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White supremacy and the future of liberal democracy – the case of the Nordic Resistance Movement

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, the largest neo-Nazi organization in Scandinavia, *The Nordic Resistance Movement* (NRM) registered as a political party and entered electoral politics in Sweden. Utilizing ethnographic content analysis, the current work explores changes in NRM's rhetoric in two time periods from before (2010) and after (2018) the party entered electoral politics in 2015. Focus centers on NRM's ideology, what or whom they frame as their threat, and their suggested solutions for constructed problems. Results show fascist rhetoric in both time periods. An argument is made that there is no clear moderation in NRM's politics by liberal democracy. Rather, right-wing extremism is a threat to liberal democracy, as we know it. Implications of the growth of the far right, and the future of liberal democracy are also discussed.

Introduction

Liberal democratic values are essential in an ever-changing world where challenges such as migration, the pandemic, and the rise of the far right continue to impact many democracies. According to Mudde and Kaltwasser,¹ liberal democracy is 'a system characterized not only by free and fair elections, popular sovereignty, and majority rule, but also by the constitutional protection of minority rights.' In other words, liberal democracy is a complex form of government rooted in political equality, which indicates that the majority cannot deprive the minority of its political rights. A strong liberal democracy has the potential to moderate extremist political ideas and is pivotal in fighting radical right political agendas.²

Valued democratic principles are under threat as far right-populist groupings arise.³ By arguing for nationalism, anti-immigrant incentives and other far-right master frames, radical right groups entering the electoral field threaten liberal democracy as they attempt to move away from established democratic values. We can see evidence of such developments in many European countries. For instance, in Hungary, the far right and anti-immigrant party Jobbik has gained significant voter-support by focusing its anti-Roma and otherwise anti-minority stances.⁴ In France, the anti-immigrant National Rally has for years maintained its strong opposition to the Euro while it has placed great emphasis on blaming the European Union (EU) for mass immigration. In 2019, Le Pen's party gained the most votes in France's election to the European Parliament, showing that the far right rises, yet again.⁵ Similarly, in Poland, the ultra-nationalist and anti-pluralist party PiS, has in the past five years, used its anti-EU

incentives and increasingly authoritarian tendencies to gain popularity.⁶ By using anti-EU rhetoric and religion as catalysts to gain votes, PiS' strategy adds to the pool of right-wing parties that are gaining legitimacy within the electoral field in European democracies.

With the rise of right-wing parties, liberal democracy will either contribute to the moderation of ideas or the radical right will mask their identity, thus contributing to changing the nature of democracy. The current work investigates the role of liberal democracy in mitigating extremist politics. To that end, it asks two questions: 1) Does entering the parliamentary democratic process serve to moderate extremist views? 2) Did the rhetoric of the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) become more moderate once it entered electoral politics in Sweden?

Historically, right-wing extremist organizations in Scandinavian countries have been characterized as fringe groups and thus unable to establish legitimacy in society and politics.⁷ In Scandinavia, such extremist groups were short-lived because they endured a one-sided focus on anti-immigration and failed to account for other political agendas. Contrasting this is the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), the largest far right extremist organization in Scandinavia today.⁸ In 2015, NRM's Swedish chapter registered as a political party and entered electoral politics. According to its party program, NRM is pro nation state, where the goal is the creation of a state consisting of only Nordic people. Furthermore, NRM is anti-democratic and enforces authoritarian rule. NRM also denies ethnicities other than the Nordic from Scandinavia while arguing that the Nordic race is superior.⁹

In 2014, one of NRM's key members, Pär Öberg, was elected as a write-in candidate for the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats (SD) in the local election of the Swedish town, Ludvika.¹⁰ This development is believed to be the main driver for NRM to enter the electoral field. Starting as a niche organization, the decision to enter the electoral field meant a shift from NRM as an external organization to being part of electoral politics. Despite NRM entering politics, the party does not appear to have made significant political gains in Sweden or Scandinavia as a whole.¹¹ The party is, however, viewed as a significant threat to security and democracy. For instance, in early 2020, a resolution called on the U.S. State Department to include specific foreign nationalistic groups in the country's foreign terrorist organization list, including the Nordic Resistance Movement.¹²

To gain traction in the electoral field, right-wing extremist parties must change their rhetoric to fit within the frames of liberal democracy.¹³ Researchers have examined

the success of European radical right parties as they entered electoral politics in their respective countries. Essentially, the argument is made that far right parties need to change their rhetoric to ‘fit’ within the frames of electoral politics. For instance, the ‘nation state’ and ‘nationalism’ are central themes in radical right party programs but are themes parties aim to alleviate when entering the electoral field. Yet, this presents a hypothetical dilemma in that radical right parties may be masking their discourse to gain traction.

