Understanding the Rise of Right-Wing Crimes, and Intergroup Threat Theory: Global Perspective & Case Studies

Aila Sajid Bhangoo[1*], Suhhae Cho[2], Rehana Saeed Hashmi[3]

[1] Kinnaird College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan
[2] Plamica Labs, Batten Hall, Boston, USA
[3] University of Punjab, Quaid-i-Azam Campus, Lahore, Pakistan

[*]Corresponding author's e-mail: aila_sajid@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

The rise in right-wing extremist offenses has become a significant global concern, particularly in the United States. These offenses are usually fuelled by radical ideologies such as nationalism and white supremacy, and have quadrupled over the past decade. Our analysis reveals that far-right extremist offenses in the U.S. have surpassed violence previously linked with jihadist-groups, with right-wing factions responsible for over 60% of extremist-related casualties since 2014. Moreover, the increase in these offenses is strongly corelated with a rise in immigration influx and demographic changes. This study employs a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA framework and synthesizes relevant works to explore the relationship between rising immigration rates and the increase in right-wing extremist offenses. While the study mainly draws on intergroup threat theory, other sociological and psychological frameworks are also presented to shed light on how economic downturns and demographic transitions can provoke hostile right-wing sentiments toward immigrants and minorities, often culminating in violent crimes. Our findings and analysis emphasize the need for comprehensive policy interventions which not only address the rise in extremist discourse but also curb those societal factors that contribute to their growth. Additionally, we examine the role of social media in disseminating extremist ideologies and suggest that immigration policy reforms can help mitigate xenophobic attitudes. Moreover, we also recommend that efforts to combat right-wing extremism should focus on promoting social inclusion, economic justice, and close monitoring of extremist organizations, both online and offline.

Keywords: Right-Wing Extremism, Intergroup Threat Theory, Immigration Reforms

1 Introduction

The rapid rise of right-wing extremism globally has become a critical area of concern for scholars, policymakers, and society at large. However, we find it particularly pronounced in the United States, where political movements aligned with anti-immigrant sentiments have intensified. For instance, Smith et al. (2024) underscores how political rhetoric in the United States about immigrants "taking over" communities has persistently fuelled resentment and violence. Moreover, empirical data reveals that far-right extremist attacks have dramatically increased over the past decade, with the number of far-right attacks quadrupling between 2016 and 2017 alone (CSIS, 2018). This trend is compounded by economic downturns and a growing sense of cultural loss, which right-wing groups exploit to galvanize support (Zabelin, 2023; Kleinfeld, 2023).

In this paper, our primary objective is to make sense of how right-wing extremist crimes might be linked to the demographic shifts and rhetoric of increased hostility toward immigrants. For this purpose, we employ a systematic literature review (SLR), guided by the PRISMA framework, to synthesize existing

research on far-right extremism, particularly its correlation with immigration patterns and economic disparities. The PRISMA methodology ensures a transparent and replicable approach to identifying and evaluating relevant studies, offering insights into the growing body of literature on extremist ideologies and violence. For instance, recent studies indicate that right-wing extremists have increasingly targeted minorities, with over 67 domestic terror incidents recorded between 2017 and 2022, 45% of which were perpetrated by white supremacist groups (ADL, 2023). Additionally, right-wing extremism in Europe saw a parallel rise, with a 43% increase in far-right attacks between 2016 and 2017 (CSIS, 2018). Our study is primarily grounded in intergroup threat theory, which argues that when a group perceives another as a threat to its resources, values, or identity, it responds with hostility, often culminating in violence (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Intergroup threat theory has witnessed an increased interest among scholars in recent years, and is an important tool in highlighting the role of demographic transitions, such as immigration and changing racial compositions, in heightening perceptions of threat among dominant groups (Riek et al., 2006).This theory, along with other sociological and psychological frameworks highlighted in this paper, helps explain the mechanisms driving right-wing extremism in the United States and other parts of the world.

Another notable framework for analysis is the social identity theory, which complements intergroup threat theory by elucidating how individuals derive psychological benefits from group membership, which influences their behaviours toward out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). The sense of belonging and protection provided by extremist groups offers a psychological explanation for the adherence to radical ideologies. Moreover, violent right-wing movements in the U.S. are often rooted in the belief that immigrants and minorities pose an existential threat to their way of life (Perry, 2001). Incidents such as the El Paso shooting and the Pittsburgh synagogue attack reflect how these ideologies translate into real-world violence, targeting immigrants, Jews, Muslims, and other minority groups. Furthermore, the role of social media in propagating these extremist beliefs has only exacerbated the problem. Right-wing extremist networks use online platforms to recruit members, spread misinformation, and amplify conspiracy theories (Oussema and Nguyen, 2021). The political environment also plays a key role in the rise of right-wing extremism. In the U.S., far-right extremist parties and movements, often linked to nationalist ideologies, have contributed to mainstreaming xenophobic rhetoric (Miller-Idriss, 2023). The success of these movements lies in their ability to frame immigrants and minorities as scapegoats for broader economic and social issues, thereby legitimizing hostility toward them (Wahyu, 2023). Comprehensive policy interventions aimed at promoting social inclusion, economic justice, and tighter regulation of extremist organizations online and offline are urgently needed to mitigate these threats (Pildes, 2024). This paper addresses the following research objectives-

