

Executive summary:

From the Nordic Resistance Movement to the Alternative Right

A study of the Swedish radical nationalist milieu

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Summary

The radical nationalist milieu in Sweden has existed since the 1920s and has developed gradually with social development and the waxing and waning of National Socialism. This nearly 500-page study provides an overall picture of today's radical nationalist milieu and the ideological and organizational patchwork created and developed between traditional National Socialist milieus and contemporary phenomenon, such as the alt-right movement and the growth of social media. The study consists of 12 individual chapters by prominent national and international academic experts, providing different analytical perspectives. Additionally, the Swedish Security Service (Säkerhetspolisen) provides a contribution over the violence-promoting right-wing extremism milieu in Sweden.

In recent years, a number of Western security services have warned increasingly of the rise of far-right extremism and the increased threat of attacks from the radical nationalist milieus. Lone-actors with a radical nationalist mindset have launched a catalogue of attacks such as Christchurch, Poway, El Paso, Baerum and Halle. In August 2019, the Swedish Security Service also warned about an increased threat of attacks by the violence-promoting right-wing extremist milieu. Furthermore, the Swedish Security Service pointed towards a trend whereby there is a risk that the violence-promoting right-wing extremist ideologies become increasingly mainstreamed and normalized, which by extension may broaden the radicalization pool of individuals. This study seeks to explore the developments within the broader radical nationalist environment, where the different strands of radical nationalist groups and expressions increasingly intertwine on a number of different levels. This is compounded by the digital radical nationalist hate cultures that exacerbates the narratives of hate and dehumanization, that moves individuals from so called alt-lite towards alt-right and more extreme manifestations.

The complexity of concepts and boundaries of what constitutes radical nationalism is vast, and there is currently a lack of standard definitions regarding different ideological orientations. In this report, *radical nationalism* is used as a generic term for the milieu that is being studied – which encompasses traditional and hierarchical National Socialist movements to the vast alt-right universe.

The report uses the definition proposed by the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) in their report *Digitalt slagfält*, which states that nationalism in itself is neither extreme nor radical. By *radical*, a distinction is made between the form of nationalism that operates through parliamentarism in order to strengthen the nation state, as opposed to the one which "advocates extra-parliamentary means or influence operations with the aim to demonize and agitate against selected groups that are considered to stand in the way of the overall aim: an ethnically and culturally homogenous state"¹. According to FOI's definition, *radical nationalism* is used "only

¹ Kaati, Lisa et al., *Digitalt slagfält: En studie av radikalnationalistiska digitala miljöer*. Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2019, page 13. <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--4813--SE>; Authors' own translation. This applies to all quotes in this paper.

when a nationalist ideology invalidates the principle of the equal value of all human beings, or infringes the social contract that defines the moral and legal boundaries for when, where, how and by whom violence may be used, it may be considered radical nationalism”. This also includes the notion that ”a territory that is considered to belong to a particular ethnicity, race or culture needs to be defended against other ethnicities, races or cultures through violent means”.²

The dominating National Socialist actor in Sweden is the Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR), who has a traditional and uncompromising ideological stance based on National Socialist values. However, today these values have morphed into a National Socialist “ideological hybrid”, borrowing ideas from a number of different influences. The NMR has merged its core values with a political strategy and vision of a unified Nordic region governed by authoritarian rule. At the same time, the NMR has also increased its involvement on social media platforms, partly in order to reach out politically in order to normalize the organization and what it stands for at the local level, and partly to project its fierce revolutionary reputation internationally, and thereby creating more closely-knit structures across the Nordic region. Simultaneously, it creates contacts with likeminded people outside the Nordic region. In addition, the creation of a social media architecture has fostered useful engagement of leaders at the mid-level within the organization, who in this way may project their own brand of leadership and raise their profiles at the local level. This means that there are rarely open challenges to the leadership at the national levels, as it ensures total commitment and dedication to the NMR.

The NMR has also managed to circumvent countermeasures by the authorities and financial institutions that impair their organizational development. The closure of the NMR’s bank accounts has forced the organization to explore alternative forms of financing. However, the study shows how the NMR through cryptocurrencies has received up to 1 million SEK through anonymous donors.