NRM’s ideas of the Nordic race as superior, as well as its suggestions to remove immigrants from the Nordic countries, clearly opposes the ideals that are valued in European democracies. Therefore, if we pair NRM’s opposition to established European democratic values along with their admiration of 1930’s Europe, it is clear that groupings of right-wing extremists pose a real threat to liberal democracy as we know it. Given the increasingly globalized nature of the world, it is important to examine factors that may threaten our ability to function together within societies. Examining the NRM is equally as important because it sheds light on recent developments in European politics and can help illuminate the future of liberal democracy around the globe.

Far-Right Discourses: Right-Wing Populism, Fascism, and Nationalism

Four bodies of literature informed the arguments of the study. The literatures of right-wing populism, fascism, and nationalism as it relates to the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) illuminate how populist, fascist, and nationalistic rhetoric can be attractive to ordinary people and thus contribute to increased votes and changes in democracies. Contradicting these three literatures is pluralism, a concept central in liberal democracies that, in theory, provides a solution to mitigate extreme ideas.

The meaning of populism depends on the direction of political thought as right/conservative or left/liberal. Scholars argue that the most common denominator of far-right parties is their exclusionist, ethno-nationalist notion of citizenship, which is usually reflected in the saying ‘our own people first’.¹⁴ The incentive indicates that a given nation should only be inhabited and enjoyed by those native to the country, and that *others* threaten this idea.¹⁵ NRM’s rhetoric often refers to the creation of a nation state excluding people other than the Nordic race. This not only creates a barrier between groups in society, where some belong and others do not, but it also contributes to a false incentive behind the construction of groups in society as the enemy.

The essence of fascism is to be found in the concept's intellectual ideas, rooted in racial nationalism or anti-Semitic stereotypes.¹⁶ Some posit that every proclaimed fascist organization has, at some point, drawn inspiration from German or Italian fascist parties.¹⁷ Perhaps the most direct example of this idea is when fringe organizations are inspired by historical fascist rhetoric, thus using Nazi or fascist symbolism as part of their political agenda. German Nazism has shaped NRM in terms of extreme nationalism and cultural superiority of the Nordic (Germanic) peoples. With its charismatic totalitarian nature, Nazism rejected liberalism, democracy, human rights, and international cooperation.¹⁸ Thus, Nazism opposed essential values of liberal democracies.

Nationalistic ideas are often represented as part of far-right rhetoric. Nationalism is defined as 'an expression of certain straightforward ideas, which provide a framework for political life.'¹⁹ Nationalism's most basic conceptualization then, is that only a selection of people belong to a national group, further suggesting that socially constructed *others* do not belong. Therefore, the notion of homogeneity is central, as well as the idea that 'our nation' is somehow better than any other nation. Nationalism becomes especially challenging when right-wing parties construct *others* as the major cause of social instability. For instance, political positions that suggest hostility towards minority groups have become legitimized as part of the majority population's perceptions of *others*.²⁰

Recent research has focused on how political parties use far-right discourses to construct false narratives around rumors of criminal refugees.²¹ Ultimately, such political initiatives contribute to placing certain individuals in a group that do not belong in society. However, such notions do not always depict themselves in upfront racism and exclusionist behavior. More often than not, it is the sense of togetherness and the construction of the people, which in Sweden equals 'white and Nordic' - that creates the connection to both nationalism and racism. As such, this discussion interacts with the conversation regarding populist rhetoric and the construction of *others*, but also with fascist intellectual content where racial superiority is an important element.

