

# Examining the Ideological Foundations, Psychological Influences, and Media Representation of Extremism and Its Social Impact

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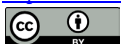
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## Abstract

This article examines contemporary research and views related to a currently observed rise in extremist views and social actions. The analysis delves into the multifaceted nature of right-wing and left-wing extremism, exploring their ideological foundations, psychological and social influences, and the diverse forms of activism and violence associated with each. The commentary highlights the ideological fluidity and adaptability within extremist movements, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary research and early intervention programs to mitigate radicalization. Additionally, the research underscores the critical role of public perception and media representation in shaping narratives around extremism, advocating for responsible media reporting and the development of counter-narratives. Legal and political frameworks are examined, with recommendations for reforms to better address the specific challenges posed by different forms of extremism. The analysis also identifies the intersection of extremism with broader social issues, such as racism, sexism, and economic inequality, and calls for comprehensive policies that promote social cohesion and inclusivity. By integrating these insights into prevention, education, and legal strategies, the article aims to contribute to the discussions related to a more stable and inclusive society that can effectively counter the evolving threat of extremism.

## Keywords

Radicalization, Extremism, Activism, Social Media, Left Wing, Right Wing

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the world has seen a surge in violent extremism that has claimed

many innocent lives (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). These extremist ideologies, whether rooted in religious, ethnic, or political motives, exalt the dominance of specific groups while opposing a more inclusive and tolerant society. This situation presents two interconnected challenges for modern societies: the escalation of violent extremism and its transnational spread, as well as the governance of increasingly diverse and multicultural populations.

The United States has experienced an increase in terrorist attacks perpetrated by domestic violent extremists. High-profile incidents at large-scale demonstrations have heightened the visibility of this issue and elicited strong reactions from civilians, law enforcement, and policymakers. A notable example is the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, where supporters of then-President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol during the certification of the 2020 presidential election results. This event brought the issue of domestic violent extremism into the international spotlight (European Parliament, 2023).

US government agencies have consistently identified domestic violent extremism as a significant threat (European Parliament, 2023). Although extremists are categorized under various general classifications for counter-terrorism purposes, the nature of the threat has evolved to become more decentralized and diverse. Racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists have been responsible for some of the deadliest acts of violence in recent years (European Parliament, 2023).

Prior to the January 6th attack, US counter-terrorism efforts were predominantly focused on international threats, especially after September 11, 2001. Domestic terrorism, while defined in US law, does not carry the same legal weight as international terrorism (European Parliament, 2023). Unlike foreign terrorist organizations, domestic extremist groups cannot be officially designated as terrorist organizations, and obtaining authorization to investigate them is more complex.

The Capitol attack marked a turning point, leading to a significant shift in counter-terrorism priorities. It prompted the largest investigation in US law enforcement history and resulted in a major overhaul of government policies. In response, 2021 saw the introduction of the first national strategy specifically focused on domestic terrorism (European Parliament, 2023).

Collaborative efforts between the US and the European Union (EU) to combat violent extremism have led to productive exchanges among policymakers, researchers, and frontline practitioners. However, establishing a unified regulatory framework for addressing online extremist content has faced challenges, particularly due to differing views on free speech and the extent of government intervention (European Parliament, 2023).

The increase in extremism, particularly violent extremism, is a multifaceted issue influenced by psychological, social, and political factors (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). Radicalization plays a pivotal role in the progression towards extremism, with various trigger factors and pathways contributing to the adoption of extreme beliefs and behaviors (Kruglanski et al., 2021). Addressing the root causes of radicalization, such as grievances, political dynamics, and religious influences, is

essential in developing effective strategies to prevent the spread of violent extremism. Additionally, understanding the role of digital platforms, algorithmic radicalization, and the prison environment in fostering extremist ideologies is crucial in devising comprehensive approaches to counter radicalization and promote peace and stability in societies (Hafez & Mullins, 2015; Ledwich & Zaitsev, 2020).

Today, crime results in more deaths globally than armed conflicts. In 2017, homicides claimed nearly half a million lives worldwide, significantly exceeding the 89,000 fatalities from armed conflicts and 19,000 deaths from terrorist attacks (United Nations, 2024). If homicide rates continue to rise at the current rate of 4% annually, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16—which aims to significantly reduce violence and related deaths worldwide—by 2030 will be at risk (United Nations, 2024).

The prevalence of organized crime and gang violence differs greatly by region. Countries in the Americas have the highest homicide rates, contributing 37% of global homicides despite accounting for only 13% of the world's population (United Nations, 2024). Political instability often exacerbates organized crime, including targeted attacks against police, women, journalists, and migrants. Political violence is no longer confined to low-income countries; in the past 15 years, more than half of the global population has experienced or been near significant political violence.

For women and girls, domestic violence remains a severe issue. In 2017, 58% of female homicides were perpetrated by intimate partners or family members, an increase from 47% in 2012 (United Nations, 2024). Women are disproportionately affected by lethal violence, often due to persistent misogynistic attitudes, inequality, and dependency, particularly in low-income countries.

Regarding terrorism, although it remains a global issue, its impact has diminished recently. In 2018, terrorism-related deaths fell for the third consecutive year to under 19,000 (United Nations, 2024). This decline is attributed to enhanced counter-terrorism measures, increased regional and international cooperation, and successful prevention programs. In 2017, 20% of terrorist attacks failed, compared to just over 12% in 2014 (United Nations, 2024).