Nevertheless, the support for and scope of the NMR should not be exaggerated. The election results have been a major failure for the organization and speak for themselves: the organization is relatively tiny. Their major political campaign prior to the 2018 election merely resulted in 2,106 votes in the parliamentary elections (0.03% of total votes), and even in local municipalities where there were greater support, the electoral results were a major disappointment. Following the NMR’s failure in the 2018 election, the organization’s base activism seem to have diminished, which is underscored both by the think-tank Expo’s annual reports but also by the interviews conducted in this report with local civil servants and security officials in 18 Swedish cities, who indicate that activity has decreased during the past year. Whether this is a temporary decline or not is difficult to assess, but according to the NMR’s five-year strategy plan, the organization is pursuing a political path and extending its influence at multiple local locations. Their strategy seems to be to try to “normalize” National

² Kaati, Lisa et al., *Digitalt slagfält: En studie av radikalnationalistiska digitala miljöer*. Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2019, page 13. <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--4813--SE>

Socialism to ordinary folks, thereby *making the unacceptable acceptable*. Also, apart from expanding their geographical reach as well as their overall number of political seats, the NMR also signals that they are intent on expanding the activities of their media channels, as well as their international contacts. With regards to the latter, the NMR has extensive links with, for example, the German Der Dritte Weg, the Hungarian Legio Hungaria, the Italian Casa Pound, and the Greek Golden Dawn. Also, the study shows that the NMR has had a long-standing relationship with the Russian Imperial Movement (RIR) since at least 2012. The NMR also has social media presence in the Russian VKontakte.

Under the current leadership, there is a low probability that the NMR as an organization will develop in a more violent direction. This is not to say that the NMR is unproblematic in relation to its propensity for violence. Especially at the local level where individual politicians, journalists, local authority representatives and others, who are perceived as declared enemies, and in return, are exposed to violence or threats of violence. This is a serious security issue and may, in the long run, constitute a serious threat to the local democracy. But on a more general level, the NMR as an organization is not a threat to the constitutional order, even if individual members may carry out actions in order to challenge the current social order.

The so-called alternative right (alt-right) is in turn an amorphous and network-based constellation, consisting of ideologues, activists and radical "influencers" on social media. Organizational affiliation seems to be secondary, and instead, supporters gather around metapolitical narratives that to a varying degree touch upon and emphasize theories of ethnopluralism, "The Great Replacement" theory, and which in some cases are interwoven with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and a belief in a "globalist elite" who orchestrates massive influx of foreigners through asylum, multiculturalism and a feminization of society where the nuclear family and patriarchal structures are undermined. These messages are skilfully packaged through a language filled with humor and irony, disguised in memes or other symbols, with the explicit aim of radicalizing the public debate, thereby *making the unacceptable acceptable*.

An interesting observation is that a few Swedish individuals, through publishing activities and large crowds of followers on social media, have gained a disproportionately large influence over the international alt-right movement. Sweden is also singled out as a former great power that has degenerated under the pressure of massive influx of foreigners through asylum, and is presently held up as a warning example internationally.

The inherent amorphous structure of the alt-right is its strength, but may also constitute its weakness. The lack of a rigid hierarchical structure makes it sensitive to change or removal of leadership figure. At the same time, the alt-right's intellectual dimension with publishers and the publication of new works is likely to persist. While representatives of the alt-right movement come and go, there is a solid ideological foundation that is unlikely to disappear. It is constantly adaptable and opportunistic and finds new opportunities to exploit right-wing populism and other societal currents.

This study shows that the radical nationalist milieu in Sweden exists on an ideological spectrum, with different organizations and movements, which cannot be easily separated. On the contrary, there are periodic contacts between neo-Nazis and alt-right key figures who introduce ideological literature, concepts and thoughts to each other. The interactions often take place digitally through guest appearances on each other's social media podcasts. In many ways, the NMR and the alt-right also share the same narratives. Common narrative messages focus, to a varying degree, on racial separatism, ethnopluralism and conspiratorial notions of an impending societal collapse, and that "the people" and "the culture" are about to be exterminated by external enemies. The external enemy is represented by foreigners seeking asylum, a process which is considered to be orchestrated by an "elite" consisting of politicians, the media and globalists acting in concert. Not infrequently, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories also are present and spread in connection with these narratives. Common to the race-based ideological milieu, there is also the notion that the radical nationalists are waging a "cultural war" in order to preserve the white identity. The radical nationalist milieu as a whole also fights against what they call "the system", which is considered to be repressive against "dissident voices" and which will lead the nation to its downfall. As such, in their eyes, some form of "true and more direct democracy" is necessary and must be recreated.

Similarly, the radical nationalist milieu unites behind a desire to radicalize the public debate and to move the boundaries regarding what is acceptable to express in public. Above all, hatred of immigrants and other minorities is cultivated online through digital hate cultures and in dehumanizing terms. The study shows that participation in such social media forums risks moving consumers gradually in a more extreme direction, a process amplified by algorithms. Alt-right messages are packaged in a skillful way that blurs the boundaries of what is serious and a joke. These messages are disseminated through youthful, internal humor and jargon, which enables distancing from potential acts of violence committed by participants or supporters. Cumulatively, the messages spread by the radical nationalist milieu risk to dehumanize certain groups, which in turn may result in violence.