First, to correlate rising immigration rates with increasing right-wing extremist offenses using a systematic literature review; second, to explore the impact of sociopolitical and demographic transitions on right-wing violence through the lens of intergroup threat theory; and finally, to propose comprehensive policy interventions that prioritize social cohesion and counter extremist ideologies.

2   Materials and Methods

The methodology for this study is centred on conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) to explore the relationship between political movements in the United States and far-right extremist activities, with a focus on immigration and demographic changes. This process is guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology, shown in Figure 1, which ensures a rigorous, transparent, and replicable approach. By applying PRISMA, we aim to systematically identify, assess, and synthesize the relevant literature to provide a reliable foundation for developing strategies to counter right-wing extremism. This method enhances the credibility of the research, offering a structured framework for data collection and analysis.
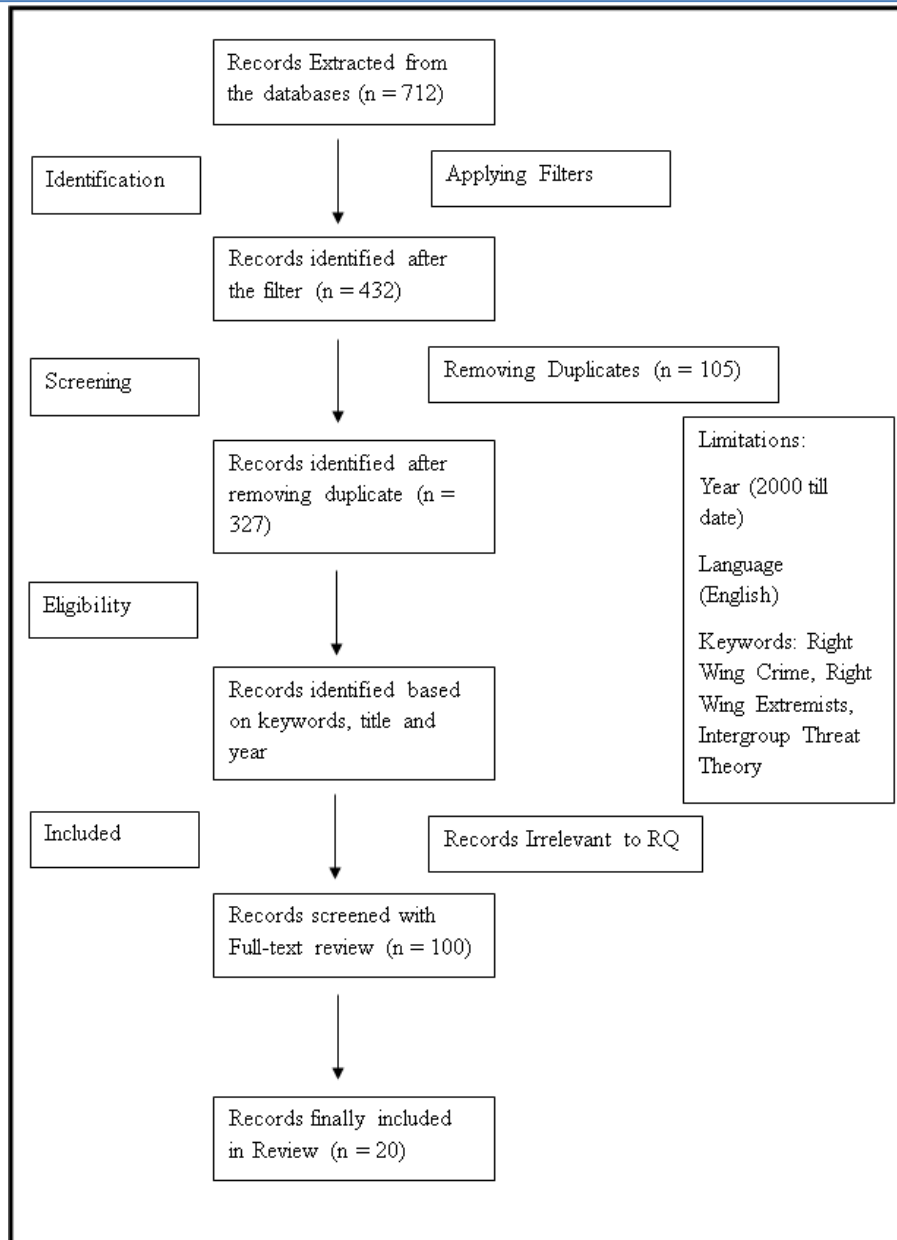
Figure 1: *PRISMA Framework*