Pluralism

Pluralism functions as a contrast to far-right populism, fascism, and nationalism. A pluralist perspective embraces a democratic equilibrium between independent parts of society, where the goal is always compromise. According to a pluralist view, people become mobilized politically and ideologically rather than organized due to their

ethnic and cultural lines.²² This not only furthers their interests as a cohesive group of individuals, but also promotes their collective interests. Thus, a pluralist society not only creates fewer disparities between people, but also promotes opportunity and equality so that all individuals are valued in society. The idea then, is to create representation of all parts in society, despite differences.

NRM is opposed to various groups in society. For one, the party opposes minority populations (populism) and suggests that immigrants and individuals of non-Nordic descent are not welcome and should leave Sweden (fascism). Second, NRM's political agenda frequently opposes current governmental leadership as it blames previous and current government coalitions to be responsible for Sweden's present political and societal situation (fascism). These NRM ideologies suggest that minorities, such as immigrants of non-Nordic descent, are not valued citizens, while also hinting to that non-Nordic individuals do not belong in the Nordic countries or in parliament (fascism). Thus, by preventing minorities and constructed *others* to partake in societal processes, NRM opposes the central ideals of the pluralist perspective.

Method

The current work explores the effects that right-wing extremism might have on the nature of liberal democracy. More specifically, it focuses on how the rhetoric of the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) changed from before and after entering politics to see if the electoral field serves to moderate extremist views. NRM entered Swedish politics in 2015. This year then, served as the starting point of the study. Three months leading up to the 2010 Swedish election (July-September) were chosen to account for the 'before-politics' period. Thus, the 'after-politics' period was the three months (July-September) leading up to the Swedish election in 2018. The months of July-September were selected because they 1) represented the three months leading up to the elections in September 2010 and 2018 and 2) had an increase in the total number of posts published when compared to the foregoing years, 2009 and 2017, respectively.

This study was based on a qualitative content analysis. The method was inductive in nature and it focused on NRM's communicated content. To analyze NRM's rhetoric, posts published by NRM leadership, members, and guest writers were selected from NRM's official website, *nordfront.se*, which is likely the dominant platform for extremist ideas in Scandinavia.²³ A total of 169 posts were analyzed ($N=70$ posts from July-September 2010 and $N=99$ from July-September 2018). To guide the research, three questions regarding NRM were asked; 1) who are NRM? 2) what or who are NRM presenting as the threat? And 3) what are their suggested solutions moving

forward? A process of coding was applied consistently with the purposes of answering the questions concerning NRM's rhetoric. Additional content that did not fall under any of the questions in relation to NRM also emerged and was included in the discussion on NRM's rhetoric.

In 2018, cluster sampling was used to narrow the sample²⁴ and random selection of posts was ensured by using an online generator from *random.org*. The total number of posts depended on the year, but July-September 2018 produced a total of 2095, and for 2010 the total number of posts corresponded to 173. In 2018, cluster sampling was used to select 99 posts, which was further divided by three, corresponding to July, August and September ($N=33$ posts/month). To demonstrate this process, July 2018 contained a total of 565 posts, and 33 numbers were randomly selected via the integer generator. As the 33 numbers were selected, the corresponding posts were found within the July 2018 archive at *nordfront.se*. For instance, one of the randomized numbers was 27. Located within the July 2018 archive, post number 27 was found on the third page.²⁵

Due to a shortage of posts from July-September 2010, the original plan of cluster sampling and random selection of posts in 2010, was not possible. Therefore, all posts (70) that consisted of more than 100 words were selected as part of the sample population in 2010. As the study aimed to analyze NRM's rhetoric, posts such as short announcements or demonstration updates (<100 words) were not included as part of the sample in either 2010 or 2018. In 2018, random selection via the online number generator was initiated until a post with more than 100 words was located.

Introduction to findings

To account for a potential change in the Nordic Resistance Movement's (NRM) rhetoric before they entered electoral politics (2010) and after (2018), three topics guided the research: NRM's description of themselves, their perceived enemies, and their suggested solutions for perceived problems. Starting with 2010, the following section describes the findings. Salient examples of each of these categories is included. This process is repeated with all topics in relation to NRM and also count for the analysis of posts from 2018. To end, a comparison between the two time periods is included.