Conflict remains the leading cause of terrorism, with over 99% of terrorism-related deaths occurring in countries experiencing violent conflict or high political terror (United Nations, 2024). The Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa bear the highest burden of terrorist attacks, with countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria being particularly affected.

In more developed countries, factors such as social alienation, lack of economic opportunities, and involvement in external conflicts drive terrorist activities. While terrorism-related deaths in Western Europe have dropped in recent years, the number of attacks has increased, particularly those carried out by far-right, white nationalist, or anti-Muslim individuals (United Nations, 2024). Between 2002 and 2017, incidents in these regions rose from three to 59, with social media playing a key role in spreading xenophobic rhetoric and inciting violence (United Nations,

2024).

Extremist groups today benefit from unprecedented access to the internet, which facilitates recruitment, propaganda, and the acquisition of weapons and funds. Additionally, both state and non-state actors can use AI-driven deep learning to create realistic but false “deepfakes,” potentially spreading misinformation and exacerbating political instability.

The research problem and objective of this article is to explore strategies for addressing both right-wing and left-wing extremism, taking into account the evolving nature of beliefs and the various factors that contribute to radicalization.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilized a literature review methodology to explore the intricate relationship between extremist ideologies and their associated forms of activism and violence. The literature review approach was chosen to integrate existing research, uncover patterns and gaps, and deliver a thorough understanding of the subject based on previously published academic work.

The search strategy involved a multi-faceted approach to ensure a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Academic databases and digital libraries were utilized to source pertinent studies. A variety of keywords and search terms related to the research topic were employed to gather relevant literature.

The review followed specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reputable reports published within the last 5 years that examined extremist ideologies and their impact on activism and violence. Studies were selected based on their empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, or comprehensive reviews relevant to the research questions. Exclusion criteria ruled out non-peer-reviewed articles, opinion pieces, and sources lacking empirical data or methodological rigor. Additionally, publications not directly addressing the relationship between ideologies and activism or violence were excluded from the review.

The data collection and analysis process involved several systematic steps to ensure a thorough examination of the literature. Initially, a systematic screening process was employed to identify the most relevant and high-quality sources. Abstracts and summaries of the selected studies were reviewed to verify their alignment with the research focus.

Key information from each selected source was then extracted. This included details such as the authors and publication year to provide context within a temporal framework. The study focus was noted to understand the specific aspects of extremism and its manifestations addressed by each source. Additionally, key findings were recorded, capturing major conclusions and evidence related to the connection between ideologies and forms of activism or violence.

A thematic analysis was subsequently conducted to uncover common themes, patterns, and trends across the reviewed literature. This involved categorizing findings into thematic areas such as ideological motivations, types of activism, and

violence. By comparing and contrasting these themes, insights were drawn into the relationship between extremist beliefs and actions.

Finally, the synthesized findings from the literature were organized to offer a comprehensive overview of how extremist ideologies influence activism and violence. This synthesis aimed to integrate diverse perspectives, highlighting both consistencies and discrepancies in the literature to provide a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

The methodology for this literature review focused on systematically gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing existing research to understand the relationship between extremist ideologies and their associated forms of activism and violence. By evaluating a range of academic sources, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic and contribute to the broader discourse on extremism.

### 3. Extremist Views and Extremist Social Actions

#### 3.1. Extremist Views

Extremist views and actions are often intertwined with radical ideologies that challenge or reject established societal norms and values. These extremist perspectives encompass various dimensions, including ideological extremism, intolerance, antidemocratic sentiments, and violent ideologies. Ideological extremism involves holding beliefs that significantly deviate from mainstream societal views, such as extreme political stances, religious fanaticism, or radical environmentalism (Rottweiler & Gill, 2020). This departure from the norm often leads to intolerance and hostility towards those with differing beliefs, fostering aggression and conflict (Trip et al., 2019). Extremists may also exhibit antidemocratic sentiments, rejecting democratic principles in favor of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, which can involve undermining democratic institutions and processes (Verkuuten, 2018). Furthermore, some extremist views endorse or rationalize the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives (Adamczyk et al., 2014).

Research indicates that extremist ideologies are associated with poor self-regulation, suggesting that individuals receptive to extremist beliefs may struggle with controlling their impulses and behaviors (Međedović & Petrović, 2016). Extremist emotions and behaviors can manifest in both non-violent coercion and actions that defy societal norms, showing disregard for life, freedom, and human rights (Blair et al., 2021). Violent extremist groups not only employ violent tactics like suicide bombings and armed attacks but also indoctrinate members into extremist ideologies, perpetuating a cycle of radicalization and violence (Keatley et al., 2021). Understanding the factors underlying extremists' attitudes, beliefs, and actions is crucial for developing interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism effectively (Pressman & Flockton, 2012).

The relationship between hate groups and far-right ideological violence has been explored, highlighting the role of hate groups in fueling extremist behaviors

(Thijssen et al., 2023). The concept of the militant extremist mind-set (MEMS) has been identified as a conservative ideology mediated by an ethos of conflict, shedding light on the psychological underpinnings of extremist thought (Jaško et al., 2022). Additionally, studies have compared political violence by left-wing, right-wing, and Islamist extremists, revealing similarities in the levels of violence perpetrated by these groups (Loza et al., 2010). It is essential to recognize that explanations for extreme ideologies are multifaceted, encompassing sociological, economic, psychological, and political factors rather than solely relying on religious interpretations (Pauwels & Svensson, 2017).

