist cited by the Financial Times remarked that an anonymous figure called *"Q"* presented through cryptic messages the idea of a global conspiracy involving political leaders and other perceived opponents, thereby contributing to the consolidation of conspiratorial narratives in the digital space (Financial Times, 2023). Such narratives not only impose an ordered meaning on social chaos, but also create a sense of participation in an essential struggle, turning followers into a community of *"initiates"* of hidden truth. A central component of QAnon is the blending of religious elements with conspiratorial imagery. From the beginning, *"Q's"* messages used apocalyptic language, referring

to an imminent event, The Storm, which was to purify America and restore divine order. This structure resembles millenarian prophecies from the Christian tradition, where believers await a final revelation and judgment of the wicked. As Jason Springs notes, the fascination with conspiratorial theories within evangelical Christian nationalism in the Trump era should not be interpreted as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as a contemporary expression of evangelicals' historical concern with apocalyptic prophecies and the end of time, reflecting how religious beliefs can be mobilized in modern political contexts (Springs, 2021).

These messages, known as Q-drops, claimed to be revelations from within the U.S. administration, suggesting that a global cabal of satanic pedophiles controls the world and that a single providential figure is the savior who will defeat these evil forces (Barkun, 2003, p. 65). The cryptic and fragmentary character of the messages invited collective interpretations, which transformed following QAnon into a permanent hermeneutical exercise (Amarasingam, Argentino, 2020, pp. 37-38). This hermeneutics of secrecy recalls Gnostic traditions, in which truth is hidden and can be revealed only to initiates who know how to *"see beyond appearances"* (Wessinger, 2021). The process of interpreting Q-drops created a participatory framework, similar to a religious community reading and debating sacred texts (Amarasingam, Argentino, p. 38). Thus, QAnon did not stop at producing a conspiracy theory, but generated a mechanism of social and spiritual cohesion, in which meaning arises through the collaboration of believers (Beyer, Herrberg, 2023, p. 2; Dinulescu, 2021, pp. 118-119). Although it did not begin as an explicitly religious movement, QAnon quickly absorbed elements from the American evangelical Christian imaginary, particularly the apocalyptic one (Wessinger, 2021). The narrative of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, of a Messiah who will save the people, and of a final judgment – The Storm – reproduces fundamental themes of Christian eschatology (Rothschild, 2021, p. 5). In parallel, QAnon integrates New Age influences, such as the idea of a *"Great Awakening",* associated both with individual spiritual awakening and with the collective revelation of cosmic truth (Teitelbaum, 2020, pp. 38-51).

This combination led to what Catherine Wessinger described as an *"apocalyptic conspiratorial religion",* in which biblical language and New Age symbols coexist and reinforce each other (Wessinger, 2021). Thus, QAnon manages to attract both evangelical believers concerned with the signs of the end times and followers of alternative spirituality seeking hidden meanings in universal dynamics (Beyer, Herrberg, 2023, p. 6). Participation in QAnon does not involve traditional rituals but rather collective interpretative practices (Amarasingam, Argentino, p. 42). Reading,

analyzing, and discussing Q-drops became forms of *"digital liturgy",* in which adherents play the role of priestly interpreters (Rothschild, 2021, pp. 97, 222). Instead of physical churches, QAnon communities are organized on social networks, where each group functions as a *"digital parish"* gathering believers around charismatic leaders or influencers (Luban, 2021, p. 9). These online communities provide what sociologists of religion define as *"religious social capital"*: solidarity, recognition, belonging, and existential meaning (Barkun, 2003, pp. 65, 106). They reinforce the feeling that adherents are part of a spiritual and moral elite, capable of seeing the hidden truth ignored by the rest of the world (Wessinger, ib.). One of the most distinctive aspects of QAnon is the centrality attributed to a messianic leader (Rothschild, 2021, p. 69). In the vision of followers, this leader is not merely a politician but the messianic figure chosen by God to fight against the demonic cabal (Barkun, 2003, p. 10). This personification of apocalyptic messianism reinterprets the political leader as a cosmic savior, which explains the almost religious fidelity of followers (Wessinger, 2021). The Storm, the event expected by the community, is described as a final judgment, in which all enemies will be arrested and punished, and world order will be restored (Amarasingam, Argentino, pp. 37, 41). This vision has strong biblical resonances, evoking both the Book of Revelation and Protestant millenarian traditions (Beyer, Herrberg, 2023, pp. 9, 13).