2010 - Before Entering Electoral Politics

NRM's description of themselves

National Socialists

According to NRM, being a National Socialist appears to be rooted in national solidarity. In a post about Göran Oredsson (leader of the neo-Nazi political party in Sweden - the Nordic Realm Party), NRM communicates the following:

By establishing the Nordic Realm Party and to declare National Socialism as its ideology, Oredsson fought to save Swedish and Nordic National Socialism. The fight was challenging, especially against those who value harmonization, when they try to imitate democracy - those who don't see a problem in collaborating with Jews, the white races' ultimate enemy...[26](#)

Here, NRM is celebrating the Swedish neo-Nazi leader Oredsson by crowning him the ultimate Swedish anti-Semitic hero. By glorifying Oredsson, NRM are clearly making the point that they too are National Socialists, who are looking for national solidarity. The way NRM degrades the idea of harmonization stands in opposition to pluralist ideas, where equilibrium between independent parts is important in decision-making.[27](#) Additionally, by the direct inclusion of the Nazi salute, "heil", NRM is clearly referring back to Nazi symbolism.[28](#) Just like Nazism was the German version of fascism, National Socialism as defined by NRM is understood as the Swedish version of fascism.

Patriots

NRM describe themselves as 'Swedes' or 'Nordic'. This notion is, of course, in opposition to the social construction of *others*. To illustrate this idea, NRM states that:

Immigrants are ludicrous and denigrating. They are offending all Swedish generations that have helped build Sweden to reflect what it is today. For them to claim they are extremely important as a result of this demonstration is an example of what the future will hold if we keep inviting more of them into the country.[29](#)

By constructing a difference between 'us' (Swedes) and 'them' (immigrants), NRM contributes to the demonizing of immigrants while making the case that their presence in Sweden is unwanted.[30](#) These ideas connect to those of nativism, racism, and the construction of 'us vs. them', which are important ideas in nationalistic and fascist rhetoric.[31](#)

Revolutionary

NRM also describe themselves as revolutionary. One author explains NRM as a 'revolutionary organization' and explains that being revolutionary is necessary because

‘the current situation is extreme’ and explains the meaning behind being radical:

To be radical is to find the root issue, or root cause and further engage in action to change the current unwanted situation... we will do everything in our power to change the sick system we live in.³²

NRM are looking to change the current, unwanted situation by transforming the system that they frame as “sick”. The presented suggestions are all signs of revolutionary behavior and connect to Adolf Hitler’s radical nature during Nazi Germany.³³

NRM’s description of their enemies

The media

One of NRM’s enemies is the media. Specifically, rhetoric framing the media as ‘corrupt’ is prevalent in much of NRM’s communicated content. For example, NRM says about the media, ‘it’s unjust and corrupted’ before continuing:

...it is blind because it is against everything they identify as for Sweden. Us that are actually for Sweden and non- leniency in media must fight back in the ongoing propaganda war...when it comes to security, we can never believe in the corrupt system, only ourselves.³⁴

Here, NRM are using words such as ‘ourselves’ and ‘we’ to describe NRM and its followers, namely white, Nordic, and ethnic Swedes. This rhetoric has clear ties to nationalistic, fascist and right-wing populist rhetoric because it aims to strengthen the sense of racial solidarity while uniting supporters to NRM’s vision of the nation.

Current political system

NRM also frames the current political system as the enemy. For example, NRM engages exclusionist opinions on current initiatives related to the restriction of the traditional Muslim garment, the burqa. NRM communities the following regarding the Sweden Democrats’ (SD) initiative:

The burqa initiative is only following a mainstreamed European trend. It is trying to avoid reforming the hopeless political system that was established after 1945... With such arrangements, one will only force integration. For every Swede and European, this is a nightmare.³⁵ (Burkaförbud? Nej tack!, 5th of August, 2010, number 70).

Here, NRM states that the political system established in the aftermath of 1945 is inadequate. This notion is in line with the belief of other white nationalistic parties, which indicates NRM's admiration of such politics. In accordance with NRM's opposition to the current political system, NRM frequently refers to communism as an unwanted political system in strong opposition with their National Socialist values. The latter is in direct correlation to how Hitler framed communism as the enemy of Nazism.³⁶

Jews

NRM depict those of Jewish descent as the ultimate enemy. In one post, the author claims that the true nature of Swedish nationalism cannot be understood without comprehending the 'Jew-problem'. For instance, Adolf Hitler's Nazi politics aimed to gather racially superior Germans into a tightly knit community where racial harmony was the ultimate goal. To accomplish such racial harmony, it was necessary to exclude people of inferior blood, a plan understood as the Nazi solution to the so-called 'Jewish problem'.³⁷