2.1   Data Collection

A comprehensive data search was conducted across several well-established academic databases, including SCOPUS, Web of Science, PubMed, ResearchGate, and Springer. The goal was to locate studies focused on right-wing extremism, immigration, and the socio-political context of these phenomena. A variety of keywords were used to capture the relevant literature, such as "Right-Wing Extremism," "Intergroup Threat Theory," "Right-Wing Activities," and "Determinants of Right-Wing Extremism." These terms were chosen based on their prevalence in existing research and their relevance to the study's core themes. The research was structured around key questions designed to probe deeper into the relationship between immigration trends and far-right extremism. These questions included: How has immigration to the United States evolved over time? To what extent has increasing immigration influenced the actions of right-wing extremists? What role do right-wing political parties play in fostering violence and anti-immigrant sentiment? Which socio-political theories best explain the rise of right-wing movements in the U.S.?

2.2   Data Analysis

The PRISMA framework was used to systematically organize the selection process into four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, a broad search was conducted to gather potential studies. These studies were then screened to remove duplicates and irrelevant works. In the eligibility phase, studies were evaluated based on inclusion and exclusion criteria which have been presented in Table 1. These inclusion and exclusion criteria were specifically designed to ensure the relevance and quality of the final selection. Finally, in the inclusion stage, studies that met all criteria were retained for detailed analysis.

Table 1: *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Articles published after the year 2000.	Research papers published before 2000 were excluded to ensure the study remains current with recent events.
Articles published in English only.	Articles published in languages other than English.
Articles sourced from established databases, such as PubMed, ResearchGate, SCOPUS, Springer, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and Google Scholar.	Papers from irrelevant or non-verified sources not mentioned in the inclusion criteria.
Emphasis on articles that include meta-analyses, systematic literature reviews, and descriptive studies.	Quantitative analysis-focused studies were excluded as this study is descriptive in nature.

As per the inclusion and exclusion criteria, only articles published after 2000 were included, ensuring that the research reflects the most recent developments in far-right extremism and immigration trends. Additionally, only articles published in English were considered to ensure uniformity in the analysis. Sources were restricted to reputable academic databases, including PubMed, ResearchGate, SCOPUS, Springer, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, to guarantee the reliability and scholarly merit of the studies. The inclusion criteria emphasized meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and descriptive studies, given that the nature of this research is primarily descriptive. Conversely, quantitative analysis-focused studies were excluded, as this study does not seek to develop statistical models but instead aims to describe trends and theories.

By adhering to these methodological steps, this research has sought to provide a comprehensive and systematic review of the literature on right-wing extremism, offering valuable insights into the socio-political dynamics driving such movements and their relationship with immigration patterns in the United States. The use of PRISMA enhances the transparency of our review process and ensures the reliability of the findings, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of how far-right extremism intersects with social, political, and demographic changes.

3   Trends & Observations

3.1   Immigration Patterns in the US

The immigration landscape of the United States has undergone significant transformations since the mid-20th century, particularly following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which replaced the national origins quota system that had previously restricted the flow of immigrants from non-European countries. This legislative change marked a pivotal shift, allowing for a more diverse range of immigrants to enter the U.S., with growing numbers from Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Hatton, 2015). In the decades that followed, further legislative acts, such as the Refugee Act of 1980, which established a framework for the resettlement of refugees, and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which

granted amnesty to millions of undocumented immigrants, continued to shape the country's evolving immigration policy (Garcia, 2024).

In recent years, the U.S. has experienced one of the most pronounced periods of immigration in its history, both in terms of temporary and permanent residents. These reforms, while increasing the flow of immigrants, also sparked ongoing debates around border control, economic competition, and social integration, leading to political and public discourse that influenced policy in the years to come. More recently, immigration policy has been shaped by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program introduced in 2012, and ongoing discussions around comprehensive immigration reform that address both border security and pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. In this context, the U.S. has experienced one of the most pronounced periods of immigration in its history, both in terms of temporary and permanent residents (Oyolola, 2024). A pivotal factor in the recent surge of immigrants has been the global economic crises, particularly in developing countries. These crises have propelled a growing number of individuals and families to seek better economic opportunities and more stable living conditions in the United States (Putzel-Kavanaugh, 2023; Castles & Vezzoli, 2011; Awad, 2009; IOM, 2009). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed immigration due to global travel restrictions and more stringent immigration policies under the Trump administration. However, since 2021, there has been a notable resurgence in immigration, driven by a combination of global economic recovery and the more lenient immigration policies of the Biden administration (Krannich & Massey, 2024).