As emphasized by the Swedish Security Service in their contributing chapter, regular organizations seem to become less relevant in the far-right violent milieus as a unifying force, and instead the tactics of the so-called leaderless resistance seem to be gaining more and more ground. In recent years, terrorist acts have been carried out by lone-actors without any organizational affiliation, united by the same conspiratorial theories of "The Great Replacement" and "White Genocide" where overseas immigration is seen as an existential threat to the white population in countries with a white majority population. In particular, the attacks have targeted symbols of the Muslim or Jewish communities. The terrorists who are responsible for these attacks feel virtually connected to each other through a digital hate culture that normalizes hatred and violence against minority groups. The terrorists have published manifestos in fringe digital forums where they both refer to previous lone-actors as sources of inspiration, and often use a coded language used within for example the alt-right milieu, such as

”red pill” and ”black pill”. These are recurring figures of thought within the alt-right milieu in order to ”see the world as it really is”.

The study emphasizes the importance of taking a wider analytical approach to radical nationalist environments, from a previous exclusive focus on National Socialist organizations to also incorporate various constellations and networks within the alt-right movement. At the same time, the study recognizes yet another level by also including the risks of influence operations by foreign states (Russia) in relation to radical nationalism. The study shows that, in order to fully understand the radical nationalist milieu, one should also include the information campaigns by foreign states that seek to amplify radical nationalist narratives through, for example, Russia Today and Sputnik, in order to sow discord between and within European states. Such may also include financial and organizational support, as well as paramilitary training for radical nationalist groups and networks in Europe. The NMR is not alone among radical nationalist groups in Europe to receive training from the Russian Imperial Movement (RIR), but similar organizations within several European countries have participated in similar trainings. As the Swedish Security Service reveal in their contribution, 17 Swedish right-wing extremists have participated in paramilitary training in Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Bulgaria, while 9 have participated in the Ukraine conflict. In addition, the NMR is also present on Russian social media, with a significant number of followers. The relations between foreign states and radical nationalism should thus be studied to a much greater extent by researchers, authorities and journalists.

The strategy and the goal of the radical nationalist milieu is to move the boundaries of the public debate. This mirrors the overall social development, where the public debate has become evermore fragmented and polarized. In an open society like Sweden, it must be possible to have a legitimate debate on migration, based on objective facts and nuanced and balanced arguments, where the merits and disadvantages are carefully weighed and discussed in a sensible, calm and respectful fashion. However, in the radical nationalist milieu, the arguments are characterized by black-and-white thinking, mixing conspiracy theories and hate messages, focusing on either racial ideology and/or the alt-right movement’s figures of thought regarding white identity politics, which in the long run results in divisions and mistrust between people, and ultimately may contribute to inspire acts of violence. Therefore, this study seeks to contextualize the radical nationalist environments, and their respective poisonous narratives. Hopefully, this will contribute to strengthening public debate.

Finally, this study demonstrates the need for a holistic analytical approach to the radical nationalist milieu. Individual instances and events provides a fragmentary picture of the radical nationalist spectrum. Without a helicopter perspective, it is difficult for governments and authorities to develop countermeasures against various centers of gravity within this far-right universe. This provides the essential tools to stunt the growth of these far-right environments.

The study consists of 12 individual chapters by prominent national and international academic experts, providing different analytical perspectives. Each chapter can be read on its own, or collectively to get a full spectrum picture.

In the introductory chapter, **Magnus Ranstorp & Filip Ahlin** present the overall aim of the study, as well as the research questions that the study seeks to answer. Specifically, the study seeks to provide a situational picture of the entire radical nationalist milieu in Sweden and how its physical and digital activities impact society and democracy. The authors further provide a general introduction to the study of radical nationalism, its central concepts, as well as theoretical perspectives. Moreover, the chapter presents an overview of previous Swedish research within the field, touching upon aspects such as ideology, history, methods, activities and radicalization processes. Furthermore, the authors also describe popular conspiracy theories and common narratives among the different movements and organizations that may be defined as radical nationalists – such as “The Great Replacement”, “White Genocide”, “Eurabia” and anti-Semitism. Finally, methodological considerations are highlighted and discussed.

In chapter two, **Heléne Lööw** describes the Swedish National Socialist and racially-motivated ideological milieu. It is partly a historical review, but special emphasis is placed on the ideological components. The chapter demonstrates that the milieu that goes by the generic term whiter power/racial ideological milieu is not a cohesive movement, but rather consists of a multitude of different ideological orientations. This include National Socialists, Fascists, Christian anti-Semitic groups etc. The groups that exist today are often ideological hybrids. However, fundamental to the National Socialist ideology is anti-Semitism, which constitute its core and starting point. Other central parts of the ideology consist of the idea of “the betrayed people” and the ongoing “exchange of peoples”, as well as the idea of communities and “the true democracy”.