In one of NRM's posts, NRM cites Lars Dencik, who is described as a 'Jew' when saying: 'Swedish nationalism is threatening the humanistic, liberal, and social world'.³⁸

NRM make a statement on Dencik's comment while arguing that Dencik, together with other Jewish intellectuals, are 'using double-speak and talk with forked tongues' when fronting views that do not align with National Socialism. Such communication indicates that NRM do not think National Socialism threatens liberal democracy. Again, NRM's statements connects to fascism, right wing populism and extreme nationalistic rhetoric in that these concepts represent ideas that exist in opposition to those of pluralism in a liberal democracy.³⁹

'Others'

Posts by NRM also showed the party's clear intention to build a certain 'us vs. them' distinction within Sweden. As noted previously, far right populism tends to construct in-group and out-group politics.⁴⁰ Findings indicate that this also counts for NRM in the way they depict immigrants as the threat to Sweden's ethnic solidarity. NRM's posts depict a broad picture of what appears to be rooted in placing *others* in a bad light. For instance, in one post, NRM provided an alternative explanation when explaining why the general Swedish population has become increasingly positive to immigration:

Demker's research has become popular among mass media and is supporting the ongoing multiculturalism in Sweden. If Demker's numbers are true, NRM finds it important to present another reality. In the fall of 2009, 12 percent of Swedes would not approve of individuals from other world corners being part of one's family through marriage. In 1993, the percentage was 25. Such numbers prove that the indoctrination of Swedes has taken place and that more people have lost their ability to think critically... As such, Demker's research might be distorted propaganda!⁴¹

With this communication, NRM seems to not only be opposed to multiculturalism, but also to constructed *others* that fall outside the category of ethnic Swedes. Research indicates that one's preconceived notion of fear can distort one's sense of what is right,⁴² and therefore compromises the democratic ideal of social justice as understood by a pluralist perspective. Although NRM has yet to engage in especially violent behavior, history has shown that rhetoric in accordance with NRM and the resulting hostility towards *others* have the potential to graduate to vicious forms of violence.

NRM's suggested solutions

Pan-Nordic Republic

To solve the current unwanted situation, NRM suggests the creation of a pan-Nordic Republic, consisting of ethnic Nordic people only. The following quote illuminates NRM's suggested solution of a pan-Nordic Republic:

On the grounds of a National Socialist framework, The Nordic Resistance Movement wants a new process of state building. This means that today's political system needs to be revoked so that we can create room for an entirely reformed state. The new Nordic Republic will be made up of those that are part of the Nordic race... our idea is that the Republic will be fairer and more useful for us as compared to any other political system that have previously existed in the North... As such, everything will be done in harmony with Adolf Hitler's ideas.⁴³

The quote is the words of a revolutionary, nationalistic, and hierarchical organization, which is in strong opposition to the socially constructed *others*. In Sweden, great changes in demographic composition as a result of the influx of immigrants from African and Middle Eastern countries have occurred in the past two decades. This change in Sweden's demographic makeup might serve as a catalyst to NRM

highlighting the importance of a solution where ethnic Swedes are placed at the top of the hierarchy. Such depictions of racial superiority are often associated with white nationalism, which is a concept closely connected to nativism. Nativism refers to the protecting of the interest of native populations while dismissing the safeties of those who are constructed, by the native population, as ‘others’.⁴⁴ Findings also indicate that NRM promotes various forms of exclusionist rhetoric as they encourage actions such as ‘the return of immigrants to their home countries’, and ‘tearing down African culture projects’. NRM then, are rooting for racial solidarity in a homogeneous Swedish society.

