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Contemporary violent extremism is becoming harder to interpret through ideology alone. Individuals and online communities increasingly move across extremist, conspiratorial, and violence-centred environments, selectively adopting narratives, symbols, aesthetics, and tactics from otherwise distinct ideological traditions. This does not mean ideology is disappearing, but it weakens the assumption that ideological coherence must precede violent mobilisation. This report examines this development as ideological convergence across four observable dimensions: narrative, symbolic, tactical, and strategic. It analyses how digital communication ecosystems, weakened ideological gatekeeping, attention dynamics, and decentralised extremist structures facilitate cross-ecosystem borrowing and hybrid radicalisation pathways. The Nordic online community HAKAKAT SAMI JAHANNAM is examined as a case study of composite extremist identity construction combining Nordic, radical islamist, neo-Nazi, accelerationist, occult, and violence-centred elements. For counter-terrorism practitioners, the central implication is to reduce dependence on ideological coherence as a proxy for threat. Greater analytical weight should be placed on behavioural mobilisation, digital trajectory, network exposure, intent, capability, and progression towards violence.		

IDEOLOGICAL CONVERGENCE AND HYBRID RADICALISATION IN CONTEMPORARY VIOLENT EXTREMISM

A POTENTIAL PRECURSOR OF TERRORISM 2.0

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AQ	AL-QAEDA
AWD	ATOMWAFFEN DIVISION
CaaS	Crime-as-a-service
HSJ	HARAKAT SAMI JAHANNAM
IS	ISLAMIC STATE
O9A	ORDER OF NINE ANGLES
OSINT	Open-source intelligence
PIT	Politically inspired terrorism
RIT	Religiously inspired terrorism
VaaS	Violence-as-a-service



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1. Executive summary

Contemporary violent extremism is becoming harder to interpret through ideology alone. Individuals and online communities increasingly move across extremist, conspiratorial, and violence-centred environments, selectively adopting narratives, symbols, aesthetics, and tactics that originate in otherwise distinct ideological traditions. The result is not the disappearance of ideology, but a weakening of the assumption that ideological coherence must precede violent mobilisation.

This report examines this development as ideological convergence. It identifies four observable dimensions: narrative, symbolic, tactical, and strategic convergence. These range from the circulation of common grievance narratives and reciprocal symbolic borrowing to the adoption of proven attack and propaganda practices across ideological boundaries. Importantly, similar behaviour does not necessarily demonstrate direct influence: some convergence reflects deliberate borrowing, while other similarities emerge independently as extremist actors respond to comparable operational pressures

Digital communication ecosystems accelerate these processes. Cross-platform circulation, weakened ideological gatekeeping, competition for attention, and decentralised organisational models expose individuals to a wider extremist repertoire and allow effective propaganda and operational practices to travel beyond their original ideological context. At the individual level, this can produce hybrid radicalisation pathways in which grievance and fascination with violence become more stable than ideological identity itself.

The emerging Nordic online community HARAKAT SAMI JAHANNAM illustrates this dynamic. Its propaganda combines Nordic and Sámi references with radical islamist, neo-Nazi, accelerationist, occult, and violence-centred material. Its operational capability remains unsubstantiated, but its significance lies precisely in demonstrating how a small digital community can construct a coherent extremist identity from ideologically incompatible material while promoting an increasingly consistent orientation towards violence.

For counter-terrorism practitioners, the implication is not to abandon ideological analysis but to reduce dependence on ideological coherence as a proxy for threat. Convergence indicators should be distinguished from mobilisation indicators; investigations should reconstruct trajectories across platforms and ideological environments; and monitoring and prevention should account for bridge communities, emerging propaganda brands, youth-oriented online subcultures, and attack-influence chains. The decisive analytical question is increasingly not whether an actor fits one ideological category, but whether diverse influences are converging around intent, capability, and progression towards violence.

2. The operational problem of ideological convergence

Already before the 11 September 2001 attacks and for most of what followed them, counter-terrorism systems in Europe and other democratic states have organised threat analysis around relatively stable ideological categories. Violent extremism has generally been divided into streams such as politically inspired far-right extremism, politically inspired far-



left extremism, and religiously inspired terrorism. These categories shaped intelligence structures, investigative tasking, border-security screening models, and prevention and deradicalisation frameworks.

In practice, ideology served as a primary analytical filter: investigators assessed radicalisation pathways, recruitment environments, behavioural indicators, and organisational affiliations largely within the boundaries of these threat streams. Over the past decade, however, a growing number of cases have demonstrated that these categories are becoming less reliable as predictive tools when used in isolation.

Investigations across Europe and North America have identified individuals and networks that borrow narratives, symbols, tactics, and communicative practices from multiple extremist traditions. Far-right accelerationist actors have referenced propaganda and operational concepts associated with religiously inspired terrorism; radical islamist online content has adopted platform-native aesthetics already circulating through far-right and other digital subcultures; and some actors move between ideologically distinct communities while maintaining a consistent trajectory towards legitimising violence.

Cross-ideological fascination and tactical borrowing predate the contemporary digital environment. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, elements of neo-Nazi and white-supremacist milieus expressed admiration for AL-QAEDA and other radical islamist actors perceived as uncompromising opponents of liberal democratic societies. The conceptual groundwork for sacralising racial violence was already present within parts of the white-supremacist milieu: from the 1980s, Ben KLASSEN's CREATIVITY movement, also known as THE (WORLD) CHURCH OF THE CREATOR, promoted RaHoWa, an acronym for "Racial Holy War", as a mobilising concept for an existential racial conflict. Although RaHoWa did not itself originate as an appropriation of radical islamist doctrine, its framing of political and racial violence as a form of "holy war" anticipated the semantic terrain on which later concepts such as "Aryan jihad" and "white jihad" developed. ARYAN NATIONS circles subsequently invoked the concept of an "Aryan jihad"; white-supremacist figures such as Billy ROPER publicly praised the 11 September 2001 attacks; and Swiss neo-fascist Ahmed HUBER combined longstanding far-right associations with support for radical islamist actors. David MYATT, associated with the ORDER OF NINE ANGLES, represents a more substantial ideological bridge, moving from neo-Nazi activism into radical islamist milieus while continuing to influence extremist subcultures. These examples demonstrate that ideological boundaries have never been impermeable. What distinguishes the current landscape is the scale, speed, and accessibility with which narratives, symbols, tactics, and propaganda practices can circulate between otherwise distinct extremist ecosystems.