Although it originated in the United States, QAnon quickly spread to Europe and other regions. In Germany, the movement was adopted by Reichsbürger segments and anti-vaccine groups, becoming a catalyst of protests during the COVID-19 pandemic. In France and Italy, QAnon theories merged with anti-globalization discourses and with suspicion toward European institutions (European Commission, 2021, pp. 13, 5). In Eastern Europe, including Romania, QAnon found fertile ground through its intersection with traditional religious discourses about the struggle between good and evil. Thus, conspiratorial ideas were integrated into Orthodox narratives and anti-Western rhetoric, which amplified polarization and mistrust in democratic institutions (Gherghina, Mișcoiu, 2022, pp. 226-227). According to an FBI report, QAnon has been identified as a potential source of domestic terrorist threat, due to the predisposition of some adherents to violent acts (FBI, 2021, p. 1). The events of January 6, 2021, when QAnon supporters participated in the attack on the Capitol, demonstrated that the apocalyptic structure of the movement can mobilize to real violence (Rothschild, 2021, pp. xi-xiii, 27, 46, 72, 89). The mythological structure of the narrative – in which adversaries are demonized as satanic pedophiles – morally justifies any act against them, transforming v iolence into a form of *"salvation through purification"* (Wessinger, ib.). In this sense,

QAnon falls within the tradition of apocalyptic sects that have generated violence in the name of supreme good (Barkun, 2003, pp. 2-3, 150).

Perspectives 2025-2030. Looking ahead, QAnon demonstrates a remarkable capacity for religious and cultural adaptation (Beyer, Herrberg, 2023, pp. 6-8). The failures of its predictions have not weakened the movement but have been reinterpreted as tests of faith, which strengthen group resilience. Digitalization and political polarization will continue to provide fertile ground for the dissemination of QAnon messages (Rothschild, 2021, pp. 174, 189). It is likely that by 2030 QAnon will become increasingly *"localized",* integrating figures and symbols specific to national contexts while maintaining its fundamental structure as an apocalyptic conspiratorial religion. This flexibility makes it one of the most persistent and dangerous forms of contemporary conspiratorial extremism (Wessinger, 2021). QAnon has evolved from a collection of anonymous messages into a complex digital religious movement, combining biblical myths, New Age ideas, and political conspiracism within a coherent narrative framework (Rothschild, 2021, pp. 183-198). Functioning as an apocalyptic religion, QAnon offers meaning, community, and cosmic mission in a world perceived as chaotic (Amarasingam, Argentino, pp. 38-39). This combination of factors makes QAnon not only a cultural curiosity but a real threat to Western democracies (FBI, 2021, pp. 1-2).

Christian Identity and the Tradwives Movement

Christian Identity

The movement known as Christian Identity has its origins in the theological reinterpretation of the British Israelism current, an ideology that emerged in Great Britain at the end of the 19th century, which claimed that Anglo-Saxons descended from the lost tribes of Israel (Barkun, 1994, pp. 3-9). In the United States, this doctrine was radicalized, transforming into a racist theology asserting that European whites are *"God's true chosen people",* while Jews were considered descendants of Satan (Juergensmeyer, 2017, p. 37). Michael Barkun described Christian Identity as *"a religion"* of hate that provides theological and cosmological justification for violence (Barkun, 1994, pp. 84, 94, 103, 171, 242). This hermeneutic of the Bible became the foundation for a dualistic cosmology in which the final battle between God and Satan was to be fought by white believers against a global system perceived as being controlled by Jews and their allies (ADL, 2017). The idea of a *"holy war"* was central, consistently promoted by leaders such as Wesley Swift, a Californian preacher in the 1940s–1950s, considered the ideological architect of the movement (Barkun, p. 49). In Christian Identity theology, the Bible is reinterpreted to justify both anti-Semitism and white supremacy (Juergensmeyer, pp. 31-37).