In chapter three, **Anna-Lena Lodenius** describes the emergence of right-wing extremism in Sweden. The chapter shows how the Swedish radical nationalist parties grew stronger from the 1920s until the Second World War, and then declined sharply as the German Nazi war crimes were exposed. Thereafter, the Swedish environment was dominated by the Nordic National Party, until the 1980s when a new generation started to establish their own organizations and networks, which drew much of their inspiration from Great Britain and the United States. During the 1990s, the seeds were sown for some of the organizations we see today, and during the same period, a number of serious crimes of violence were also committed by individuals in the Nazi environment. The 21st century became marked by the entry of Internet, which created new conditions for recruitment and propaganda, and today, the right-wing extremist milieu exists both physically and virtually.

In chapter four, **the Swedish Security Service** provides an aggregated assessment of the Swedish violence-promoting right-wing extremist milieu. According to the authority, the boundary between the **violence-promoting** right-wing extremist milieu and the non-violent right-wing extremist milieu has become increasingly

blurred. The regular organizations have also become less relevant. Instead, the tactics of the leaderless resistance now seem to (yet again) gain a greater audience within the violence-promoting right-wing environment. The chapter also provides a description of a sample of 507 individuals who have been the subject of the Security Service's monitoring of the violence-promoting right-wing extremist environment during 2018 and 2019. Among other things, the individuals' age, gender, marital status, country of birth and registered address are described. In addition, activities and crime, traveling abroad to training camps and conflicts, as well as sources of financing are also described.

In chapter five, **Magnus Ranstorp, Filip Ahlin and Magnus Normark** describe the organization the Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR). The chapter highlights the growth of the organization, and how it has developed to date. The focus is on the NMR's ideology and policy, where National Socialism and anti-Semitism are the focal points, and the party wants, among other things, to introduce a complete stop to all immigration and pursue an active repatriation policy. The hierarchical structure of the organization is described, along with the activities undertaken by the NMR, such as propaganda dissemination, manifestations and demonstrations. The chapter further highlights the organization's activities in the digital sphere, and the messages disseminated by the NMR to different target groups. A description is also made of the capability of violence possessed by the members of the organization, as well as how the movement finances its activities.

In chapter six, **Peder Hyllengren** provides a picture of how the influence from right-wing extremist milieus is felt locally in select Swedish cities. Interviews were conducted with 22 local civil servants and security officials in 18 Swedish cities. The results from the interviews indicate that there, in general, has been low activity within the right-wing extremist milieus since the 2018 election, and that their influence in local communities also is considered to be relatively modest. The NMR is the only right-wing extremist organization that has been spotted locally, with the exception of The Free Sweden in a few places. The split within the NMR, through the recently formed Nordic Strength, has not resulted in any local activity.

In chapter seven, **Erik Mellander and Jennie Sivenbring** provide a guide to understand the movement called the alt-right. The chapter demonstrates that the movement has emerged in recent years, and received a sharp upswing in connection to the 2016 presidential campaign in the US. The authors point to the representation crisis, the masculinity crisis and the establishment crisis as explanatory models for the growth of the movement. The chapter further describes the organization of the movement, which largely takes place exclusively on the Internet through various digital platforms. The ideology disseminated by the alt-right movement contains ideas about identitarianism, ethnopluralism and nationalism. The authors also highlight how the movement disseminates its messages through so-called metapolitics, where the goal is to change today's political norms and move the public debate in a more radical direction.

In chapter eight, **Filip Ahlin and Magnus Ranstorp** describe the Swedish alt-right movement. The authors provide a background to the movement globally, and how it has emerged within Sweden. The chapter shows how the Swedish environment revolves around a number of digital platforms where representatives disseminate their messages about, among other things, ethnopluralism and nationalism, but also anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The authors further describe how representatives of the Swedish alt-right movement have personal connections with other Swedish radical nationalist groups and platforms by, for example, visiting each other's podcasts and web TV programs. The chapter also touches upon the gender dimension within the Swedish alt-right milieu, as well as the alt-right's relations to similar environments in Europe and the US.

In chapter nine, **Joe Mulhall** shows the emergence of the international alt-right movement and its relations to the Swedish equivalent. Among other things, the author points out that the Swedish alt-right movement has had a disproportionately large influence on the global movement as a whole. This partly since leading figures within the environment come from Sweden, but also since Sweden is portrayed as a former role model for other countries that now have disintegrated due to the stress of immigration, especially from Muslim countries. The chapter states that the future of the alt-right is difficult to predict, but that it is likely that Sweden will remain at the center of the international extreme right-wing's consciousness for some time, and that people from Sweden will continue to be central to the movement.