Digital communication has amplified this process and produced new forms of cross-ideological influence. Several high-profile cases illustrate different manifestations of this convergence. Anders BREIVIK combined far-right leaderless-resistance concepts with tactical ideas found in AL-QAEDA-related material. The Christchurch attacker subsequently adapted the manifesto-and-attack model to a newer technological environment built around livestreaming, online amplification, and meme culture. At the same time, accelerationist milieus such as ATOMWAFFEN DIVISION, THE BASE, and networks



influenced by the ORDER OF NINE ANGLES demonstrate how political extremism, occult symbolism, violent nihilism, and tactical learning can coexist within hybrid digital environments.

These patterns reflect a broader shift in the operational environment of contemporary violent extremism. Three operational challenges arise from this shift:

1. Ideological identity has become a less reliable predictor of violent mobilisation. Investigators may encounter individuals expressing multiple or contradictory ideological positions while nonetheless progressing along a discernible pathway towards violence.
2. Hybrid extremist expression complicates early detection. Mixed ideological references, ironic or meme-based propaganda, and cross-movement symbolism can be dismissed as provocation or trolling even when they sit alongside increasingly serious mobilisation indicators.
3. Institutional counter-terrorism structures remain largely organised along ideological lines. Intelligence units, investigative teams, and prevention programmes frequently specialise in particular threat streams, while some contemporary actors move across those boundaries.

European threat reporting increasingly reflects this evolution. Europol has highlighted ideological overlap, fluid or incoherent worldviews, youth involvement, violence-centred online communities¹ and the growing operational importance of the digital domain in the EU terrorism and violent-extremism landscape².

This report examines ideological convergence as an operational problem. It argues that extremist movements continue to pursue distinct political or religious objectives, but contemporary actors increasingly borrow useful narratives, symbols, tactics, and communicative practices across ideological boundaries. Grievance narratives provide a principal connective mechanism at the level of identity and mobilisation, while symbolic, tactical, and strategic convergence may also emerge through pragmatic borrowing driven by visibility, operational utility, or adaptation to changing security environments.

Understanding this distinction matters for counter-terrorism practice. Detection models, investigative prioritisation, and prevention strategies that rely heavily on ideological categorisation risk overlooking actors whose radicalisation and mobilisation trajectories develop across several extremist, conspiratorial, or violence-centred environments.

¹ Europol, June 2025, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2025 (EU TE-SAT)", available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU_TE-SAT_2025.pdf

² Europol, 2026, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2026 (EU TE-SAT)", available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU-TE-SAT-2026.pdf>



3. Conceptualising ideological convergence in violent extremism

Ideological convergence does not mean that extremist movements are merging into a single unified ideology. Politically inspired extremist movements and religiously inspired terrorist movements continue to pursue distinct strategic objectives, historical narratives, and political visions. What has changed is the growing pragmatic borrowing of narratives, symbols, and tactics, together with the emergence of comparable strategic logics across otherwise distinct ideological environments

In contemporary extremist environments, actors adopt elements from other ideological traditions when those elements enhance mobilisation, identity formation, visibility, or operational impact. This produces hybrid forms of extremist expression without requiring full doctrinal alignment.

Convergence can arise through different mechanisms. In some cases, documentary or digital evidence demonstrates direct borrowing between extremist milieus. In others, movements independently develop structurally comparable narratives, tactics, or strategic logics in response to similar operational problems. This distinction is analytically important: similarity alone should not be treated as evidence of direct influence, affiliation, or coordination.

For analytical purposes, ideological convergence can be understood across four observable dimensions.

3.1. Narrative convergence

Extremist movements increasingly rely on structurally similar grievance narratives even when their ideological frameworks differ. Across politically inspired extremist and religiously inspired terrorist propaganda, recurring themes include civilisational decline, humiliation of the in-group, cultural or demographic replacement, corruption of political elites, and the perceived need for violent renewal. Grievance narratives therefore operate as flexible emotional frameworks capable of connecting otherwise distinct ideological milieus.

3.1.1. Civilisational collapse

Far-right accelerationist propaganda frequently portrays European or North American societies as collapsing under demographic change, cultural decay, or elite betrayal. Similar existential narratives appear in propaganda linked to radical islamism, where violence is framed as defence of the global Muslim community against perceived oppression, occupation, or cultural destruction. Across both milieus, violence can be presented as a legitimised response to an existential emergency.

The 2019 El Paso attack illustrates how grievance frameworks can accumulate heterogeneous themes. The perpetrator's manifesto combined demographic-replacement narratives with anti-globalisation and environmental anxieties. The case does not establish cross-ideological borrowing in itself, but it demonstrates how a dominant extremist



worldview can absorb additional grievances and present them as parts of a single civilisational crisis.

3.1.2. Anti-system and anti-elite narratives

Far-right propaganda frequently portrays democratic governments as controlled by hostile elites or as betraying the nation. Violent anarchist propaganda similarly depicts political and economic institutions as irredeemably oppressive and legitimate targets of revolutionary violence. Radical Islamist propaganda often frames national governments, international institutions, and secular political orders as illegitimate authorities opposed to divine or moral order. The ideological diagnoses differ, but the mobilising structure is comparable: existing institutions are presented as fundamentally illegitimate, making violent rupture appear morally permissible or necessary.

3.1.3. Revenge and humiliation narratives

Across extremist environments, historical or contemporary grievances can be framed as collective humiliation requiring redress. Far-right propaganda often describes demographic or cultural change as humiliation of the majority population; radical Islamist propaganda frequently invokes perceived injustices against Muslim populations; and other political extremist milieus may frame state violence, policing, economic inequality, or geopolitical conflict as evidence that retaliation is justified. In each case, violence is presented not only as political action but also as moral retribution.

For investigators, the operational relevance lies less in the existence of any single grievance than in how multiple grievances are assembled, repeated, and linked to a growing acceptance of violence. A mixed narrative environment may therefore be analytically significant even where an individual's formal ideological identity remains uncertain.

3.2. Symbolic convergence

Symbolic borrowing across extremist milieus has become increasingly visible. Accelerationist networks influenced by the ORDER OF NINE ANGLES combine neo-Nazi ideology with occult symbolism, satanist references, apocalyptic imagery, and violent nihilism. These symbolic ecosystems can attract individuals from several extremist and subcultural environments without requiring a coherent shared doctrine.