Extremist beliefs can influence the relationship between self-control and violent extremism, with extremist beliefs acting as a moderating factor in this dynamic (Mueller, 2021). Economic and political discourses frame radicalization as the process of embracing radical beliefs, emphasizing ideology as a potential driver of violent extremism (Knight et al., 2019). While nonviolent extremists may hold radical views, they may lack the motivation, capability, or opportunity to engage in violent acts, highlighting the complexity of extremist behaviour (Trip et al., 2019). The interplay of factors at different levels of analysis influences the radicalization process, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms driving extremism (True & Eddyono, 2021).

In the context of ideological extremism, individuals with strong ideological prejudices tend to exhibit more extreme views compared to moderates, contributing to ideological polarization and societal divisions (Ozer & Bertelsen, 2020). Exposure to extremist content online can increase aggression, with personality traits playing a role in moderating the impact of such exposure (Shortland & McGarry, 2022). Factors associated with (de)radicalization processes operate at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels, highlighting the multifaceted nature of radicalization (Feddes et al., 2023). Ideological extremists demonstrate a higher level of certainty in their political attitudes, which is linked to viewing their beliefs as superior to those of others (Woitzel & Koch, 2022). The framing of news media can inadvertently amplify extremist agendas, allowing extremist members to exploit content for their benefit (Sullivan et al., 2019).

The correlation between domestic right-wing extremist ideology and violence in the United States underscores the challenges in countering violent extremism, particularly in the face of institutional barriers and increasing political salience of extremist ideologies (Bahadori, 2024). Improved understanding of extremist positions through a consistent ideological framework can enhance national security outcomes by accurately identifying concerning behaviors (Matejic, 2024). Mechanisms of ideological transmission in extremist contexts shed light on how ideas are shared, contributing to our comprehension of the link between extreme beliefs and violent actions (Santoprete & Xu, 2018). The online behaviors of violent and nonviolent right-wing extremists differ significantly, informing risk assessment frameworks used by law enforcement and intelligence agencies (Tapia et al., 2023).

### 3.2. Extremist Social Actions

Extremist social actions encompass a range of behaviors that are driven by radical ideologies and seek to disrupt societal norms and provoke conflict. These actions can manifest in various forms, including terrorism, hate crimes, propaganda and recruitment efforts, radical activism, and social and cultural disruption. Extremist groups may resort to acts of terrorism, such as bombings and shootings, to further their agenda, often targeting civilians (Kruglanski et al., 2014). Additionally, actions motivated by extremist views can lead to hate crimes, where individuals are singled out based on characteristics like race, religion, or nationality (Stets & Burke, 2000). Extremists also employ propaganda through various mediums like online platforms, pamphlets, and public speeches to disseminate their ideologies and recruit new members (Baumann et al., 2020).

Radical activism is another facet of extremist social actions, involving protests and demonstrations aimed at challenging societal norms or authorities (Phadke & Mitra, 2021). Furthermore, extremists may engage in actions that aim to undermine social cohesion and create divisions within society, eroding trust in institutions and fostering discord among different community groups (Nivette et al., 2017). These actions are often fueled by a quest for significance and a desire to challenge existing power structures (Vancouver, 2019). Extremist movements, such as white supremacy and anti-LGBTQ groups, thrive online through social media platforms that provide a fertile ground for recruitment and radicalization (Esmailzadeh, 2023).

Propaganda and recruitment are key tools used by extremists to spread their ideologies and attract new followers (Aly et al., 2014). This can take the form of online platforms, pamphlets, or public speeches aimed at radicalizing individuals (Schumann et al., 2024). Extremists leverage moral disengagement mechanisms to justify violence and dehumanize victims, facilitating the recruitment process (Mann et al., 2023). Exposure to radicalizing information has been linked to increased support for violent extremism (Decker & Pyrooz, 2020). Online communities play a significant role in motivating violent political extremists (Asrila et al., 2024).

Radical activism involves disruptive actions like protests or demonstrations challenging societal norms (Uba & Bosi, 2021). Extremist activism seeks to challenge or overthrow existing authorities, often leading to conflict (Spadaro, 2020). The imprisonment-extremism nexus highlights how legal cynicism in prison can fuel extremist intentions post-release (Ludigdo & Mashuri, 2021). Non-violent radicalism, operationalized as activism, aims to replace existing systems with new social and political orders (Rieger et al., 2019). Extremist intentions can be influenced by experiences of economic difficulties and contentious political activism (Campion, 2020).

Social and cultural disruption efforts by extremists aim to erode trust in institutions and create divisions within society (Akram & Nasar, 2023). Environmental terrorism represents a growing security threat, exacerbated by the radicalization

of marginalized environmental extremists (Bintarsari et al., 2023). Negative evaluations of national ethics have been linked to the escalation of Islamic radicalism (Nicolajsen & Scupola, 2011). Right-wing and Islamist extremists use propaganda to recruit followers by appealing to national or religious social identities (Rieger et al., 2019). By crafting messages that align with the national or religious identities of their target audience, these extremists aim to establish a connection that fosters a sense of shared identity and purpose, ultimately leading individuals to be more receptive to their extremist ideologies (Rieger et al., 2019).