Data collected from 2021 to 2023 shows that the U.S. has seen a significant increase in both temporary and permanent residency applications, particularly from Central and South America, Asia, and Africa (Gramlich & Passel, 2024). This influx is driven by a combination of political instability, violence, and economic hardship in many migrants' home countries, prompting them to seek refuge in the U.S. (Moslimani & Passel). Additionally, labor market demands in the U.S., particularly in sectors like agriculture, construction, and service industries, have created a strong pull factor, drawing immigrants to the country. However, this significant rise in immigration has also sparked an intensification of far-right extremist sentiments. The increasing presence of immigrants, particularly from non-white, non-European countries, has exacerbated fears among certain segments of the U.S. population, who view this demographic shift as a threat to their social and economic status. These perceptions are in line with Intergroup Threat Theory, which suggests that when dominant groups perceive that their status or resources are threatened by an outgroup, hostility toward the perceived threat intensifies (Wodak, 2015; Stephan, 2009). This theory helps to explain the growing anti-immigrant rhetoric and right-wing extremist activity observed in recent years, as white nationalist groups and far-right organizations capitalize on these fears to fuel their agendas.

As these immigration trends continue to shape the socio-political landscape of the United States, it is crucial to understand the dual impact they have. On the one hand, they contribute to the country's economic and cultural diversity, while on the other, they provoke resistance and fear in certain groups, leading to the rise of extremist ideologies. Studies indicate that this demographic shift will continue to be a significant factor in shaping U.S. politics and social dynamics in the years to come and it is imperative for policymakers to balance the economic and social benefits of immigration with strategies to address the underlying fears and hostilities that fuel right-wing extremism.

3.2   Economic Impact Analysis

Immigration's economic impact on host nations is a subject of ongoing debate, as it presents both opportunities and challenges. A significant body of literature highlights the positive contributions of immigration to economic growth, particularly through labor market expansion, entrepreneurship, and innovation (Chodavadia & Kerr, 2024; East et al., 2023). However, there are also concerns, albeit limited, about the potential strain on public resources, wage suppression, and increased competition for jobs, which can incite economic anxieties, particularly among lower-income or less-skilled native workers (Borjas, 2013).

The strength of a country's economy is crucial in determining whether immigration is economically beneficial or detrimental. In economies with robust growth and labour shortages, immigration can provide much-needed labour, boosting productivity and contributing to economic expansion (Capoani, 2024; Kerr & Kerr, 2011; Kerr & Kerr, 2018). Immigrants tend to fill positions in industries such as agriculture, construction, and services, which are often essential to the functioning of the economy but face persistent labor shortages (Bound et al., 2015). Moreover, high-skilled immigrants contribute significantly to innovation, especially in sectors like technology and healthcare, further driving long-term economic growth (Nate, 2024; Danzer, 2024). However, the economic benefits of immigration are not distributed evenly across all segments of society. While immigration can increase the overall size of the economy, the gains may be concentrated among higher-income individuals and business owners who benefit from a larger pool of labour. Meanwhile, low-wage native workers may face wage stagnation or even declines due to increased competition for jobs in certain sectors. This uneven distribution of economic benefits can fuel resentment and contribute to the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments, particularly during periods of economic downturn or labour market instability.

3.3   Labour Market and Resource Allocation

Immigration plays a crucial role in filling labour shortages, particularly in developed countries that attract talent from abroad to maintain economic growth. One of the most prominent examples is Silicon Valley, which relies heavily on immigrant workers, especially in specialized fields like technology. Research by Das et al. (2020) highlights how foreign labour, particularly through the H-1B visa program, has bolstered U.S. industries by providing companies access to skilled workers they might not otherwise be able to recruit domestically. However, this influx of foreign labour raises concerns regarding its impact on local employment markets. Castelli (2018) points out that many U.S. workers feel their employment opportunities are undermined by lower-wage competition from foreign-born workers, exacerbating tensions within the labor market. The H-1B visa program has been both praised for its role in advancing technological innovation and criticized for its potential to exploit foreign workers. According to Hira et al. (2022), companies sometimes misuse the program by offering lower wages to immigrant workers, undermining wage standards and employment rights for native-born workers. The lottery system used to allocate visas, particularly when demand exceeds the annual cap, also leaves many highly qualified workers unable to secure positions, creating further economic inefficiencies. Despite these challenges, the H-1B visa program remains a cornerstone of U.S. immigration policy in the tech sector.

The rise of immigration, particularly through programs like the H-1B visa, is also tied to the escalation of right-wing extremism. As Jones (2022) discusses, right-wing ideologies often exploit economic anxieties by perpetuating the belief that immigration reduces opportunities for native workers, especially in an economy with limited job prospects. This sentiment fuels xenophobia and anti-immigrant violence, aligning with the broader social and political shifts that drive right-wing extremism. Economic uncertainty, job scarcity, and demographic changes converge to create an atmosphere ripe for radicalization, where immigrants are scapegoated for broader systemic issues. This pattern of resource competition and perceived threat to local job markets directly correlates with rising extremist violence in the U.S. The exploitation of labour, coupled with fears of job displacement, fosters resentment toward immigrants and serves as a key narrative in right-wing extremist rhetoric. In the context of economic downturns and job scarcity, these perceptions are heightened, exacerbating societal tensions. Therefore, the labour market dynamics influenced by immigration not only shape economic outcomes but also fuel socio-political unrest, making resource allocation a critical factor in understanding the rise of right-wing extremism.