Radical Islamist online communities, particularly those frequented by younger audiences, have also adopted elements from visual repertoires already circulating across other extremist and internet subcultures. In some cases, radical Islamist content uses vaporwave, retrowave, or fashwave-derived aesthetics: neon grids, synthetic retrofuturist imagery, VHS degradation, stylised typography, meme-based humour, and other platform-native conventions. Fashwave itself emerged as a far-right appropriation of vaporwave and synthwave aesthetics, while research has identified users linked to ISLAMIC STATE adapting religiously inspired terrorist symbolism to Gen-Z and Gen-Alpha online formats. These examples should consequently be interpreted contextually: aesthetic convergence does not by itself establish ideological alignment, organisational affiliation, or common intent.



Symbolic borrowing also operates in the other direction. Politically inspired neo-Nazi and accelerationist milieus, including NATIONAL ACTION and ATOMWAFFEN DIVISION, have appropriated visual and ritual elements associated with radical islamist propaganda within the context of "white jihad", including the raised-index-finger monotheism gesture, adapted Islamic profession of faith, black-banner aesthetics, RIT fighter imagery, and terminology associated with holy war and martyrdom, frequently recombining these elements with neo-Nazi symbols. Also herein, appropriation does not imply doctrinal alignment; it reflects selective adoption of a militant symbolic repertoire associated with sacrifice, insurgency, and uncompromising violence.



Figure 1: examples of reciprocal symbolic borrowing between politically inspired extremist and radical islamist online milieus





The borrowing illustrated by these examples is therefore primarily aesthetic, affective, and communicative. It demonstrates how extremist propaganda can appropriate a shared platform-native visual language and adapt it to different ideological purposes.

3.3. Tactical convergence

Violent extremists increasingly adopt tactical and communicative practices developed outside their own ideological traditions. Accelerationist groups have drawn from the operational practices of organisations linked to religiously inspired terrorism, including ISLAMIC STATE and AL-QAEDA, particularly their approaches to decentralised cells, autonomous or lone-actor mobilisation, tactical communication, and propaganda amplification. AL-QAEDA's logistical modus operandi, and that of earlier connected networks such as MAKTAB ALKHADAMAT, were quoted by accelerationist groups as a historical blueprint example of relevance in the development of transnational recruitment, facilitation, financing, and logistical-support structures from which later terrorist organisations evolved. This borrowing remains explicit rather than merely historical: in 2025, THE BASE³'s founder Rinaldo NAZZARO continued to present AL-QAEDA as a model from which white-supremacist militants could draw organisational and strategic lessons, particularly its ability to mobilise geographically dispersed supporters within a transnational framework and deploy them to favourable conflict environments. His subsequent messaging identified destabilised territories, terrain conducive to insurgency, and access to weapons and materiel as criteria for establishing operational bases. The case therefore provides direct evidence of cross-ideological learning at both organisational and strategic levels rather than structural similarity alone.

Anders BREIVIK provides an important example. Despite his violently anti-Muslim worldview, he studied AQ-related material and drew operational inspiration from religiously inspired terrorism, combining concepts associated with far-right leaderless resistance with ideas concerning decentralised and individually executed terrorism. BREIVIK subsequently became an important reference point for later far-right attackers. His combination of mass-casualty violence with a manifesto intended to explain, publicise, and inspire replication established an influential model within contemporary far-right terrorism.

The Christchurch perpetrator adapted this model to a newer technological environment by combining a manifesto with livestreaming and deliberate online amplification. Christchurch then became a reference point for subsequent attackers and plots in Poway, El Paso, Bærum, Halle, Buffalo, and elsewhere. The resulting chain is principally an intra-far-right influence chain, but it illustrates how tactical and communicative practices can become a reusable attack script once they prove capable of generating notoriety and replication.

The Halle attack further illustrates the fusion of attack execution and online performance. The perpetrator combined antisemitic conspiracy narratives with stylistic features drawn from gaming and meme culture, livestreamed the attack, and framed the violence for an

³ THE BASE was added to the EU Terrorist List on 26 July 2024. The Council describes THE BASE as a right-wing extremist organisation involved in terrorist acts and identifies NAZZARO as its founder.



online audience. Such cases demonstrate that tactics now include not only the method of attack but also the production, packaging, and intended circulation of the attack as propaganda.

The broader convergence is therefore not a simple process of imitation within one ideological movement. Religiously inspired terrorist organisations had already demonstrated the operational value of decentralised mobilisation, individually executed attacks, online tactical guidance, and sophisticated propaganda; politically inspired extremist milieus subsequently adapted and further developed manifesto culture, livestreaming, meme-based propaganda, and the gamification of violence. These practices circulate across extremist environments at different rates of technological adoption and are increasingly treated as transferable operational tools rather than as features belonging to a single ideological tradition.

3.4. Strategic convergence

Some extremist milieus also share comparable strategic logics even where their ideological objectives differ. Accelerationism provides one example. Within politically inspired extremist ecosystems, accelerationist actors advocate violence intended not simply to achieve an immediate political objective but to intensify instability, accelerate societal breakdown, and create conditions for radical transformation

Comparable strategic reasoning can be identified within religiously inspired terrorism. AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ under Abu Musab AZZARQAWI deliberately intensified sectarian conflict through attacks intended to provoke retaliatory violence and widen civil war. ISLAMIC STATE later articulated a strategy of deepening social polarisation, including its stated objective of eliminating the “gray zone” between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe and elsewhere.

These approaches are not ideologically identical and should not be labelled as “accelerationist” or treated as evidence of direct borrowing. Their strategic logic is nevertheless structurally comparable: instability, polarisation, and escalating conflict are treated not merely as consequences of violence but as conditions that can be deliberately produced and exploited to weaken the existing order and expand opportunities for radical transformation.

The table below summarises the four observable dimensions of ideological convergence, their analytical focus, and examples of observable indicators.