In chapter ten, **Maik Fielitz** describes radical environments online and the mechanisms that may pull individuals from digital hate environments to right-wing extremist terrorism, similar to the attacks in for example Christchurch, El Paso and Halle. The author highlights how such terrorists have acted on the basis of an imagined community that they have found within the digital environment, and that they have left behind material that is disseminated online and that encourages new terror attacks. The chapter describes how these individuals have appeared in a digital environment characterized by irony and an internal jargon, which dehumanizes people – which is found, for example, within the alt-right movement. The author further argues that the use of language in these environments risks lowering the thresholds for serious right-wing extremist violence against minority groups in society, carried out by lone-actors.

In chapter eleven, **Magnus Ranstorp and Filip Ahlin** describe and discuss acts of violence carried out by lone-actors within the radical nationalist milieu, as well as how foreign states (Russia) interact with, and influence, radical nationalist milieus in Europe. The review of attacks carried out by lone-actors shows that these people may have limited physical contacts, but that they appear within a digital environment filled with hatred and a narrative about immigration and “The Great Replacement”. The lone-actors have also been inspired copycat incidences. Furthermore, the chapter highlights how Russian actors directly have supported radical nationalist circles in Europe, trying to sow division and discord within the states. Furthermore, right-wing actors connected to Russia have also been running paramilitary camps where European radical nationalists have participated. Overall, Russian actors have also

disseminated a narrative that reinforces radical nationalism, which in the long run may result in creating polarization and, in the extreme, can create aggravated violence.

In chapter twelve, **Magnus Ranstorp and Filip Ahlin** provide conclusions. The chapter shows that the radical nationalist environment in Sweden exists on a spectrum, from very extreme neo-Nazi groups to alt-lite movements. These cannot easily be separated. On the contrary, different actors largely share the same narratives and have regular exchanges with each other, mainly by individuals from each camp visiting each other's social media. In addition, the chapter points out that there are relatively few hardcore supporters and leaders within respective radical nationalist environment, but that the crowds of sympathizers are more significant – especially within the alt-right movement. The authors further emphasize the importance of studying and understanding the radical nationalist digital environments that reinforce hate messages, the growth, the potential of violence and the transnational connections between actors in different countries.

Select conclusions

To date, the research on radical nationalism in Sweden is rather limited, engaging only a few researchers. For the most part, research has been traditional in nature, as it focuses largely on the historical development of National Socialism. Heléne Lööw has contributed with a thorough review of the Swedish Nationalist Socialist environments, from the 1920s until 2014. In recent years, the Gothenburg University-based Segerstedt Institute has also contributed with valuable research on the NMR's ideology and recruitment mechanisms and exit from the white power movement. In addition, the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) has produced a number of reports on radical nationalist digital hate cultures. However, the research contributions have not focused on the broader radical nationalist milieu, specifically its alt-right dimension – its structure, organization, funding and connections both within and outside of Sweden.

This study provides a more comprehensive picture of the current radical nationalist milieu, and the ideological and organizational patchwork created and developed between traditional National Socialist milieus and contemporary phenomena, such as the alt-right movement and its interaction with digital platforms. Moreover, the study is unique in that it is the first time that the Swedish Security Service contributes with a chapter, based on their overall assessment on the violence-promoting right-wing extremism in Sweden.

The study has shown that the radical nationalist milieu in Sweden exists on a spectrum, with different organizations and movements, but that these cannot be easily separated. On the contrary, there are periodic contacts between the NMR and the Swedish key alt-right figures, as well as international alt-right personalities, through key interlocutors who introduce ideological literature, concepts and thoughts to their own sympathizers and supporters. The interactions often take place digitally through guest appearances on each other's social media channels. It is clear that both the NMR and the alt-right movement largely share the same narratives and enemies. Common messages focus, to a varying degree, on racial separatism, ethnopluralism and conspiratorial notions of an impending collapse of society, and that "the people" and "the culture" are about to be exterminated by external enemies. The external enemy is embodied by foreign asylum seekers, a process which is considered to be orchestrated by an "elite" consisting of politicians, the media and globalists acting in concert. Often these narratives are interwoven with an assortment of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Another common feature is that they consider that they are waging a "cultural war" in order to preserve the white identity. They also fight against what they call "the system", which is considered to be repressive against "dissident voices" and which will, in their eyes, lead to the nation's downfall.