Additional content

Nazi Germany

Reading through the posts, it was evident that the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) had a fascination with Nazi Germany. Specifically, Hitler’s biography *Mein Kampf* is mentioned multiple times and appears to function as NRM’s guide to National Socialism. In several instances, NRM argue that one cannot be a true National Socialist if one has not read or understood Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. In fact, the party also cites *Mein Kampf* as the ‘most principal book ever written’. Content related to Nazi Germany continues in several posts. For example, one author talked about the death of a Polish holocaust denier. Here, NRM are questioning whether the Polish man did in fact die a natural death or if he ‘died as a result of his beliefs’. This communication suggests that NRM are questioning whether the Polish holocaust denier was victimized as a result of his denial of the Holocaust. The topic of deaths of individuals is not a common theme throughout 2010, but if covered, it discusses people that lived according to National Socialist beliefs. This selection communicates a particular bias and is interesting because it indirectly contributes to the understanding of who NRM are, but also what they believe in.

2018 - After Entering Electoral Politics

NRM’s description of themselves

Superior National Socialists

Like 2010, NRM’s description of themselves as National Socialists is prevalent. By using language such as ‘Sweden is our country’, ‘our people’, ‘our race’, where ‘our’ refers to white individuals of ethnic Swedish origin, NRM’s rhetoric connects to that of

nationalism. As such, these notions of superiority correspond with NRM's description of themselves as superior National Socialists. In a post from August, NRM writes:

The law against ethnic groups is clearly made to prevent Swedes moral and practical right to defend our own people in our own motherland... Ethnic Swedes are the ones that suffer through daily persecution and we are especially affected by rape, threat, robbery, assault and murder... Due to the Anti-Swedish lawmaking, we are the "legitimate prey"... How are we supposed to react to this when all people are equal?⁴⁵

By NRM's frequent use of exclusionist and National Socialist rhetoric, there is not much evidence to point to that NRM believe all people are equal. By using language that communicates that NRM believe Nordic people are superior, NRM are making the point that white, Ethnic Swedes are more valuable than any other racial group. Therefore, NRM's communication of 'all people are equal' appears out of place as it contradicts their belief that the Nordic race is superior.

Revolutionary

NRM describe themselves as part of 'the people', 'fight group', and 'National Socialists' while placing great emphasis on these groups being revolutionary. The following communicates the importance of 'the people' being revolutionary:

Our people are soon replaced with ethnic others originating from all over the world. Trips, new cars, new cell phones and trash-TV; does it even matter since our people are becoming extinct? No, disconnect yourself from such examples of materialistic hell and become a resistance man or woman already.⁴⁶

It is evident that NRM is opposed to developments that result from globalization. As NRM describe themselves to be part of a "fight group" composed of national socialists, they are revolutionary in that they are seeking great change. Nazi Germany was also revolutionary when Hitler gained the majority power in the Reichstag. As such, this observation connects to the literature on Nazism in that it aims to operate outside the parliamentary democratic process.⁴⁷

Enemies

Jews

NRM's rhetoric shows significant anti-Semitic views. For instance, NRM covers a discussion that includes words from Philip Giraldi concerning how the United States is

failing to dismantle violence and terror in Israel. By stating that ‘the richest donors are typically Jews...With money, they buy the politics they want to see’, NRM is clearly framing Jews as the enemy, while feeding the illogical idea that Jews are responsible for societal downturns and corrupt political systems. Furthermore, NRM communicates the following:

The news concerning Israel was deleted from the article a few hours later. This is just like when SVT in Sweden cut out news from their websites to avoid revealing people's identity... That is especially if suspects of crimes are black Africans or Jews... This is an example of how the media self-censors its news when something negative is written about others and Israel...The U.S. contributes to the creation of scapegoats that look at themselves as superior Americans. In fact, using scapegoats is a prehistoric Jewish method to avoid taking responsibility for sins... This idea is described in the Torah, one of the Jews’ “Holy” Scriptures.⁴⁸

Not only does this communication contribute to our understanding of NRM’ view of Jews as inferior, but it also underpins the illogic belief that Jews are responsible for unfortunate societal events. As such, NRM’s framing of Jews as the enemy builds upon the hostile views of Jews perceived in fascist rhetoric in Nazi Germany.⁴⁹

The racial other

NRM members write about the *racial other*, which in addition to Jews as explained earlier refers to immigrants, migrants, or refugees. These individuals are typically framed to be violent, opposed to established Swedish values, and therefore, threatening Swedish society. Although the overall Swedish population consists of a majority of ethnic Swedes, this group is never mentioned as violent. Rather, the description of ‘violent and brutal’ people is reserved exclusively for the constructed *others*. An example of this idea is communicated in the following lead paragraph:

Multiculturalism. After all rape-cases got cleared in the end of May, another racial other is being framed as the suspect for yet another rape-case dated to the beginning of July.⁵⁰

It is worth noting that NRM are including an identification number, which is an addition that could potentially become a security issue for the alleged rapist. In this quote, NRM is blaming immigrants and the resulting multiculturalism to be the sole reason to why violent acts happen. Such rhetoric is closely connected to that of

nationalism and fascism in that the intrusion of *others* threatens established, idealized societal values.⁵¹

Solutions

Increased globalization and higher levels of immigration to Sweden have led some people longing back to an illusory, idealized past. NRM's solution to this is to "stop the invasion of others". We can see evidence of this idea when NRM writes:

Vote for a free Sweden and a Nordic Union. Vote for ethnic solidarity, self-sufficiency, and a safe future. Vote for idealism and real people power!⁵²

As discussed, the idea of ethnic solidarity is one of NRM's main goals when creating a pan-Nordic Republic consisting of Nordic people only. This message is rooted in the notion of returning to an idealized Swedish Nation. The idea of returning to a romanticized notion of the past is not a newly developed idea. For instance, Nazi rhetoric highlighted the importance of returning to an idealized past, an example of rhetoric used to generate emotional responses in ordinary people. In more recent times we see Donald Trump engage similar ideas when he uses phrases such as 'make America great again'.⁵³ With the suggested return to an idealized past, NRM's communication relates to right-wing populism, but also to fascist intellectual ideas.

Additional content

Racial biology and Holocaust denial

The topic of race is relevant in all three questions concerning NRM. To add to the importance of racial superiority, NRM's appeared fixation around the topic is furthered in a post that concerns racial biology. NRM writes:

The Living History Forum (LHF) are now forced to update their information around Swedish race biology after facts presented in the movie "One people, One party" by Sweden Democrats...⁵⁴

LHF was established to further democracy, tolerance and human rights after the Holocaust.⁵⁵ In a discussion over some of the work that FLH has done, NRM does not recognize the annihilation during Holocaust and use wording such as 'so-called annihilation' to underpin that this in fact did not happen. Furthermore, in describing an information book that the FLM helped publish titled '*...about this you need to know... the Holocaust from 1935-1945*', NRM calls the book a lie. Although this

communication is subtle, these findings suggest that NRM are engaging in holocaust denying.

Summary of findings

In both time periods, NRM describe themselves as National Socialists, which is a narrative in line with Nazi rhetoric from the 1930-40's. NRM's descriptions of their enemies are similar in 2010 and 2018. For example, in depicting communism and Jews as two of its enemies, NRM are using similar rhetoric as Hitler did during National Socialism in 1930's Germany. Furthermore, NRM's suggested solutions moving forward also do not seem to have changed much. For instance, results show that NRM wishes to create a pan-Nordic Republic consisting of only Nordic people, which are notions like those of Nazi exclusionist and expansionist ideas. Throughout the analysis, it was evident that NRM frequently refer to Nazi Germany and idolizes Hitler's Main Kampf. Combined, these findings show that NRM is using extreme forms of fascist rhetoric in both 2010 and 2018. In the case of NRM then, it indicates that entering the parliamentary democratic process has not served to moderate the party's extremist stances. As a result of the lack of moderation in NRM's rhetoric, there is a chance liberal democracy could be susceptible to extremist politics.

Implications of fascist infiltration in democracies

In theory, liberal democracy, serves as a moderator in mitigating extremist politics. This is only true, however, with the presence of evidence that demonstrates the moderation of such politics. With no significant moderation, chances are liberal democracy does not work as theorized. Findings indicate that entering the parliamentary democratic process has not served to moderate the Nordic Resistance Movement's (NRM) extremist politics. As a result of the lack of moderation in NRM's rhetoric, there is a chance liberal democracy could be susceptible to extremist politics, today and in the future. The discussion below clarifies some of the implications that can follow from such an advance.