Women in the extreme and radical right participate in various roles, including violent actors and activists. Women's involvement in the extreme and radical right encompasses a spectrum of roles, from active participation as violent actors to engagement as activists advocating for radical-right ideologies. Research by Ben-Shitrit et al. (2021) highlights how the visibility of women in radical-right parliamentary positions and as political activists can enhance acceptance and support for the agendas of these movements, particularly among women themselves. This underscores the significant impact that women can have within these movements, influencing their growth and mainstream appeal (Ben-Shitrit et al., 2021).

From the comprehensive analysis of extremist views and actions, several key insights can be drawn. Firstly, extremist beliefs and behaviors are influenced by a complex interplay of ideological, psychological, sociological, and economic factors. This multifaceted nature implies that addressing extremism requires a holistic approach, considering all these dimensions to be effective.

Research also indicates that poor self-regulation is linked to susceptibility to extremist beliefs. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving self-control could play a crucial role in countering radicalization. Furthermore, online platforms have become significant in spreading extremist ideologies, recruiting new members, and facilitating radicalization. This highlights the need for enhanced monitoring and the development of counter-narratives in digital spaces to mitigate these effects.

Ideological polarization is another critical factor, as strong ideological prejudices contribute to greater societal divisions. Understanding how extremist ideologies drive this polarization can help in devising strategies to foster dialogue and integration. The psychological underpinnings of extremism, such as the militant extremist mind-set (MEMS) and the impact of extremist content, reveal the importance of addressing psychological factors and individual vulnerabilities in counter-radicalization efforts.

Extremism manifests in various forms, from non-violent activism to violent terrorism. Recognizing this diversity is essential for tailoring specific interventions to address different types of extremist activities effectively. Additionally, economic and political factors play a role in shaping extremist ideologies and actions, underscoring the need for socio-economic reforms and political strategies to address underlying grievances that may fuel extremism.

The radicalization process occurs at multiple levels—micro, meso, and macro—

indicating that effective counter-extremism strategies must address these levels comprehensively. Hate groups significantly influence extremist behaviors, so understanding their role can aid in creating targeted counter-strategies. Furthermore, women's involvement in extremist movements, whether as activists or violent actors, highlights the need to consider gender dynamics in developing counter-extremism strategies.

The media's framing and the use of propaganda are critical in amplifying extremist agendas, which calls for responsible media practices and effective counter-propaganda measures. Lastly, institutional barriers and legal challenges in countering extremist violence emphasize the need for improved policies and frameworks to address these issues effectively.

Extremist views, which deviate significantly from mainstream beliefs, often lead to actions intended to enforce or promote these ideologies, such as protests, violence, or propaganda. Right-wing extremism, focusing on nationalism and racism, and left-wing extremism, emphasizing anti-capitalism and socialism, are both rooted in radical beliefs that challenge the current system. The social actions of both right-wing and left-wing extremists are driven by these ideological goals and reflect their impact on society. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing effective strategies for prevention and intervention. As such, right-wing and left-wing extremism are examined in detail in the following section.

## 4. Right- and Left-Wing Extremism

### 4.1. Ideological Foundations

The ideological foundations of right-wing and left-wing extremism are multifaceted and complex. Right-wing extremism often centres around nationalism, racial superiority, anti-immigration, and anti-globalization, emphasizing the preservation of traditional values and national identity (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). This ideology may promote ideas of racial purity, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, sometimes advocating for authoritarianism to protect national identity (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). In contrast, left-wing extremism focuses on achieving social equality, challenging capitalism, and dismantling systems of oppression, advocating for wealth redistribution and dismantling oppressive structures (Thorisdottir et al., 2007).

Research has shown that the psychological needs and values underlying left-right political orientation vary across regions, highlighting the complexity of political ideologies (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). While some argue that resistance to change is a stable feature of right-wing ideology, it is important to recognize that ideological orientations can evolve over time (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). Left-wing authoritarianism has been observed in Western Europe, emphasizing the need to understand different ideological frameworks (Van Hiel et al., 2006).

In contemporary Turkey, the crisis of capitalism has led to cycles of right-wing populism, resulting in alliances blending elements from both the left and right (Karataşlı & Kumral, 2023). This demonstrates the fluidity of political ideologies

and the hybrid nature of populist movements (Karataşlı & Kumral, 2023). Identity diffusion and extremist attitudes in adolescence have been linked to left-wing extremism, emphasizing the role of social psychology in shaping extremist beliefs (Isenhardt et al., 2021).

New scales for measuring political radicalism have provided insights into distinguishing between right- and left-wing radicalism, emphasizing the importance of analyzing extremist attitudes (Jungkunz et al., 2024). Studies on populism in Spain have shown the complexities of regionalist parties adopting right-wing populist discourses (Vampa, 2020). Agrarian social movements have been identified as key actors in challenging right-wing populism and exploring socialist futures (Borras, 2019).

The link between women's status and terrorism has revealed how ideologies of patriarchy intersect with different forms of extremism (Kattelman & Burns, 2022). Voting for populism in Europe has been associated with globalization and technological change (Milner, 2021). Political ideology and activism in football fan culture in Spain have illustrated how left-wing fan groups navigate political boundaries (Spaaij & Viñas, 2013).