Table 1: four observable dimensions of ideological convergence		
Dimension	Convergence focus	Observable indicators
NARRATIVE	Shared grievance narratives and emotional mobilisation frames	Civilisational decline; humiliation of the in-group; cultural or demographic replacement; corruption of political elites; violence presented as renewal, defence, or redress
SYMBOLIC	Symbols, imagery, aesthetics, and cultural	Hybrid iconography; neo-Nazi, occult, satanist, apocalyptic, or religious



Table 1: four observable dimensions of ideological convergence		
Dimension	Convergence focus	Observable indicators
	references borrowed across extremist milieus	symbolism; memes and visual formats combining material from otherwise distinct ideological environments
TACTICAL	Operational and communicative practices used to conduct, frame, and amplify violence	Manifestos; livestreaming; gamification; imitation of previous attackers; autonomous or lone-actor methods; decentralised cells; tactical guidance; propaganda amplification
STRATEGIC	Comparable theories of change based on destabilisation and transformative violence	Acceleration of societal collapse; deliberate polarisation; provocation of wider conflict; exploitation of instability to enable radical transformation
Note: The dimensions are neither mutually exclusive nor sequential. A single individual, network, propaganda product, or attack may display convergence across several dimensions. The presence of similarity should not, by itself, be interpreted as evidence of direct influence or organisational connection		

Taken together, these four dimensions of convergence are significant for contemporary counter-terrorism practice, as case analyses repeatedly show individuals whose radicalisation pathways cross multiple ideological ecosystems. Recognising narrative, symbolic, tactical, and strategic convergence allows investigators to identify patterns of mobilisation that might otherwise remain hidden within fragmented ideological categories. As the four dimensions describe what ideological convergence looks like when it occurs, the four drivers examined in the following section describe structural conditions that make such convergence more likely.

4. Drivers of ideological convergence

The mechanisms described above do not emerge spontaneously. They reflect structural changes in the environments in which contemporary extremist mobilisation occurs. Four interrelated drivers are particularly significant.

4.1. Digital communication ecosystems

Contemporary extremist mobilisation is increasingly mediated through digital environments. Mainstream social media, anonymous forums, encrypted messaging services, decentralised platforms, gaming-related spaces, and supporter-operated channels allow users to encounter extremist narratives from several ideological traditions within the same broader information environment.

The operational significance is not simply that propaganda is online, but that digital content is portable. Material produced in one ideological environment can be translated, clipped, reframed, aesthetically modified, detached from its original organisational context, and redistributed elsewhere. This lowers the cost of cross-ideological pollination and creates persistent opportunities for actors to encounter narratives, symbols, propaganda formats, and tactical concepts originating outside their primary ideological milieu.



For example, accelerationist communities linked to violent far-right extremism have circulated translated propaganda originally produced by organisations associated with radical islamism in order to study insurgent tactics and recruitment methods. Religiously inspired terrorist ecosystems demonstrate similar digital adaptability, where ISLAMIC STATE and its supporters have repeatedly migrated between mainstream platforms, encrypted services, alternative hosting, and decentralised supporter networks as access and counter-terrorism pressure changed.

Recent European cases also show how youth-oriented mainstream platforms can provide low-threshold exposure to radical islamist content before users migrate towards more explicit extremist material⁴. Digital communication ecosystems can therefore create conditions that expand the range of material available to extremist actors and accelerate its circulation across ideological boundaries.

4.2. Disintermediation and cross-ecosystem exposure

Historically, extremist organisations, movements, recruiters, and physical milieus performed a significant gatekeeping function: they socialised members into a comparatively coherent doctrine, selected approved texts and symbols, and imposed boundaries around acceptable alliances and methods. Digital radicalisation increasingly weakens that gatekeeping function.

Individuals can now assemble their own ideological repertoires from heterogeneous sources without formal membership in an organisation⁵. They may consume radical islamist propaganda, accelerationist content, conspiracy narratives, attacker glorification, and non-ideological violent subcultural material within a relatively short period and without passing through a single movement's doctrinal filter.

This disintermediation does not make ideology irrelevant. Rather, it increases the possibility that ideological commitment develops unevenly, that symbolic or tactical borrowing precedes doctrinal coherence, and that individuals move between communities while retaining a relatively stable grievance orientation or fascination with violence.

4.3. Attention economy dynamics

Extremist propaganda increasingly operates within the logic of the online attention economy. Content that generates strong emotional reactions, novelty, outrage, fear, humour, or spectacle can achieve disproportionate visibility. Extremist actors therefore have incentives to adopt narratives, imagery, stylistic conventions, and communicative

⁴ Stockhammer, Nicolas, July 2025, "From TikTok to Terrorism? The Online Radicalization of European Lone Attackers since October 7, 2023", CTC Sentinel, Vol. 18, Issue 7, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, available at: <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/from-tiktok-to-terrorism-the-online-radicalization-of-european-lone-attackers-since-october-7-2023/>

⁵ Europol, July 2026, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2026 (EU TE-SAT)", available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publication-events/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2026-eu-te-sat>



practices from outside their own ideological tradition when those elements increase reach or audience engagement.

The manifesto, livestreaming, and platform-native propaganda formats discussed earlier illustrate how visibility-maximising practices can acquire value independently of their ideological provenance. Radical Islamist propagandists have similarly adapted material to short-form and algorithmically driven environments. Following the October 2023 Hamas attack and the ensuing war in Gaza, radical Islamist propagandists repackaged emotionally charged imagery and narratives for TikTok, Telegram, Instagram, X, and other platforms, including through the appropriation of widely circulating hashtags and youth-oriented formats.

More recent analysis of IS-linked online milieus identifies the use of gaming culture, memes, music trends, gendered imagery, and other Gen-Z and Gen-Alpha formats as vehicles for ideological diffusion. Much of this material is rather supporter-generated rather than centrally produced, illustrating how RIT ecosystems can innovate rapidly at the cultural edge of a movement.

The attention economy therefore rewards communicative effectiveness rather than doctrinal originality and encourages successful propaganda forms to diffuse across ideological boundaries.

4.4. Strategic adaptation by extremist movements

Extremist movements also adapt strategically to counter-terrorism pressure. Hierarchical organisations are vulnerable to infiltration, leadership targeting, disruption of communications, restrictions on travel, and financial or logistical interdiction. In response, many extremist actors have promoted decentralised structures emphasising autonomous cells, dispersed supporter networks, and individually executed attacks.

Religiously inspired terrorist organisations provide a particularly important example. As travel to territory controlled by ISLAMIC STATE became increasingly difficult and the organisation came under growing military and counter-terrorism pressure, its external messaging increasingly urged supporters to remain in their countries of residence and conduct attacks locally. Supporter networks simultaneously used platforms such as TechHaven and Telegram to redistribute propaganda, operational-security material, and instructional content across encrypted platforms. Research on Telegram networks linked to ISLAMIC STATE found that operational utility often outweighs ideological provenance when material was selected for redistribution.

Politically inspired accelerationist movements demonstrate a structurally comparable adaptation. They promote autonomous actors and small cells partly because decentralisation increases resilience against organisational disruption and allows violent mobilisation to continue without a conventional command structure.