4   Theoretical Analysis

4.1   Economic Downturns and the Scapegoat Theory

Economic downturns often exacerbate negative sentiments toward immigrants and minority groups, as immigrants become convenient scapegoats for broader societal and economic anxieties. This is evident during financial crises, when the general population feels heightened economic pressure and seeks an outlet for their frustrations. Scapegoat theory, a sociological framework that explains how individuals project their frustrations onto vulnerable groups, helps to illuminate this phenomenon. According to Berkowitz (2022), during periods of economic strain, individuals are more likely to externalize their personal failures or shortcomings by blaming marginalized groups, particularly immigrants, for their economic distress. Research suggests that such scapegoating is driven by a desire to maintain a positive self-image and to preserve in-group identity. As economic conditions worsen, competition for limited resources intensifies, reinforcing group identity and the tendency to differentiate between "us" and "them." This heightened group awareness often leads to the demonization of immigrants, who are viewed as economic threats. Furthermore, during times of crisis, frustrations may manifest in calls for stricter immigration policies, as majority populations seek to assert control over perceived threats to their livelihood. The financial crisis of 2007–2008 serves as a key example of how economic downturns can influence attitudes toward immigrants. Isaksen (2019) highlights that during this period, the growing presence of immigrants, both documented and undocumented, became more pronounced in public discourse. Immigrant communities were increasingly framed as a threat to the economic security of native-born citizens, leading to widespread demands for restrictive immigration policies. This environment, coupled with high unemployment rates, amplified anti-immigrant sentiments, as communities sought to identify culprits for their financial hardships (Verea Campos, 2019).

During the Great Recession, anti-immigrant rhetoric gained momentum, particularly in states where ethnic and cultural differences were most visible. In regions with higher concentrations of immigrant populations, local media and political actors often emphasized the distinct language, physical appearance, and cultural practices of these groups, fostering a narrative that portrayed immigrants as outsiders who threatened the socio-economic fabric of American society. As a result, scapegoating became a powerful tool for rallying political support for harsh immigration controls, which further marginalized immigrant communities and solidified their portrayal as a source of economic instability. This cycle of economic downturns, scapegoating, and policy tightening reflects how vulnerable groups are often targeted when broader societal issues remain unresolved. Scapegoat theory underscores the need to critically analyze the societal and economic factors that drive such attitudes, particularly as they contribute to the rise of right-wing extremist ideologies and violence against immigrant communities.

4.2   Authoritarian Personality Theory

The Authoritarian Personality Theory, developed by Theodor Adorno and his colleagues during the mid-20th century, attempts to explain how certain personality traits can predispose individuals to authoritarianism and extremist ideologies. This theory identifies nine key traits of an authoritarian personality: conventionalism, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, anti-introspection, superstition, stereotypy, power and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and exaggerated concerns about sexuality. These traits, often rooted in childhood experiences, collectively shape individuals to exhibit rigid obedience to authority figures, hostility toward out-groups, and intolerance toward perceived deviations from societal norms (Worley., 2021; Sivyer, 2024). Authoritarian personalities are seen as more susceptible to right-wing extremism due to their predisposition toward conformity, aggression, and a need for security in rigid social structures. As Duckitt (2015) suggests, such individuals often harbor a strong aversion to ambiguity and difference, making them more prone to scapegoating minority groups or immigrants during times of social or economic stress. This intolerance is manifested in hostility toward

groups that are perceived as a threat to societal order, contributing to the rise of right-wing extremism and hate crimes. Critics of authoritarian personality theory, however, argue that it oversimplifies the complex social, economic, and political factors that drive extremism (Willig, 2002). While the theory offers valuable insights into the psychological makeup of individuals prone to extremism, it underplays the importance of contextual influences such as economic inequality, media framing, and political rhetoric in shaping extremist behavior. For example, the rise of right-wing populism in recent years has shown that individuals who do not exhibit strong authoritarian traits are often still swayed by populist leaders who use fear and division as political tools.

One historical example often cited in discussions of authoritarian personality theory is Adolf Hitler's leadership during World War II. Hitler's rigid adherence to Nazi ideology and his ability to manipulate authoritarian traits in the German populace resulted in widespread atrocities, including the Holocaust. As Duckitt (2015) highlights, the authoritarian dynamics of Nazi Germany exemplify how authoritarian leadership can mobilize individuals with authoritarian personalities to commit acts of extreme violence and hatred in the name of preserving order and national purity. While the authoritarian personality theory provides a psychological lens through which to understand the motivations behind right-wing extremism, it should be considered alongside broader social, economic, and political factors that also contribute to the rise of extremist behavior.