Responses to extremism vary, with differing levels of perceived threats from left-wing, right-wing, and radical Islamic groups (Trüdinger & Ziller, 2023). Twitter language analysis has provided insights into the moral foundations of extremist ideologies (Alizadeh et al., 2019). Comparative studies on gang members and extremists have highlighted similarities and differences across different forms of extremism (Haymoz et al., 2021).

Attitudinal ambivalence on redistribution has been studied across Europe, revealing complex patterns of support for redistributive policies (Yakter, 2023). Collective discontent has been linked to voting for extreme parties (van der Bles et al., 2017). Left-wing xenophobia in Europe challenges conventional understandings of political ideologies (Kopyciok & Silver, 2021). The media plays a role in shaping perceptions of extremism (Baugut & Scherr, 2021).

The rise of the radical right in Sweden has been linked to changing social structures and the decline of traditional institutions (Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019). Solidarities from below in emancipatory rural politics have been explored as counterforces to right-wing populism (Calvário et al., 2019). Religion influences right-wing, left-wing, and Islamist extremism (Kamenowski et al., 2021). The psycho-political profile of party activists and extremists highlights distinct ideological frameworks (van Hiel, 2011).

Supporters of left- and right-wing political ideologies exhibit internal variations (Hanel et al., 2018). The identification of precursors and growth of left-wing violent extremism in New Zealand sheds light on radicalization factors (Tibby & Bayly, 2023). Right-wing Twitter users in France exhibit growing homophily (Gurchani, 2024). Voters' issue preferences are structured along ideological dimensions (Lachat, 2017).

Intergenerational social mobility and political socialization influence support

for the Left (Ares & Ditmars, 2022). Participant recruitment through social media provides insights into radicalization processes (Sikkens et al., 2016). Ideological shifts influence educational policies (Canale, 2015). Terrorism in Jharkhand is linked to socio-economic inequality (Ouassini & Verma, 2018). The significance of the bogan to class in Australia influences class identities (Paternoster et al., 2018).

Political representation in post-growth capitalism has shifted in response to economic transformations (Reitz & Jörke, 2021). Political extremes and perceived anomie have been explored within French samples (Ionescu & Collange, 2021). Partisan media shapes perceptions of movements like Black Lives Matter (Kim et al., 2024).

The ideological foundations of extremism are deeply intertwined with the specific forms of activism and violence that extremist groups employ, as these ideologies provide a framework that justifies and rationalizes their actions. Right-wing extremists often aim to uphold traditional hierarchies and target minorities or progressive institutions, viewing such actions as necessary to defend national identity and cultural values. This perspective is supported by the notion that individuals with high social dominance orientation, often associated with right-wing extremism, exhibit a strong preference for maintaining existing social hierarchies and may resort to violence or hate speech to protect these perceived threats (Carter, 2018). Conversely, left-wing extremists typically seek to dismantle established power structures, targeting entities they perceive as perpetuating inequality, such as corporations or government institutions. This ideological stance is often accompanied by justifications for property destruction or direct action as legitimate tactics against perceived oppression (Juma et al., 2021). The cognitive and perceptual correlates of ideological attitudes further illustrate that these beliefs not only shape the objectives of extremist groups but also influence their methods of activism, with right-wing groups favoring rallies and hate speech, while left-wing groups engage in sabotage or protests (Zmigrod et al., 2021). Moreover, the selection of targets is heavily influenced by these ideologies; right-wing extremists focus on threats to traditional values, while left-wing extremists aim at symbols of systemic injustice, thereby highlighting the direct relationship between their beliefs and actions (Marysyuk et al., 2021). Ultimately, the ideologies of extremism serve as a critical lens through which the specific forms of activism and violence are understood, shaping the justifications for their actions and the nature of their engagements with society (Clifford, 2021).

## 4.2. Forms of Activism and Violence

Forms of activism and violence encompass a wide spectrum of behaviors and ideologies, with right-wing extremism and left-wing extremism representing two prominent categories. Right-wing extremism often manifests through violent actions such as hate crimes, racially motivated attacks, and domestic terrorism, including mass shootings targeting minority groups, bombings, and assaults on

government institutions (Deloughery et al., 2012). This form of extremism is commonly associated with groups like white supremacist organizations, neo-Nazi groups, and militia movements, which rally around beliefs of racial superiority and anti-government sentiments (Deloughery et al., 2012). On the other hand, left-wing extremism involves actions that can escalate from protests into riots, property destruction, and confrontations with law enforcement. Tactics may include bombings or targeted attacks against symbols of capitalism or authority (Deloughery et al., 2012). Groups associated with left-wing extremism include revolutionary or anarchist movements, anti-globalization activists, and radical environmental groups, which often target symbols of corporate power or governmental authority (Deloughery et al., 2012).

Research has delved into the relationship between terrorism and hate crime, suggesting that both hate crime and hate speech can be viewed as forms of terrorism (Deloughery et al., 2012). This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of various forms of violent behaviour and the underlying motivations that drive them. Additionally, studies have explored the impact of state policies on hate crime incidence, indicating potential policy externalities in the form of hate crimes (Levy & Levy, 2017). Understanding the socio-structural and contextual factors that shape political extremism, including far-right electoral support and right-wing hate crimes, is crucial for preventing and addressing these forms of violence (Rees et al., 2019).