The Book of Genesis is read allegorically to support the claim that Jews are the direct descendants of Cain, the *"seed of the devil",* while populations of color are viewed as pre-Adamic beings, soulless (ADL, 2017). This reinterpretation allows the creation of a *"racial metaphysics",* where biological differences are sacralized and become theological criteria (Barkun, p. 116). Thus, the ideology is not limited to a mere form of social racism but becomes a religious framework that legitimizes exclusion and violence as divine imperatives (Juergensmeyer, pp. 55, 184). Within this logic, any act of violence against the *"racial enemy"* or the *"Jew-controlled government"* is perceived as a sacred offering in the context of an apocalyptic struggle (ADL, 2017).

Since the 1970s, Christian Identity has served as the spiritual bond for paramilitary and terrorist organizations such as Aryan Nations, The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA), and The Order (Barkun, p. x). Through these groups, the ideology was translated into violent practice. In particular, Aryan Nations functioned as an informal *"church-state",* where paramilitary training camps were accompanied by Identity-based sermons (ADL, 2017). In the movement's literature, leaders are presented as prophets of a final battle against the federal government, labeled as *"ZOG"* (Zionist Occupation Government) (Wessinger, ib.). This formulation became one of the most well-known expressions of extremist propaganda, still used today in far-right circles (AJC, 2025; SPLC, 2024). Christian Identity's history is marked by numerous acts of violence. The Order carried out a series of robberies and assassinations in the 1980s, including the killing of Jewish journalist Alan Berg in 1984, justified as *"divine punishment"* (Barkun, p. 228). Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord stockpiled weapons and explosives, preparing for an insurgency against the United States, until it was forcibly dissolved in 1985 (ADL, 2017). Although Timothy McVeigh, the perpetrator of the Oklahoma City bombing (1995), was not an official member of Identity, researchers have shown that he was exposed to the group's literature and network through his connections with the Patriot movement (Juergensmeyer, pp. 25, 184). Thus, Identity's influence on domestic extremist violence is indirect but consistent. Juergensmeyer described these acts as *"sacred performances",* where violence becomes a liturgy through which believers participate in the cosmic battle between good and evil (Juergensmeyer, pp. 202, 210-211). In this sense, terrorism is no longer perceived as crime but as a form of religious devotion.

Although Christian Identity is a U.S.-originating movement, its elements have been imported to Europe through neo-Nazi networks. The Global Project against Hate and Extremism report notes that fragments of Identity theology can be identified in European groups, where they are combined with local elements

of extremism (GPAHE, 2025b). In the United Kingdom, part of the British Israelism movement radicalized, adopting antisemitic accents inspired by American Identity (Wessinger, ib.). In Europe, far-right organizations have integrated Identity elements into their discourses about *"racial purity"* (GPAHE, 2025-a). In Eastern Europe, although direct influence is more limited, Identity-type ideas circulate online, particularly on conspiratorial networks and forums combining radical Orthodox beliefs with antisemitism (SPLC, 2024). This transnational diffusion demonstrates that in the digital age, radical theologies no longer remain captive to the national context but globalize rapidly. Contemporary perspective and risks until 2030. Today, Christian Identity no longer has strong centralized structures but continues to survive through small networks and the circulation of texts and sermons online (ADL, 2017). Barkun warned as early as 1994 that Identity ideology remains a theological engine for white supremacist violence in rural America (Barkun, pp. 213-218). In a polarized political climate, with low trust in state institutions and the proliferation of conspiracy theories, Identity can provide a religious framework that radicalizes isolated individuals or small cells (Juergensmeyer, pp. 279-280). By 2030, the risk does not necessarily lie in the formation of large organizations but in violent actions by *"lone wolves"* inspired by this theology.