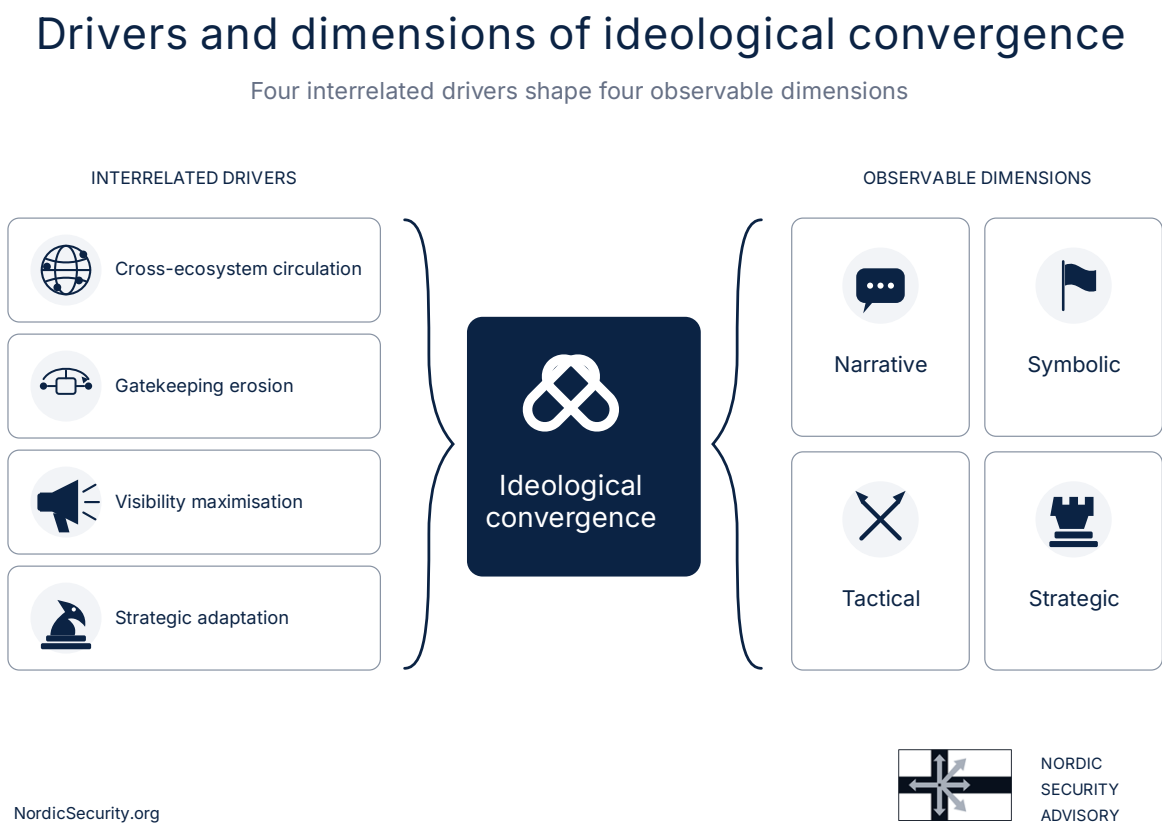
Decentralisation can therefore facilitate ideological convergence as well as organisational resilience. Actors operating with limited doctrinal supervision can select



narratives, symbols, propaganda techniques, and operational concepts from a wider extremist repertoire according to perceived relevance or effectiveness.

The figure below summarises the four observable dimensions of ideological convergence and the four interrelated drivers that shape them.

Figure 2: drivers and dimensions of ideological convergence



Taken together, these drivers increase the porosity of ideological boundaries, creating both the opportunity and the incentive for cross-ideological borrowing. They do not themselves constitute ideological convergence. Rather, they create conditions in which the narrative, symbolic, tactical, and strategic forms of convergence identified above are more likely to emerge. At the individual level, these conditions can produce radicalisation pathways that are increasingly fragmented, non-linear, and ideologically hybrid.

5. Hybrid radicalisation pathways and online ecosystems

The convergence of extremist narratives and tactics is most consequential at the level of individual radicalisation and mobilisation. Contemporary investigations increasingly reveal individuals whose ideological identities do not conform neatly to traditional categories of politically inspired extremism or religiously inspired terrorism. Instead, some



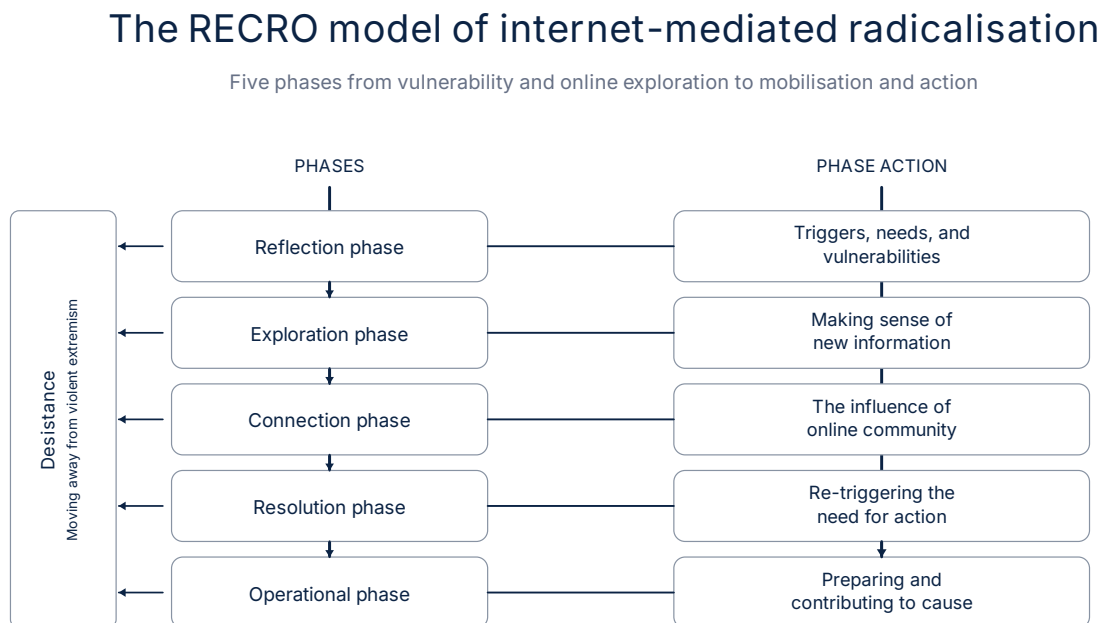
actors move through multiple online environments where extremist narratives, symbols, tactical discussions, conspiratorial material, and violence-centred subcultures intersect.