The NMR has an uncompromising ideological position based on traditional National Socialist values. As shown by Lööw in her chapter, these values have resulted in some kind of National Socialist "ideological hybrid", which has borrowed ideas from a number of different orientations and merged them into new forms. The NMR has

merged their core Nazi values with a political strategy and vision of what a unified Nordic region by authoritarian rule should look like. Through their political commitment, they have created a utopia – a form of governance based on a kind of imaginary world – which the NMR’s highest leadership skillfully visualizes for disaffected followers. By articulating this vision through their own media outlets and in podcasts, the NMR leadership pushes the organization forward.

In recent years, the NMR has expanded its involvement on social media significantly, and today, the organization has almost 20 different podcasts and TV channels. The purpose has been to reach out politically in order to normalize the NMR and National Socialism to the public, especially at the local level. In this process, they have further realized that they also may project their reputation internationally, and thereby create closer contacts with likeminded groups around the world. Simultaneously, the NMR has pushed for closer co-operation with its Nordic branches. More focus should thus be placed on the NMR’s digital arena and their international connections. There exists no study on how this affects the organization’s strategy and tactical decisions.

However, the extent of support for the NMR should not be exaggerated. Their election results have been a major failure for the organization and speak for themselves: the organization is relatively tiny in numbers. The major effort prior to the 2018 election merely resulted in 2,106 votes in the parliamentary elections (0.03%), and even in the local municipalities where the organization had established its presence, the results were a great disappointment. In the NMR’s stronghold Ludvika, it received 215 votes (1.3%) and failed to receive any seats in the municipal assembly; in the Kungälv municipality merely 103 people (0.34%) voted for the NMR; and in the northern city of Boden, the NMR received 51 votes (0.27%). However, a real indicator of the NMR’s support base was revealed with the result of the 2019 EU election, when the organization only received 644 votes.

After the failure in the 2018 election, the NMR’s base activism seem to have decreased. This is confirmed both by Expo’s annual report for 2019, where the activities had decreased by a third, but also by this study which shows that the influence at the local levels has decreased in the past year. Whether this is a temporary decline or not is difficult to assess, but according to the NMR strategic five-year plan, the organization is prioritizing their local influence, their geographical spread, their number of political seats at all levels, their channels on social media, as well as their international contacts. With the current leadership, there is a low probability that the NMR as an organization will develop in a more violent direction. The NMR has been clear in their position that they do not intend to escalate the level of violence with, for example, terror attacks or other serious acts of violence, as long as they are allowed to operate openly and do not become banned. Although it is easy to, instinctively, consider a ban on the NMR, it could create adverse negative consequences. Apart from legal obstacles, the NMR may become more violent, and there is always the possibility that the same individuals will gather under a new name.

However, it is equally important to emphasize that the NMR is a violent and dangerous organization, especially at the local level where they target individual politicians, journalists, authority representatives or others, who are perceived as enemies. Balancing this contradiction is difficult to resolve. It is important to recognize that the NMR is not an immediate threat to the constitutional order, but could become so in the long run.

Today, a lot of work is done at the local level in order to counter the effects of the NMR. However, the work could be guided by carefully following the NMR's strategic and tactical decisions, such as their five-year plan. In fact, one could reverse design countermeasures accordingly. It is important to consider the balance between offensive measures and prevention. For example, it is understandable that banks have closed accounts linked to the organization, but at the same time, this has resulted in the NMR's use of crypto currencies, which makes financial control opportunities more difficult. This also complicates prevention and dialogue efforts.

As for the splinter group Nordic Strength, it constitutes a dilemma for the NMR. The fact that several leading members left the NMR and founded Nordic Strength in August 2019 is probably a contributing factor as to why the NMR's activism has decreased. It further illustrates the problem of different levels of ambition, between being an elite revolutionary combat organization in contrast to a broader organization with political ambitions. So far, however, Nordic Strength has not left any major marks, and it is further doubtful whether they will be able to do so in the long run. Although Nordic Strength may carry out individual acts of violence, the current assessment is that the organization is moderate, since they have an aging leadership, a small number of members, and limited financial resources.

As shown in the chapter on the NMR, there is an extensive social media exchange between the organization and representatives of the Swedish and American alt-right movement. Such exchange seems to primarily be taking place at the individual level rather than being formalized, but it is difficult to imagine that such interactions are not authorized by the leadership of the NMR. For them, the exchange offers an arena for attracting new potential sympathizers, both in Sweden and abroad. Similarly, the exchange also creates opportunities for the network-based alt-right movement to reach a new audience. By conveying the same metanarrative, additional opportunities are created to move the boundaries of what is extreme or not. It further gives both milieus an ideational exchange in terms of ideology and strategy.