4.3 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, posits that individuals derive a significant part of their identity from their membership in social groups. This identification often leads to intergroup behaviors that can manifest as prejudice, bias, and discrimination against those perceived as outsiders (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Rattansi (2020) highlights how the normalization of xenophobia, nativism, and populist nationalism, particularly within white supremacist societies, can result in the emergence of new and entrenched forms of racism, thereby deepening social divides.

A salient example of these dynamics is the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville (Charlottesville, 2017), where insider-outsider dynamics significantly fueled right-wing criminal activity. Participants at the rally, who identified with various white nationalist organizations, demonstrated heightened group cohesion and a fervent commitment to their cause. This identification fostered a perception of marginalized groups—particularly racial minorities—as threats to their social identity, prompting violent and aggressive behaviors. The rally illustrates how group identity can catalyze extreme actions when individuals perceive their group status as threatened. The role of social media in disseminating extremist ideologies and symbols has further exacerbated these dynamics. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram have become breeding grounds for hate speech and radicalization, allowing extremist groups to organize and recruit members more efficiently than ever before. Hogg et al. (2012) note that the online environment can amplify feelings of in-group solidarity while simultaneously fostering hostility toward out-groups. This virtual reinforcement of social identity can lead to an escalation of extremist behaviors, as individuals are emboldened by the support of like-minded peers.

Additionally, the interplay between social identity and economic insecurity can intensify extremist sentiments. Research indicates that individuals who experience economic hardship may gravitate toward groups that promise security and belonging, even if these groups espouse violent or exclusionary ideologies. For example, during times of economic downturn, individuals may perceive immigrants and minorities as competitors for limited resources, heightening group-based tensions and facilitating the rise of right-wing extremism. Moreover, the concept of "othering" further elucidates how social identity dynamics contribute to prejudice. By categorizing individuals into "us" versus "them," dominant groups can dehumanize and justify discrimination against marginalized populations. This phenomenon is often exploited by political leaders and media narratives that frame certain groups as threats to national identity or social cohesion,

effectively legitimizing acts of violence and intolerance. Social Identity Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the psychological mechanisms behind right-wing extremism. By examining how group dynamics shape perceptions of self and others, we can better comprehend the roots of intolerance and develop strategies to counteract the negative consequences of divisive social identities.

4.4   Intergroup Threat Theory& Integrated Theory

Intergroup Threat Theory posits that perceived threats from out-groups can lead to heightened prejudice and hostility toward those groups. Developed by Walter G. Stephan and his colleagues, the theory identifies two primary types of threats: realistic threats, which concern competition for resources, and symbolic threats, which pertain to perceived challenges to cultural values and group identity (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan et al. 2009). In the context of right-wing extremism, increasing immigration is often viewed as a realistic threat by native populations, as they fear the potential economic competition for jobs and resources. Simultaneously, it can invoke symbolic threats, as immigrants are perceived to undermine established cultural norms and values. Integrated Theory, as proposed by Stephan, seeks to combine insights from various theories, including Intergroup Threat Theory and Social Identity Theory, to explain the psychological mechanisms driving intergroup hostility. This theory emphasizes the interplay between individual-level factors, such as personal experiences and socio-economic conditions, and broader societal factors, such as political rhetoric and media representations of immigrants. Stephan's integrated approach suggests that both direct and indirect experiences with immigrants can influence attitudes and behaviors toward them.

The consequences of these dynamics are far reaching, as they not only perpetuate cycles of discrimination but also create a feedback loop that reinforces extremist ideologies. As anti-immigrant sentiments grow, individuals may feel justified in engaging in or supporting acts of violence against perceived out-groups. This cycle is particularly alarming, as it underscores the importance of addressing intergroup perceptions to mitigate the rise of right-wing extremism. To counteract these trends, it is essential to implement educational and outreach programs that promote intergroup understanding and empathy. By addressing misconceptions and fostering positive interactions between groups, communities can work to dismantle the prejudices that fuel right-wing extremism.

5   Discussion

5.1   The Rise of Right-Wing Populism

Right-wing populism has emerged as a persistent phenomenon not only in Europe but also in English-speaking countries like the UK and the USA. These parties combine right-wing politics with populist rhetoric, presenting themselves as defenders of the "common people" against the established elite. Their central agenda focuses on protecting national culture, heritage, identity, and economy from perceived external threats, particularly immigration. Since the 2010s, right-wing populism has become a defining characteristic of the Republican Party in the USA, especially following the election of Donald Trump (Wodak et al., 2017). The populism associated with these extremist parties is intricately linked to issues of racism, white supremacy, chauvinism, and social injustice. A striking example of this occurred during the violent rally in Charlottesville in August 2017. On the night of August 11, white supremacists converged on the University of Virginia campus, instilling fear among students with chants like "Blood and Soil" and "Jews will not replace us" (MacFarquhar, *The New York Times*, 2021). The rally culminated in a tragic incident when James Alex Fields Jr., a white supremacist, drove his car into a crowd of anti-racist protestors, resulting in one death and 35 injuries (Jones, 2020).