5.1. From linear models to hybrid pathways

The RECRO model of internet-mediated radicalisation provides a useful reference point for understanding the role of the digital environment in radicalisation. Developed by Loo Seng Neo, the model conceptualises five phases: Reflection, Exploration, Connection, Resolution, and Operational. It also recognises the possibility of desistance at different stages.

In the context of contemporary hybrid radicalisation, the RECRO phases are treated as analytical reference points rather than a fixed linear sequence. Recently encountered cases may move between communities and ideological influences, revisit earlier stages, or progress towards mobilisation while ideological identity remains fragmented or weakly developed. The operational value of the model therefore lies in identifying functions within a pathway rather than assuming that every case follows the same ordered progression.

Figure 3: the RECRO model of Internet-mediated radicalisation



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Source: Adapted from Neo, Loo Seng, 2016, "An Internet-Mediated Pathway for Online Radicalisation: RECRO", in Combating Violent Extremism and Radicalization in the Digital



Figure 3: the RECRO model of Internet-mediated radicalisation
Era, IGI Global, pp. 197–224, available at: <https://www.igi-global.com/viewtitle.aspx?TitleId=150577>

5.2. Ideological fluidity and cross-ecosystem mobilisation

Traditional radicalisation models often assumed that increasing commitment to violence would be accompanied by progressively deeper commitment to a particular ideology or organisation. Contemporary European reporting increasingly shows a more complicated picture. Europol's EU TE-SAT 2026 report describes young radicalised individuals with only superficial understanding of established ideologies, susceptibility to unstable and fragmented combinations of ideas, and, in many cases, fixation with violence itself rather than commitment to a single organisation or doctrine⁶.

This does not mean ideology is irrelevant. Ideological narratives can still supply targets, moral justifications, in-group and out-group categories, and strategic meaning. The analytical shift is that ideological coherence should not be assumed to precede mobilisation. Individuals may move between extremist, conspiratorial, or violence-centred communities while progressively normalising violence as legitimate or desirable.

Within such pathways, personal writings, digital archives, and online activity may contain politically inspired extremist narratives, religiously framed grievances, conspiracy theories, nihilistic content, and admiration for attackers from different milieus. What remains consistent is a trajectory towards legitimising violence irrespective of ideological coherence.

5.3. Hybrid violence-first pathways

Observed hybrid pathways often begin with the legitimisation of violence as a response to perceived grievance rather than a stable ideological identity. Online communities centred on previous mass-casualty attackers, including school shooters, operate as transnational subcultures that glorify perpetrators, analyse attack methods, circulate attack footage, preserve manifestos, and construct symbolic lineages of previous attackers. These environments are not inherently ideological in the conventional sense, but they can overlap with accelerationist propaganda, conspiracy narratives, racist or antisemitic content, as well as religiously inspired extremist material.

The 2022 Buffalo terrorist attack illustrates the interaction between attacker culture, textual replication, and ideological mobilisation. The perpetrator's writings combined accelerationist narratives, demographic-replacement ideology, conspiracy theories, and extensive references to previous attackers. He copied substantial elements of earlier extremist texts, explicitly cited Christchurch as an inspiration, and reproduced the manifesto-and-livestream model as part of an effort to situate himself within a perceived lineage of extreme-right violence.

⁶ Europol, 2026, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2026 (EU TE-SAT)", available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU-TE-SAT-2026.pdf>



In such environments, fascination with violent performance may precede strong ideological commitment. Exposure to attack footage, tactical discussion, perpetrator glorification, and transgressive or shock-oriented content normalise violence before an individual develops a coherent ideological framework. Extremist narratives then provide the interpretive framework through which pre-existing fascination with violence is moralised and directed.

For investigators, this distinction is important. Participation in gaming, meme, or attacker-related subcultures is not in itself evidence of terrorist intent. Analytical significance arises from combinations of behaviour, persistence over time, increasing identification with perpetrators, acquisition of tactical knowledge, target-oriented grievance, and movement from spectatorship towards preparation.

5.4. Youth exposure and online subcultures

Hybrid extremist ecosystems appear particularly influential among younger individuals whose political, social, and personal identities are still forming. Digital-native users may encounter extremist narratives through meme culture, short-form video, gaming-related spaces, private messaging groups, and online forums in which propaganda is embedded within broader social or entertainment content.

Nordic and European terrorism investigations have identified a growing involvement of minors and young people in terrorism and violent extremism, accompanied with a propaganda ecosystem analysis that shows increasing ideological overlapping, violence gamification, and intrinsic interaction between online radicalisation and real-world violence. Users linked to ISLAMIC STATE and ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS have also adapted content to gaming and youth-culture formats in ways designed to reduce the threshold for engagement. Adjacent violence-as-a-service (VaaS) and crime-as-a-service (CaaS) models further illustrate how digitally mediated environments can separate violent mobilisation from stable organisational or ideological affiliation, including through the recruitment of young perpetrators for discrete tasks.

These youth-oriented online environments function simultaneously as social spaces, entertainment environments, identity laboratories, and radicalisation pathways. Individuals can initially participate for humour, social interaction, status, or curiosity before encountering increasingly explicit extremist material or being redirected towards more closed communities.

Because such spaces do not always present themselves as explicitly ideological, traditional monitoring approaches focused primarily on formal organisations may overlook relevant transitions. At the same time, law-enforcement assessment must distinguish lawful or non-extremist participation in mainstream youth cultures from concrete indicators of extremist mobilisation.

6. Case study: HAKAKAT SAMI JAHANNAM

Hybrid extremist milieus can also produce small online communities that deliberately construct composite identities from otherwise divergent ideological and subcultural



traditions. Nordic Security Advisory monitoring of publicly circulated propaganda provides one example in HARAKAT SAMI JAHANNAM (HSJ), an online extremist community that emerged in 2025 as predominantly young online collective with participant overlap with MILIKOLOSSKRIEG-linked and O9A-linked spaces, and has since disseminated material through channels associated with the self-styled "AL-LAPLAND BRIGADES".