The alt-right movement is an amorphous network-based constellation of ideologues, activists and radical "influencers" on social media. There is a cluster of ideologues within the identitarian movement, and key representatives frequently refer to their works. The intellectual dimension is constantly changing and a cross-fertilization between works by Alain de Benoist, Guillaume Faye, Paul Gottfredi, Jared Taylor, Alexander Dugin, Kevin McDonald and Richard Spencer. The core metanarratives revolve around ideas that, to varying degrees, touch upon and emphasize theories of ethnopluralism and popular exchange ("The Great Replacement"). In addition, these

theories are also, at times, interwoven with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and a belief in a "globalist elite" who orchestrates massive immigration, multiculturalism and a feminization of society. These narratives are skillfully packaged through the use of humor and irony, disguised in memes or other internal symbols, with the explicit aim of radicalizing the public debate – thereby *making the unacceptable acceptable*.

Organizational affiliation is secondary, and instead, the supporters gather around these metanarratives. This makes it difficult to describe the movement, since it is so multifaceted and constantly evolving. As stated by Mellander and Sivenbring, the alt-right movement mainly exists in various forms on social media. As they emphasize, the attraction is often:

"a manifestation of a strong collective dissatisfaction among individuals who do not experience that issues related to their identity (mainly white and male) are being addressed by the established parliamentary system. Such dissatisfaction may be traced to the perception that others are granted the benefits that oneself lacks or is denied. Women, Jews and non-white individuals may often be singled out as the cause of injustice"

As a counterreaction to the perceived feminization of Western countries, the movement portrays itself as a defender and protector of heterosexuality as the norm, and wants to maintain traditional gender roles. Unlike the NMR, which opposes immigrants on racial grounds, there is a strong hatred of Muslims within the alt-right movement, along with an alleged "Islamization" of Europe. On social media and in speeches, there is a very aggressive rhetoric against Islam and Muslims, where Muslims are seen as fundamentally different compared to the majority of the population in Western countries, as well as unable to assimilate and live in accordance with the "Swedish culture".

Interestingly, several key figures within the Swedish alt-right movement have also gained a disproportionately large influence over the international movement. The influence of Daniel Friberg and his publishing house Arktos has been central to this development. It is also remarkable that the Swedish Henrik Palmgren and Marcus Follin together have over 54 million views on social media. Furthermore, in the international alt-right sphere, Sweden is also portrayed as a former great power that has degenerated under the pressure of massive immigration, and is further singled out as a warning example.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the Swedish alt-right movement is centered around a few key figures, which makes the milieu vulnerable – if these key figures disappear, it will take a long time for new leaders to create credibility, reach and large crowds of followers. The inherent amorphous structure of the alt-right movement is its strength, but may also constitute its weakness. The lack of a rigid hierarchical structure makes it sensitive to change.

However, the alt-right movement's intellectual dimension with publishing houses and the publication of new works is likely to persist. While representatives of the alt-right

movement come and go, there exists a solid ideological foundation that is unlikely to disappear. The movement is adaptable and opportunistic and will probably find opportunities to exploit right-wing populism and other negative societal currents.

The alt-right movement's greatest influence is on social media, where organizational affiliation is not central. However, there are local, physical spin-offs, such as the organization The Free Sweden. As such, the alt-right movement should not solely be considered as a volatile phenomenon on social media, as it also finds physical locations and bases of operations. For example, there is an ambition to create physical bastions, "societies within society", where sympathizers may meet and even live together, relatively cut off from the outside world.

The explicit aim of the alt-right movement is to *radicalize* the public debate and move the boundaries of what is acceptable to express openly. Similarly, the NMR aims to *normalize* National Socialism. This study has shown that the messages that are disseminated within the radical nationalist circles – from the alt-right movement to the NMR – risk lowering the threshold for violence. Within these milieus, hatred of immigrants and other minorities is cultivated online. As shown by the Segerstedt Institute as well as by other researchers, participation in such online forums risks moving those who contribute, discuss and share content towards trajectory, moving them in an increasingly extreme direction, consciously and unconsciously, and finally the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable to express. The messages are often packaged through humor and jargon online, which in turn enables the rejection of any acts of violence carried out by sympathizers. The messages are packaged in a way that places them on the border between what is serious and what is a joke. However, at the same time, the abusive language contributes to a dehumanization of certain groups, which in turn may encourage acts of violence.

In the chapter on violence-promoting right-wing extremism, the Swedish Security Service emphasizes that regular organizations seem to become less and less relevant. Instead, the tactics of the so-called leaderless resistance seem to be gaining more and more traction. In recent years, terrorist acts have been carried out by lone-actors without any organizational affiliation, but who share the same conspiratorial theories of "The Great Replacement" and "White Genocide", where immigration is seen as an existential threat to the white population in countries with a white majority population. In particular, the attacks have targeted Muslims and Jews.