The ramifications of this event have been profound, contributing to a surge in racism in Charlottesville and beyond. Some observers have drawn connections between the aftermath of the rally and the George Floyd incident, which further emboldened white supremacists to display their ideologies more openly across the United States (Piatkowska, 2021). This trend signifies a troubling normalization of extremist views and

highlights the urgent need for strategies aimed at countering right-wing populism and promoting inclusivity in democratic discourse.

5.2   The Rise of Right-Wing Extremism

A comprehensive analysis reveals a rapid escalation of right-wing extremism in the United States. Data indicate that far-right activities and crimes increased nearly fourfold between 2017 and 2018. Notable incidents, including the pipe bombings in October 2018 and the attack on the Pittsburgh synagogue, underscore the severity of this extremist trend (Jones, 2022). To effectively counter these challenges, local and federal agencies in the U.S. must amplify their efforts to address the rising tide of far-right extremism. The situation in Europe mirrors this trend, with a reported 43% increase in far-right extremist activities, further illustrating the global nature of the threat. Right-wing extremist groups not only target government institutions but also actively promote racial, ethnic, and religious supremacy. These groups encompass a range of ideologies, from white supremacists to anti-government extremists, including militia organizations and so-called sovereign citizens, who frequently conspire against governmental authority. Reports from The New York Times (Turkewitz, 2018) highlight that figures like the Pittsburgh synagogue shooter, Robert Bowers, and pipe bomber, Cesar Sayoc, were both aligned with far-right extremist ideologies. Although threats from left-wing groups are also present, right-wing extremist factions appear to be more organized, armed, and widespread. While Islamic terrorism has historically been a significant threat to the U.S., statistics show that since 2014, right-wing extremist activities have outpaced those associated with Islamic terrorist groups.

It is essential to clarify that right-wing and left-wing extremists do not represent mainstream political parties such as the Democrats or Republicans. Polls consistently indicate that both parties disapprove of terrorism. Most right-wing extremist attacks are executed by non-state actors, whose motives typically revolve around themes of racial, ethnic, or religious supremacy, anti-government sentiment, and resistance to practices such as abortion. As noted by Bruce Hoffman, right-wing extremist parties often criticize the state for its liberal policies. These policies are perceived to facilitate the entry of dark-skinned immigrants into the national labor force and to appoint Jews and other minorities to influential positions. In contrast, left-wing movements typically advocate against colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and environmental degradation, or promote decentralized political systems like anarchism. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat the rise of right-wing extremism and to foster social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies.

5.3   Linking Demographic Shifts to Right-Wing Crime

The World Report from Human Rights Watch indicates a notable increase in politically motivated offenses, highlighting a troubling trend linked to demographic shifts. Data released in May show a rise from 44,692 offenses in 2020 to 55,048 in 2021, with ideologically motivated violence surging by 16%. In the first half of 2022, the Ministry of Interior documented 9,167 right-wing motivated crimes, including 418 violent attacks. Additionally, anti-Semitic hate crimes increased by approximately 29% between 2020 and 2021, while the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) recorded 965 cases of racist offenses during the same period (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019). These demographic changes often provoke a variety of emotional responses within societies, leading to social separation, fear, political polarization, and hostility. The reactions are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and economic factors. For some individuals, the response manifests as nationalism and racism, whereas others engage in activism and legislative initiatives aimed at countering these trends (Christopher M.B., 2021).

Furthermore, the impact of demographic changes is closely linked to economics, which can exacerbate intergroup tensions. As certain communities experience rapid demographic shifts due to immigration, native-born populations may perceive these changes as a threat to their economic stability and cultural identity. This perception is particularly strong in rural or economically disadvantaged regions, where job

competition is more acute, and public resources are more limited. Economic anxieties are a key driver of right-wing extremism, as they provide a fertile ground for populist leaders and movements to exploit fears about immigration. By framing immigrants as a drain on public resources or a threat to native workers' livelihoods, far-right groups can galvanize support and legitimize their anti-immigrant rhetoric. This link between economic insecurity and the rise of far-right extremism is well-documented, with multiple studies highlighting how economic downturns, especially during the 2008 financial crisis and the more recent COVID-19 pandemic, have intensified anti-immigrant sentiment (Kim, 2023; Krannich & Massey, 2024).

This pattern underscores the importance of understanding how demographic shifts can exacerbate existing tensions and contribute to a climate conducive to right-wing crime. As societies become more diverse, those who feel threatened may resort to extremist ideologies to preserve their perceived cultural and economic dominance. Addressing these concerns requires a multifaceted approach that promotes social cohesion and inclusivity, reducing the appeal of right-wing narratives.