The name itself illustrates the composite character of HSJ's identity construction. Its Arabic rendering, "حركة سامي جهنم" (Ḥarakat Sāmī Jahannam), combines "ḥaraka" (حركة), i.e. "movement", and "Jahannam" (جهنم), i.e. "Hell", with "sāmī" (سامي), a word derived from the Arabic root s-m-w, associated with height, elevation, and exaltation. In this construction, "sāmī" need not be understood as an adjective modifying the feminine noun ḥaraka. Rather, the relevant unit is "Sāmī Jahannam"⁷, permitting a stylised reading approximating "the heights of Hell", "the elevations of Hell", or potentially "those elevated in Hell". A plausible interpretive rendering is therefore "MOVEMENT OF THE HEIGHTS OF HELL", although the construction is intentionally stylised and does not yield only one unambiguous English translation.

The ambiguity of "Sami" appears particularly significant. In addition to its Arabic semantic field of elevation or loftiness, Sami functions as an Arabic personal name and is also a common personal name in the Nordics. More importantly, HSJ propaganda has itself made references to the Sámi people, creating an additional Nordic reading of the term. The name can consequently operate simultaneously across several semantic registers: Arabic elevation or "heights"; an Arabic or Nordic personal name; and, where invoked by the propaganda, the Indigenous Sámi identity of northern Fennoscandia, giving this appropriation an immediately recognisable association with northern geography and territorial rootedness.

The designation "AL-LAPLAND BRIGADES" extends the same linguistic and symbolic construction. The recognisably Arabic definite article "al-" is attached directly to the distinctly Nordic geographical term Lapland. In isolation, "al-" is simply an Arabic grammatical article and has no extremist significance. Within HSJ's wider branding, however, its juxtaposition with "Lapland", the Arabic-language group name, and used religiously framed extremist imagery produces a deliberate Arabic-Nordic visual and linguistic association. The term "Brigades" further adopts the vocabulary of an organised militant formation, projecting a degree of structure and territorial presence that has not been independently substantiated.

The resulting identity is therefore not simply Nordic, radical Islamist, neo-Nazi, or occult. Different symbolic components appear to perform different functions. Sámi and Lapland references provide northern geography, indigeneity, and territorial rootedness; Arabic and

⁷ The construction has a useful parallel in the attested Arabic expression "سامي الذرى" (sāmī aldhurā), occurring in Arabic poetry and elevated prose with the sense of being lofty, high-ranking, or "of lofty summits". This use is an example of how "sāmī" can precede a following noun in a compact literary construction rather than functioning solely as an adjective agreeing with a preceding noun. The parallel does not establish a single literal translation of "Sāmī Jahannam", but supports reading the expression within an intentionally elevated semantic register.



radical islamist references provide religious and militant associations; accelerationist and neo-Nazi imagery introduces destruction, societal collapse, and recognisable extremist lineage; while occult and chaos-oriented motifs contribute transgression, esotericism, and shock value. These elements need not be doctrinally compatible to be useful. Their simultaneous deployment is better understood as the construction of a composite extremist identity than as the emergence of a coherent composite ideology.

This composite identity extends beyond nomenclature. Nordic Security Advisory monitoring has identified HSJ publications containing manifesto-style statements, praise of violent attacks and attempted assassinations internationally, and material intended to stimulate tactical interest in improvised violence and toxic substances. The material combines radical islamist imagery with accelerationist, neo-Nazi, occult, and chaos-oriented references. OSINT monitoring broadly corroborates the violence-centred character of the milieu around HSJ, describing violent propaganda, threats, and harmful instructional material in HSJ-linked spaces as well as participant overlap with adjacent accelerationist networks. These observations do not establish that HSJ possesses corresponding operational capability, but they demonstrate that the community is more than a purely aesthetic exercise.

HSJ therefore illustrates not ideological synthesis but ideological exploitation. Disparate symbols, narratives, and subcultural references are appropriated for the identities, emotions, and behaviours they can activate rather than for their doctrinal compatibility. Radical islamist, neo-Nazi, occult, Indigenous-Nordic, and accelerationist references can coexist because each supplies different forms of symbolic capital: belonging, perceived authenticity, transgression, notoriety, militancy, or operational relevance. This pattern is consistent with the wider current European threat environment, in which younger actors combine fragmented ideological influences encountered online while violence itself increasingly provides identity, recognition, and belonging.

The case is particularly relevant to Nordic analysis because HSJ has projected part of its identity onto a specific northern territory. Its propaganda has claimed the existence of "brigades" associated with Lapland and has employed Nordic geographic and ethnic references in its self-presentation. The research undertaken by the release date of this assessment located no independently corroborated public evidence establishing functioning HSJ cells, an organised territorial presence in Lapland, or violent attacks conducted on behalf of the "AL-LAPLAND BRIGADES". Nevertheless, territorial claims can perform important propaganda functions even when they exceed real-world capacity, including manufacturing presence, creating mythology, increasing status, and offering prospective adherents an imagined organisational identity.

The broader Nordic context makes this distinction increasingly important. Analysis of violent online networks in the Nordic region documents decentralised and youth-oriented ecosystems in which organisational labels, aesthetics, techniques, and participants can circulate across national and subcultural boundaries without the formal structures associated with conventional extremist organisations. Research on nihilistic-violence ecosystems similarly emphasises decentralised, cross-platform communities in which



behavioural commitment to violence can matter more than stable organisational affiliation⁸. This does not establish a connection between HSJ and networks such as 764; rather, it demonstrates the wider environment in which small, fluid, digitally mediated extremist communities are emerging.

For Nordic counter-terrorism practitioners, HSJ consequently demonstrates why very small online communities should not be assessed solely through the lens of formal organisational capability or conventional ideological classification. An operationally immature community can still contribute to radicalisation, symbolic experimentation, tactical curiosity, network formation, or mobilisation within a broader digital ecosystem. The relevant analytical question is therefore not simply which ideology an individual or community appears to endorse, but whether otherwise fragmented ideological, symbolic, and subcultural influences are converging around an increasingly stable acceptance of violence.

7. Operational recommendations

Ideological convergence does not eliminate the value of ideological analysis. It changes the weight assigned to ideological coherence in risk assessment. For counter-terrorism practitioners, the central requirement is to integrate ideology with behavioural mobilisation, digital context, network exposure, and trajectory over time.

A. Distinguish indicators of convergence from indicators of mobilisation

Convergence indicators help identify hybrid or cross-ecosystem profiles, while mobilisation indicators help assess whether an individual is progressing towards violence. Conflating the two risks both false positives and missed threats.