Differentiating between various forms of hate speech and offensive language is essential in combating the spread of extremist ideologies and behaviors (Paasch-Colberg et al., 2021). Examining the boundaries of hate crime policy raises important questions about how violence is conceptualized and understood by practitioners and theorists, shedding light on the complexities of addressing hate-motivated actions (Mason-Bish, 2012). Moreover, exploring the relationship between hate groups and far-right ideological violence provides insights into the dynamics that fuel extremist behaviors and the role of organized hate in promoting violence (Adamczyk et al., 2014).

The implications of different conceptualizations of hate crime have been a subject of study, particularly in the European context, where economic difficulties and political uncertainties have contributed to a rise in certain forms of violence and harassment (Garland & Chakraborti, 2012). Opposition to the legitimacy of hate crime laws can be influenced by political orientation and attitudes towards civil rights, underscoring the complexities surrounding the legal frameworks designed to address hate-motivated offenses (Dunbar & Molina, 2004). Understanding the relationship between hate crime and terrorism is significant in determining the extent to which these phenomena are interconnected and whether they represent distinct or overlapping forms of violence (Mills et al., 2015).

Public attitudes towards hate crimes play a significant role in shaping societal responses to such offenses, with factors like social dominance orientation and authoritarianism influencing perceptions and behaviors related to hate-motivated

actions (Bacon et al., 2020). Addressing right-wing extremism and its manifestations of violence requires nuanced policy options that can effectively counter this elusive threat (Köehler, 2019). A critical review of hate crime legislation in the United States highlights the historical context and advocacy efforts that have shaped the legal frameworks aimed at combating hate crimes and protecting marginalized communities (Bills & Vaughn, 2022).

Examining the geography of disability hate crime underscores the vulnerabilities faced by individuals with disabilities, particularly in terms of experiencing bullying, harassment, and violence in various settings (Hall, 2018). Studies on racial and ethnic discrimination in the context of societal crises emphasize the negative impacts of extreme right-wing ideologies and their role in perpetuating discrimination and violence (Casquilho-Martins et al., 2022). The association of hate with right-wing movements underscores the need to address prejudice and negative emotions that underpin extremist ideologies and actions (Tetrault, 2019).

Hate crimes are often viewed as human rights violations, reflecting discriminatory attitudes and behaviors that target individuals based on their identity (Brudholm, 2014). Research on local deprivation and right-wing hate crime highlights the socio-economic factors that can contribute to radicalization and the perpetuation of hate-motivated offenses (Belgioioso et al., 2023). The role of intergroup contact and conflict in fostering hate speech and hate crimes underscores the importance of addressing social divisions and promoting inclusivity in diverse communities (Rees et al., 2022). The influence of hard-right social media on civil unrest points to the need for understanding the link between online activities and real-world violence (Karell et al., 2021).

The relationship between hate crime supporters and violent political appeals sheds light on the mechanisms through which individuals may be influenced to endorse or engage in hate-motivated actions (Dancygier, 2023). Assessing attitudes about hate through validated scales helps in understanding the underlying motivations and beliefs that drive hate crimes and discriminatory behaviours (Kehn et al., 2022). Gender biases and hate speech in political contexts highlight the ways in which gendered narratives can be used to promote hatred and discrimination (Domenech et al., 2023). The effects of right-wing authoritarianism and aggression on intentions to harm specific groups underscore the psychological factors that can contribute to hate crimes and prejudice (Yamawaki et al., 2022).

The evolution of legislation and crimes based on sexual identity or orientation reflects the progress and challenges in addressing hate crimes targeting LGBTQ+ individuals (Ruiz-Azcona et al., 2022). The utilization of anti-Asian rhetoric by right-wing extremism during the COVID-19 pandemic raises concerns about the normalization of extremist ideologies and the potential increase in hate crimes (KIM, 2023). Understanding the factors that predict judgments of hateful acts motivated by prejudice is essential in combating discriminatory behaviors and promoting social cohesion (Roussos & Dovidio, 2018). Mutual radicalization of

opposing extremist groups through the Internet highlights the role of online platforms in perpetuating hate speech and escalating tensions between different ideological factions (Jd & Heerdink, 2021).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on right-wing extremism underscores the ways in which global crises can be exploited by extremist groups to further their agendas and incite violence (Đorić, 2023). Research on anti-Muslim hate crimes emphasizes the vulnerabilities faced by specific groups within marginalized communities and the need to address targeted forms of violence (Gunthel, 2023b). Evaluating court decisions related to hate crimes provides insights into the legal interpretations and applications of hate crime legislation in different contexts (Bilius et al., 2021). Measures against right-wing extremism in illiberal populist countries shed light on the policy responses aimed at countering extremist ideologies and behaviors (Vidra & Félix, 2023).

The classification and definition of right-wing extremism as an ideology highlight the complexities of addressing extremist movements and the need for nuanced approaches to combating radicalization (Tynan, 2023). The legitimacy of far-right extremism and its categorization as freedom of expression, hate crime, or terrorism underscores the challenges in distinguishing between protected speech and harmful actions (Lowe, 2020). Identifying soft violence as a tool for current right-wing extremism points to the evolving nature of extremist tactics and the ways in which violence is perpetuated in contemporary contexts (Meyers, 2019). Gendering hatred and examining domestic violence within legal frameworks emphasize the intersections between gender-based violence and hate crimes (Gunthel, 2023a).