5.4   Right-Wing Movements from a Global Perspective

The rise of right-wing extremism is not confined to the United States; it reflects a global trend fueled by economic crises and societal grievances. In Greece, the Golden Dawn party effectively scapegoated immigrants during the economic downturn, revealing deep-seated authoritarian attitudes and social tensions. Similarly, Anders Behring Breivik's racist attacks in Norway underscored the violent consequences of these pervasive attitudes. The Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally in the U.S. illustrated the dynamics of out-group hostility and in-group solidarity, highlighting the interconnectedness of these global movements. In France, the National Front exploited economic anxieties to stoke nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiments, further indicating the need for inclusive measures to counter extremism (Trilling, 2020). Right-wing extremist organizations across Europe, such as Britain First in the UK, Svenskarnas Parti in Sweden, Jobbik in Hungary, Forza Nuova in Italy, and Pegida in Germany, have capitalized on social unrest and economic instability to spread hate speech against minorities and advance nationalist agendas. These groups reflect the global resurgence of right-wing extremism and expose long-standing tensions surrounding immigration, diversity, and economic insecurity. Addressing the root causes of these movements necessitates comprehensive strategies that uphold democratic values, combat economic inequality, and promote social cohesion (Khalfa, 2022).

In Germany, the far-right terrorist organization known as the National Socialist Underground (NSU) was responsible for numerous ethnic murders, bombings, and bank robberies, primarily targeting immigrants of Turkish and Kurdish descent. The NSU operated covertly for years, raising concerns about the effectiveness of German security services in combating far-right extremism (Illei & Moerdler, 2016). In the United States, the alt-right movement has significantly influenced right-wing criminality, promoting white nationalist ideologies and racist rhetoric. This movement has radicalized individuals through social media and online forums, fostering an environment of intolerance and hatred. Events such as the 2017 Charlottesville rally, which escalated into violence, exemplify the dangers posed by the alt-right's influence. Combating this extremism requires a focus on addressing its underlying causes and promoting social inclusion (Summers, 2017).

6   Conclusion

This manuscript highlights the significant role of political shifts in fueling the rise of extremist factions and illegal activities, adversely impacting societal harmony. The unequal distribution of rights, benefits, and opportunities between immigrants and native populations emerges as a crucial factor underpinning these challenges. Countries with high immigration rates or marked cultural and religious diversity frequently witness a surge in right-wing crimes and extremist activities, driven by a perception among certain groups that immigrants threaten their societal dominance. This dynamic fosters tensions that promote right-wing ideologies, resulting in violence, oppression, and social injustice. The novelty of this study lies in its

comprehensive analysis of the interplay between demographic shifts, economic instability, and the emergence of right-wing extremism. By illuminating the underlying mechanisms that fuel these trends, this research offers valuable insights for policymakers seeking to address societal divisions. Moreover, our research highlights the need for governments to establish equitable mechanisms that ensure equal opportunities for all, particularly for immigrants. Such initiatives can help alleviate feelings of resource deprivation among local populations, thereby mitigating the appeal of right-wing ideologies and reducing the likelihood of extremist behavior. To this end, it is essential for governments to implement strict, consistent policies that promote inclusivity and respect for diversity. This includes enforcing laws that safeguard the rights of immigrants and native populations alike. By fostering an environment of equal opportunity and social cohesion, nations can effectively counteract the rise of extremism and work toward a more harmonious society.

7   Declarations

7.1   Study Limitations

The limitations of this study are multifaceted and reflect the inherent challenges of conducting a comprehensive analysis within the constraints of available literature. One notable limitation is the reliance on the PRISMA framework, which, while valuable for guiding systematic reviews, may inadvertently restrict the scope of the analysis. This framework focuses primarily on studies that meet specific criteria, potentially sidelining alternative viewpoints and empirical evidence that could enrich the discussion. Consequently, the exclusion of diverse perspectives may lead to a partial understanding of the complexities surrounding right-wing extremism and its socio-political underpinnings. Access to relevant literature was another significant constraint. Inaccessibility to key databases and articles limited the time span of the literature included in the review, resulting in the omission of potentially critical studies that might have informed the analysis. This limitation is particularly relevant in regions where data on right-wing extremism is scarce or poorly documented, which can skew the findings and diminish their applicability to a global context. Moreover, the reliance on qualitative research based on the interpretation of secondary sources raises concerns about researcher bias. The researcher's experiences and perspectives may inadvertently influence the interpretation of data, potentially skewing results. The subjective nature of qualitative research underscores the need for caution in drawing conclusions based solely on personal insights and anecdotal evidence.

7.2   Competing Interests

The authors declare that there are no competing interests.

7.3   Publisher's Note

AIJR remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published institutional affiliations.

How to Cite this Article

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