The Tradwives Movement

The movement known as Tradwives has its origins in the online environment, particularly on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, where women promote a lifestyle centered on traditional roles of wife and mother (BBC, 2024). The term *"Tradwife"* is an abbreviation of *"traditional wife",* designating a woman devoted to family, household, and submission to her husband, inspired by a conservative interpretation of Christian values and post-World War II ideals (The Guardian, 2020). This subculture took shape around 2015-2017, alongside the rise of the alt-right in the United States and the resurgence of anti-feminist discourse online (Rascoe, 2024). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the movement gained increased visibility, as messages about returning to family life and home safety resonated with social and cultural anxieties (BBC, 2024). On the surface, Tradwives present themselves as a personal choice, a *"return to authentic femininity"* and a rejection of modern pressures related to career and emancipation (Rascoe, 2024). Yet behind this rhetoric lies an ideology combining Christian fundamentalism with political conservatism, portraying female submission as a biblical virtue and patriarchal order as the natural foundation of society (Illouz, 2019, pp. 32-35).

The BBC noted that the discourse promoted by Tradwife influencers constructs an idealized representation of traditional femininity, centered on domesticity,

household activities, and obedience to the husband, paradoxically presented as a form of empowerment and an alternative to modern feminist values (BBC, 2024). This rhetorical strategy transforms submission into a paradoxical form of *"empowerment",* suggesting that true freedom lies in renouncing gender equality (The Guardian, 2020). In many cases, Tradwives claim legitimacy from biblical passages prescribing a wife's submission to her husband, such as Ephesians 5:22-23 *("Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Savior")*, turning gender roles into religious imperatives (Ford, 2025). This sacralized framework makes the discourse appear harder to contest, as it is associated with divine will. A distinctive feature of the movement is its online aesthetic. Tradwife influencers use vintage images, retro dresses, baking recipes, and idealized home décor to construct a visual narrative of the family *"golden age"* (The Guardian, 2020). This online performativity *("pharisaism")* is meant to create a strong contrast with contemporary feminist culture and to suggest an attractive alternative. Case studies reported in the media highlight families promoting a traditional domestic lifestyle, in which the woman assumes the role of wife and mother, giving up a professional career in favor of household and childcare responsibilities, while the man is seen as the primary financial provider and authority in decision-making (The Independent, 2025). In this way, the movement functions as a tool of cultural socialization, attracting young people through aesthetic images and an apparently positive discourse.

Although Tradwives do not explicitly declare themselves extremist, multiple studies have shown that this subculture intersects with the alt-right and far-right movements (Lewis, 2018, p. 28). Social media, particularly TikTok, has significantly contributed to popularizing the Tradwife phenomenon through influencers promoting domestic aesthetics, heightened femininity, and submission to the husband, attracting millions of followers and transforming this model into a transnational cultural trend (The Independent, 2025). This convergence makes Tradwives a *"soft entry point"* into radical ideologies. Even when not directly claiming affiliation with a religious denomination, the Tradwives movement is imbued with a conservative Christian ethos (Illouz, 2019, pp. 6, 32, 42-47, 240). The concept of submission is often justified through *"divine order",* and motherhood is presented as a sacred vocation. Thus, religion becomes the invisible framework supporting the entire ideology. The foundation of this lifestyle frequently relies on interpretations of Christian texts emphasizing complementary differences between the sexes. Within this framework, female sacrifice and devotion to family are presented as moral virtues and part of a spiritual vocation (The Independent, 2025). In Tradwife

discourse, the man is invested with the role of protector and family leader, while the woman assumes the position of *"helper"* and household manager, presenting this division of roles not as coercion but as a free and authentic choice, perceived as a means of personal fulfillment (The Independent, 2025). Sociologist Eva Illouz argues that *"the return to tradition often becomes a cover for cultural anxieties and resistance to gender equality"* (Illouz, 2019, pp. 73, 147, 224).