Group salience, inflammatory rhetoric, and hate against religious minorities underscore the role of rhetoric and social dynamics in perpetuating discriminatory behaviors and violence (Hobbs et al., 2021). The refugee footprint on politics and its implications for voting patterns and hate crimes highlight the interconnectedness of political events and social attitudes towards marginalized groups (Adee et al., 2023). Motives and legacies behind specific acts of violence shed light on the cultural and historical factors that can contribute to extremist ideologies and behaviors (Subert, 2019). The use of social media by right-wing extremists to propagate hate speech underscores the challenges in regulating online platforms and addressing digital forms of extremism (Rigato, 2023).

The connection between forms of activism and violence, ideological goals, target groups, and scholarly insights is intricate and interrelated. Ideological goals drive the types of activism and violence adopted by extremist groups, as these ideologies provide the framework for their actions. For instance, right-wing extremists may engage in violence or exclusionary practices to defend traditional hierarchies, while left-wing extremists might use activism or violence to challenge and dismantle established power structures. The choice of targets reflects these ideological goals: right-wing extremists often target minorities and progressive institutions, whereas left-wing extremists may focus on corporations and government

bodies. Scholarly research sheds light on these dynamics, revealing how extremist ideologies shape actions and impact societal and political structures. This research enhances our understanding of the motivations behind extremist actions and their broader consequences.

### 4.3. Ideological Goals, Target Groups, and Scholarly Insights

Right-wing extremism typically aims to uphold or restore a perceived traditional order or hierarchy based on racial, cultural, or national identity, often advocating for exclusionary policies and the preservation of traditional values (Lubbers et al., 2002). This movement targets minority groups, immigrants, and institutions that are viewed as threats to national or racial identity. On the other hand, left-wing extremism seeks to dismantle existing power structures and replace them with systems that promote equality and justice, often advocating for radical reforms or the establishment of a new socio-economic order (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006). The targets of left-wing extremism include corporations, government institutions, and entities perceived to perpetuate inequality or exploitation.

Scholarly research has delved into various aspects of right-wing extremism to understand its drivers and manifestations. Studies have explored the relationship between right-wing ideological attitudes and psychological well-being, revealing mixed findings regarding the impact of such attitudes on individuals' well-being (Onraet et al., 2013). Additionally, research has investigated the ecological correlates of right-wing extremism in Western Europe, examining factors such as economic conditions, social developments like immigration, and political trends to understand the roots of this phenomenon (Knigge, 1998). Furthermore, studies have analyzed how civil society organizations respond to right-wing extremism, focusing on different types of organizations' reactions to neo-Nazi and militant groups associated with right-wing extremism (Lundberg, 2022).

In contrast, left-wing extremism has also been a subject of academic inquiry, with studies examining the precursors and growth of left-wing violent extremism in various contexts. Research has compared political violence by left-wing, right-wing, and Islamist extremists, highlighting that both left-wing and right-wing extremists may resort to violence to advance their ideological agendas (Jaśko et al., 2022). Moreover, investigations have been conducted to identify the consequences of collective discontent, with a measure of zeitgeist predicting voting patterns for extreme parties, including both right-wing and left-wing political actors (van der Bles et al., 2017).

The impact of external factors on the rise of extremism has also been explored in scholarly works. For instance, the influence of religion on different forms of extremism, including right-wing, left-wing, and Islamist extremism, has been studied, with findings indicating that higher education can serve as a protective factor against right-wing extremism (Kamenowski et al., 2021). Moreover, the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in shaping the spread of right-wing extremism has been examined, highlighting the significant role of online platforms in propagating

extreme ideologies during times of crisis (Dorić, 2023).

Ideological goals of extremist groups directly influence the nature of their activism and violence, which, in turn, affects how these actions are perceived and represented by the media and the public. For example, right-wing extremists' efforts to uphold traditional hierarchies often lead to targeted violence against minorities, which can be framed by media in various ways, shaping public understanding and response. Similarly, left-wing extremists' actions aimed at challenging power structures may be depicted as either radical activism or legitimate resistance, depending on media narratives. This relationship will be examined, and expanded upon, in the following section.

#### **4.4. Public Perception and Media Representation**

Public perception and media representation play significant roles in shaping the narratives around different forms of extremism, including right-wing and left-wing extremism. Right-wing extremism is often associated with hate crimes, domestic terrorism, racist, and xenophobic ideologies, leading to increased media attention and public fear (Lubbers et al., 2002). This perception is further fueled by the media's focus on discussions of national security and domestic terrorism, particularly in the aftermath of high-profile attacks or hate crimes (Knigge, 1998). On the other hand, left-wing extremism is sometimes viewed as a response to economic and social injustices but is also linked to violence and property destruction, often observed in the context of protests and social movements (Norman, 2022). Media coverage of left-wing extremism tends to emphasize clashes with law enforcement, property damage during protests, and the potential for radical actions (Baugut & Neumann, 2018).

The public perception of right-wing extremism is influenced by various factors, including individual-level social background characteristics, public opinion, country characteristics, and the nature of extreme right-wing parties themselves (Baugut & Scherr, 2021). This multidisciplinary approach helps in understanding how perceptions are formed and maintained within society. Additionally, the media's representation of right-wing extremism is a critical aspect that influences both the emotions and behaviors of right-wing extremists, as they strategically monitor news media to further their political goals (Schumann et al., 2022). Journalists reporting on right-wing extremism also play a role in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions of social identity threats (Hart, 2021).