One way to reduce the risk of fascist infiltration into the democratic system is that moderate parties show unwillingness to cooperate with far-right extremist parties. This could lead the extremist party to have limited power in governmental processes. The intersection between extremist parties' unwillingness to moderate their politics and moderate parties' reluctance to cooperate with extremist parties might lead the far-right party being overruled, ignored, or even banned from the electoral field. Although it might be difficult to grasp the idea of letting extremist parties exist within

the electoral field or in society in general, banning an extremist organization might, in some cases, lead extremist supporters to engage alliance elsewhere. For instance, members could potentially radicalize further via online networks and may cause harm to society as a result of that organization. As we reminisce over the past where far-right extremist parties went from fringe movements to leading political powers in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, we know that such developments, although manifested in different ways, can also advance today.

Another possibility of reducing the risk of fascist infiltration in the democratic system can happen if moderate parties collaborate with the extreme right. In a multi-party system, the moderate party can use the extremist party as a ‘safety net’ to secure their own place in the coalition. In turn, cooperation on such bases might lead the extremist party to not have a say in political debate. This idea played out in a recent coalition change in electoral politics in Norway. In 2013, the far-right party Fremskrittspartiet (FrP), were accepted into a coalition with another party before FrP, and in early 2020, they exited the coalition due to not being heard politically.⁵⁶ Although such party coalitions can lead far-right parties to have less influence in a governmental coalition, as seen in the example of FrP, it may also be true that far-right parties gain recognition as part of a coalition. In countries that employ a system characterized by proportionate representation in a multi-party system, political influence is divided among several political parties. Thus, far-right fringe parties have the potential to advance to legislative seats because they can, together with other parties, establish governmental coalitions. It is when this happens that far-right extremist parties threaten democracy because they, in their politics, attempt to move away from established democratic values.

One possibility that results from fascist ideas failing to moderate is that existing moderate parties are drawn to rightward policy immersion. This could happen if moderate parties lose their voters to right-wing parties. This potential development can lead moderate parties to question whether to adopt extremist stances to recover such losses. As various illiberal positions posed by the far right are legitimized through such policy repositioning, a steady weakening of established core democratic values is also possible. The inclusions of one’s own people and the exclusion of *others* is one of the most characteristic incentives enforced by far-right extremist parties. For instance, anti-immigration policies might gain initial momentous support in times of economic hardship or threat of migration, but can, if legitimized then, continue to be part of the ‘new’ mainstream after the fact.

Failure to moderate extremist politics also means the possibility that exclusionist ideas such as ‘us vs. them’ become part of the mainstream. Findings from the current study indicate that NRM uses the notion of ethnonationality to construct an in-group and an out-group, respectively *the people* as contrasted by *others*. Here, *the people* are ethnic Swedes, and understood as the only individuals worthy of residing in Sweden. Obviously, this suggests that socially constructed *others* such as immigrants do not belong in society. As discussed earlier, white nationalistic rhetoric and the construction of *others* often entails the alleged corrupt and political elite, immigrants, and other minorities excluded from *the people*. Surely, such constructions of enemies are prevalent in NRM’s rhetoric, but also when we look further at some of the oldest democracies in the world. In other words, this extreme right discourse regarding *the people* is elitist, but also exclusionist, as socially constructed others are, to different degrees, rejected from the elite in society. Such examples of extreme nationalism might lead to discursive aspects of discrimination, further leading similar discourses rooted in xenophobia to become a natural and therefore acceptable reaction to the unwanted presence of *others*.

Future trajectories of the Nordic Resistance Movement

The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) continues to prosper as the leading neo-Nazi organization in Scandinavia. Despite entering the electoral field, findings from this study indicate that the party has failed to moderate their politics. Global conspiracy theories such as QAnon, changes in perceived societal threats, as well as societal and economic hardship can lead the general population to adapt alternative views of reality rooted in far-right extremism. Such developments can also lead far right political parties to rise in popularity. In relation to NRM, the party’s leader Simon Lindberg, published in March 2020 on *Nordfront.se*, describing the party’s aim to recruit members amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and economic hardships. Using difficult times to recruit followers is a characteristic method often used by extremists. For instance, societal changes rooted in national unrest were highly influential to the construction of fascism. Recent violence incited by Donald Trump on the U.S. Capitol in January 2021 is yet another example that speaks to the real challenge of democracy, namely right-wing views resulting in violence. Especially with the latter development in mind, future research should focus on NRM and other right-wing groupings recruitment process before, during and after times of hardship to determine the potential growth of the far-right extreme.

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