Therefore, Tradwives is not merely a lifestyle phenomenon but a form of cultural counter-revolution with a religious foundation. The Tradwife phenomenon is seen both as an expression of freedom of choice and as a risk for reactivating restrictive patriarchal models. Public debate highlights the tension between valuing domestic traditionalism and perceiving it as a potential social and political regression (The Independent, 2025). The recent popularity of Tradwives is correlated with the rise of conservative currents and reactions to contemporary feminism. Thus, the phenomenon fits into a broader trend of revalorizing traditional gender roles, gaining visibility in digital spaces and fueling cultural and ideological polarization (The Independent, 2025). In Eastern Europe, the phenomenon is less visible as an organized subculture, but the ideas circulate in conservative Orthodox and Catholic communities. Discourses on the *"traditional mother"* and *"submissive wife"* are promoted by religious influencers and conservative politicians, often in opposition to feminism (Illouz, 2019, pp. 6, 23). At first glance, Tradwives may appear benign, centered on personal choice and retro aesthetics. Yet the major risk lies in normalizing authoritarian values and preparing the ground for acceptance of extremist ideologies (Lewis, 2019, pp. 28-29). By 2030, Tradwives are expected to become more mainstream, as they offer an easily digestible message and an attractive aesthetic, which can mask connections to the far right (Lewis, 2019, pp. 8, 33; BBC, 2020). In a European context where illiberal governments promote pronatalist and conservative policies, Tradwives may become a cultural vehicle for these political agendas (The Guardian, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The present analysis shows that right-wing religious extremism in Europe and North America can no longer be interpreted as a mere ideological drift, but rather as a complex ecology of transnational movements that use religion both as a source of legitimacy and as a mechanism for emotional and cultural mobilization. Unlike historical forms of extremism, contemporary phenomena – from the racial neopaganism of the Nordic Resistance Movement, to the apocalyptic conspiracism of QAnon, or the pseudo-legal religiosity of Sovereign Citizens – draw their strength

from social vulnerabilities and global crises (economic, pandemic, geopolitical) and derive power from their capacity to combine political, spiritual, and digital dimensions. A central element is the transnational role of religion: beliefs and sacralized symbols are no longer anchored within national contexts, but circulate rapidly online, being locally adapted and reinterpreted. This dynamic transforms religious right-wing radicalism into a threat that cannot be addressed solely through national security frameworks, but requires international and interdisciplinary cooperation. Moreover, the convergence between religious fundamentalism and conservative cultural discourses (as exemplified by the Tradwives phenomenon) demonstrates that the danger does not originate solely from violent groups, but also from seemingly *"soft"* subcultures that can serve as gateways to radicalization. The online aestheticization of traditional gender roles or the sacralization of ideas such as absolute sovereignty provides fertile ground for the gradual normalization of extremism.

In the medium term (2025-2030), three major trends are emerging:

- The persistence and adaptability of these movements in digital environments, regardless of legal countermeasures.
- Structural fragmentation, with a focus on small cells and individual radicalization, alongside the maintenance of a shared global culture.
- Intersection with geopolitics – particularly through the ideology of the *"Russian World",* which sacralizes an imperial project and exports radical religious messages to diaspora communities.

In conclusion, right-wing religious extremism should not be seen merely as a collection of organizations, but as a transnational cultural and religious dynamic capable of eroding democratic institutions through a combination of symbolic violence, apocalyptic discourse, and digital mobilization. The challenge for states and societies will be to respond not only with coercive tools, but through strategies of democratic resilience and cultural dialogue, providing alternative sources of meaning and community in the face of the appeal of extremist narratives.

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