As shown by Maik Fielitz in his chapter, these individuals act on their own, but feel virtually connected through a digital hate culture that normalizes the denigration of minority groups as an act of amusement. In these digital milieus, extreme opinions are amplified and algorithms contribute to users becoming, consciously or unconsciously, increasingly radical, while alternative opinions simultaneously are excluded. In recent years, radical nationalist lone-actors have also published manifestos in which they refer to previous terrorists as sources of inspiration. Furthermore, the manifestos are couched in coded language that corresponds to the one used within the alt-right movement. Lone-actors have, among other things, referred to how they became "red-

pilled” and ”black-pilled” prior to their attacks. These symbols for ”seeing the world as it truly is” are reoccurring figures of thought within the alt-right movement. Further research should focus on the mechanisms of norms being pushed as well as the digital dimensions, such as ”memeification”, ”gameification” and martyrdom, which lower the thresholds for violence.

The frequency of radical nationalist lone-actor attacks draws attention to the need to strengthen the security and protection of Muslims, Jews and other minorities. For example, the physical protection of mosques, synagogues or other meeting points should be reviewed and heightened.

A dimension that deserves more attention within research is the influence of foreign states (Russia) in relation to radical nationalism. On the one hand, radical nationalists look to Russia as an ideal society where multiculturalism does not exist, strong norms of masculinity prevails, and where strong authoritarian leadership is rewarded. Russia has also become an ideological and operational gathering point for radical nationalists. For example, in 2015, National Socialist groups from across Europe gathered in St. Petersburg, along with activists from the alt-right movement in the US, in order to create a common strategy. In connection to this meeting, the Russian Imperial Movement (RIR) further offered the NMR and other groups the opportunity to receive paramilitary training. The existence of Russian paramilitary training camps is a worrying feature in relation to the radical nationalism in Europe. At the same time, there is an offensive dimension of Russian influence, which operates through martial arts clubs (Systema), motorcycle clubs and soccer hooligans in Europe. In addition, Russia is extremely active when it comes to disseminating negative propaganda about alleged social decay and problems in the West, as a part of a subversive strategy dividing the EU and creating polarization within European societies. This narrative further coincides very well with the one disseminated by the European radical nationalist groups. There, Russia’s various forms of support for radical nationalist milieus will be an effective and strong weapon against the West.

The study exposes various areas that the academic community and authorities should focus on. Further research is needed on the macro level regarding radical nationalist milieus, how they interact with each other and how they change over time. Additional areas that also require further investigation in the future are how radical nationalist narratives affect the public debate and polarization, as well as how the digitalization affects and changes individual norms through a process, which gradually risk radicalizing them without them being aware of it.

At the meso level (group level), further research needs to analyze group dynamics within and between radical nationalist groups, as well as how divisions and generational change affect leadership and behavior. This study has further opened up for the understanding of transnational connections, how these work, as well as the influence from foreign states. There is currently very limited research within this particular area. A focus on the dimensions of financing is important since it also makes network structures visible and further may function as an efficient tool for authorities.

In general, further research is needed on how radical nationalist milieus are affected by various countermeasures, and which ones that are effective in order to impede the growth of the milieu.

At the micro level (individual level), further research is needed on psychological mechanisms as well as on emotional factors and how these affect entry and exit within various forms of radical nationalist organizations and networks. In this context, more attention should also be paid to the gender dimension.

The study has contextualised the changing nature of radical nationalist milieus in parallel with digitalization and globalization. On the one hand, this has given the milieus transnational areas of contact, and it has also in many ways blurred certain boundaries between traditional National Socialism and the messages of the alt-right movement. The alt-right movement's strategy to move the boundaries of the public debate – *to make the unacceptable acceptable* – mirrors the societal development, where the public debate has become fragmented and polarized. In an open society like Sweden, it must be possible to have a legitimate debate on immigration and migration, based on objective and balanced discussion. However, in the radical nationalist milieu described in this study, the arguments are characterized by black-and-white views, mixing conspiracy theories and hate messages with a focus on either racial ideology and/or the alt-right movement's figures of thought regarding white identity politics, which in the long run results in divisions and mistrust between people, and ultimately risks to inspire acts of violence. Understanding the context in which the radical nationalist milieu operates, as well as the messages disseminated by such a milieu, may thus assist in strengthening the public debate.

This study demonstrates the need for a holistic analytical approach to the radical nationalist milieu. This since the reporting on individual events provides a fragmentary picture of reality. It is clear that, in order to develop knowledge about and measures against these movements, a greater focus should be placed on contextualizing and understanding the evolution within the radical nationalist milieus.