Table 2: indicators of ideological convergence and mobilisation towards violence	
Indicators of convergence	Indicators of mobilisation
admiration for attackers from different ideological backgrounds	increasing and sustained admiration for previous attackers as models to emulate
hybrid symbolism or aesthetics associated with otherwise distinct extremist milieus	systematic study of attack methods, target selection, security vulnerabilities, or previous operational failures
consumption, storage, or redistribution of propaganda from several extremist movements	efforts to acquire tactical knowledge, materials, weapons, or operational guidance
mixed grievance narratives combining political, cultural, religious, conspiratorial, or personal themes	movement from general grievance expression towards target-specific hostility or attack justification
movement between online communities that ordinarily sit in separate threat categories	attempts to conceal preparation, establish operational security, or compartmentalise communications

⁸ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, February 2026, "Beyond Extremism: Platform Responses to Online Subcultures of Nihilistic Violence", Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET), available at: https://gnet-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/GNET-nihilistic-violence_web.pdf



Table 2: indicators of ideological convergence and mobilisation towards violence

Indicators of convergence	Indicators of mobilisation
references to conflicts, organisations, or ideological traditions not readily explained by the individual's declared identity	behaviour indicating transition from propaganda consumption or performance towards concrete preparation

No single indicator is determinative. Analytical significance derives from combination, persistence, trajectory, context, and the relationship between ideological expression, intent, capability, access, and preparation. Mixed ideology should therefore neither be dismissed as incoherence nor treated as inherently threatening.

B. Reconstruct mobilisation trajectories across ideological and digital ecosystems

Hybrid radicalisation pathways complicate investigations because relevant evidence may be distributed across several ideological ecosystems, platforms, languages, and types of content. Case analysis should therefore reconstruct chronology rather than rely only on a snapshot of the suspect's most recent ideological presentation.

Investigators should distinguish between organisational affiliation, ideological sympathy, admiration for an attacker, tactical emulation, and direct tasking. These relationships carry different evidential and threat implications. Similar symbols or tactics do not establish coordination; conversely, the absence of stable organisational affiliation does not exclude serious mobilisation.

Proactive digital evidence collection and lawful interception should account for cross-platform movement and the possibility that different services perform different functions within the same pathway: discovery on mainstream platforms, socialisation in semi-open communities, tactical exchange in closed channels, access to archived propaganda, or operational planning elsewhere. Analytical handovers between specialist teams should preserve this chronology rather than fragment the case according to organisational or ideological silos.

Transnational attack-influence chains also require attention. Individuals planning violence may study earlier attacks in detail, adopt their media strategies, reuse manifesto structures, reproduce visual symbolism, or deliberately position themselves within a lineage of previous perpetrators. These behaviours can be operationally relevant even where the earlier attacker belongs to a different ideological milieu.

C. Extend monitoring beyond formal organisations to emerging extremist ecosystems

Established organisation-focused monitoring should be complemented by awareness of loosely structured ecosystems, bridge communities, and emerging propaganda brands. Small communities can exert influence through content production, archiving, translation, aesthetic innovation, or the circulation of attack-related material without possessing a conventional hierarchy.



Particular analytical value may lie in identifying bridge accounts, channels, or communities that repeatedly move material between otherwise distinct ideological environments; emerging propaganda entities that combine otherwise incompatible symbolic repertoires; platform migration following disruption; and exaggerated claims of territorial or organisational presence intended to construct legitimacy.

The purpose is not to treat every hybrid online community as a terrorist organisation. It is to maintain situational awareness of ecosystems capable of normalising violence, transmitting tactical knowledge, or linking individuals to more explicit mobilisation environments.

D. Adapt youth-focused prevention to hybrid radicalisation pathways

Prevention models that rely heavily on visible commitment to a single ideology may identify hybrid cases only at a late stage. Earlier opportunities for intervention may instead arise from behavioural changes: escalating engagement with violent propaganda, fixation on attackers, growing target-oriented hostility, persistent tactical curiosity, or movement into closed communities centred on violent action.

Youth-focused prevention should recognise that initial engagement may occur through social, entertainment, gaming, or meme-based environments that are not themselves extremist. Effective intervention therefore requires careful attention to context and progression rather than treating cultural participation or provocative expression as a proxy for terrorist intent.

Operational use of behavioural indicators should remain grounded in legality, necessity, proportionality, and objective evidence. The analytical purpose of the convergence framework is to improve discrimination between benign ideological inconsistency and meaningful movement towards violence, not to widen suspicion indiscriminately.

E. Integrate threat analysis across ideological, subcultural, and hybrid environments

For Nordic and European practitioners, ideological convergence reinforces the importance of cross-border and cross-category information exchange. Small language-specific online environments do not operate in isolation: local actors can consume transnational propaganda, participate in English-language or multilingual communities, and import narratives, aesthetics, and tactical concepts into locally framed grievances.

Claims of regional presence or capability should be assessed neither at face value nor dismissed automatically. Their significance may lie in recruitment, myth-building, audience targeting, or signalling even where operational capacity is weak.

The Nordic context illustrates the need to connect threat analysis across politically inspired extremism, religiously inspired terrorism, violent online subcultures, and emerging hybrid communities while preserving the legal and analytical distinctions between them. Analytical coverage should therefore combine established threat categories with



systematic attention to cross-cutting behaviours, narratives, networks, and influence chains.

8. Conclusion

Ideological categories remain indispensable to counter-terrorism analysis, but they are no longer sufficient on their own. Contemporary extremist actors can retain distinct political or religious objectives while borrowing selectively from one another and operating within digital environments where symbols, grievances, propaganda formats, attacker cultures, and tactical knowledge circulate with diminishing regard for ideological provenance.

The principal challenge is therefore not ideological convergence itself. The greater risk arises when ideological fragmentation obscures behavioural coherence. An individual may appear politically inconsistent while demonstrating an increasingly consistent relationship with violence: repeated attacker admiration, intensifying grievance, tactical curiosity, movement across extremist communities, and eventual preparation. Conversely, hybrid symbolism or provocative online behaviour without such progression should not automatically be interpreted as mobilisation.

Cases such as HSJ also show why organisational size and demonstrated capability cannot be the only measures of relevance. Small and operationally immature communities may still function as laboratories for extremist identity, propaganda innovation, symbolic experimentation, and the circulation of violence-oriented material.

Counter-terrorism practice should therefore preserve specialist knowledge of established threat categories while becoming more capable of analysing what moves between them. The analytical advantage will lie in connecting ideology, behaviour, networks, digital trajectories, and operational preparation over time. In an environment of increasingly fluid extremist identities, coherence may be found less in what an actor believes than in the direction in which the actor is moving.