Contrary to right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism is often perceived as a response to societal injustices, with media coverage focusing on the actions of protesters and the potential for radical behaviour (Pilkington, 2021). The public's understanding of left-wing extremism is further explored through experimental methods that examine perceptions of domestic political violence perpetrated to advance either right-wing or left-wing agendas (Lundberg, 2022). This research sheds light on how different forms of extremism are perceived and the implications of these perceptions on societal attitudes and behaviors.

In the realm of civil society responses to extremism, organizations have shown varied reactions to right-wing extremism, with a particular focus on neo-Nazi and militant groups associated with right-wing ideologies (Hofmann et al., 2021). While some organizations may take a more direct approach in countering right-wing extremism, others, such as humanitarian and religious groups, engage in fostering public deliberation and promoting democratic norms as part of their response strategies (Cornelis & Hiel, 2014). Understanding these diverse responses is essential in developing comprehensive strategies to address extremism effectively.

Moreover, the impact of media bias on the perception of public opinion is a significant area of study, with research indicating that journalists' perceptions of public opinion can be influenced by right-wing biases (Decker et al., 2022). This bias can shape the narrative around extremism and impact how the public perceives different forms of political ideologies. Additionally, the rise of online activism has provided a platform for right-wing extremist groups to spread their ideologies, with social media playing a crucial role in shaping public perceptions (Kim et al., 2024). Understanding these dynamics is essential in combating the spread of extremist ideologies in the digital age.

The relationship between public perception and media representation of extremism, as well as the legal and political context, is characterized by a dynamic and reciprocal interplay. Media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion about extremism, often amplifying fears or fostering a more nuanced understanding of the issue. For instance, Ahmed & Matthes (2016) highlight that the media representation of Muslims and Islam has evolved significantly, influencing public perceptions and, consequently, political responses to perceived threats, such as the enactment of stricter counterterrorism measures. This is further supported by the findings of Tukachinsky et al. (2015), who document how negative portrayals of ethnic and religious minorities in media can shape national-level attitudes, thereby affecting public opinion and legislative actions. Additionally, the work of Bozdağ (2019) emphasizes that social media, alongside traditional media, contributes to the framing of refugees and extremism, often depicting them as security threats, which in turn influences public sentiment and policy discussions. Conversely, legal actions and political decisions can also shape media narratives; for example, coverage of legal measures against extremism can reinforce or challenge existing stereotypes, as noted by Larsen (2018), who discusses how media conventions in reporting radicalization can influence public discourse. This reciprocal relationship underscores the importance of understanding the media's role in shaping public perceptions and the subsequent impact on legal and political frameworks, emphasizing the need for informed and strategic counter-extremism approaches that consider these dynamics (Czulo et al., 2020). The legal and political context is further considered following.

#### 4.5. Legal and Political Context

To appreciate the legal and political context surrounding right-wing and left-wing

extremism, it is essential to consider the dynamics of law enforcement responses and the political affiliations of these extremist groups. Right-wing extremism often leads to law enforcement efforts targeting hate crimes and domestic terrorism, resulting in legal actions against groups involved in violent activities and hate speech (Ghosh, 2023). Conversely, left-wing extremism typically involves addressing violent protests, property damage, and radical activism, which may lead to legal scrutiny for their actions and strategies (Windisch et al., 2017). These legal responses significantly influence the consequences faced by extremist groups.

The political context surrounding these extremist movements is crucial. Right-wing extremist groups may garner support from specific political factions or ideologies that align with their nationalist or anti-globalist views (Jungkunz et al., 2024). This alignment with particular political groups can shape the narrative around right-wing extremism and influence policy decisions. On the other hand, left-wing extremism often intersects with progressive movements or critiques of capitalist systems, influencing political discourse and policy directions (Hahn et al., 2018).

Research indicates that right-wing extremists utilize various platforms, including social media, to disseminate their ideologies. Studies have shown how right-wing extremists in Canada use social media to spread racism, hate, and violence, creating digital enclaves fueled by hatred (Vries & Edwards, 2009). This digital presence enables them to broaden their reach and impact, facilitating the spread of extremist views. Additionally, research has explored the impact of media coverage on right-wing extremism, revealing a correlation between media portrayal and the perception of right-wing extremist violence (Rigato, 2023). Understanding how media influences the perception and actions of right-wing extremists is crucial for developing effective countermeasures.

In the realm of psychology and morality, studies have investigated the motivations behind terrorist group actions. By applying moral foundations theory, researchers have identified universal instincts known as “moral motivations” that drive terrorist organizations to engage in acts of violence (Fortunato et al., 2022). This framework offers insights into the psychological factors underlying extremist behaviors. Furthermore, examining the psychological aspects of extreme political ideologies has shed light on the factors contributing to adherence to such ideologies (Baugut & Neumann, 2018). Understanding the psychological foundations of extremism is essential for devising interventions to counter radicalization.

The impact of political events and candidacies on right-wing domestic terrorism has been studied. Research has highlighted how political resentment can serve as a significant motivator for right-wing extremism, with the candidacies of political figures influencing the prevalence of extremist activities (Vidra & Félix, 2023). This emphasizes the interconnectedness between political developments and extremist behaviors, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of these dynamics. Additionally, research on the role of women’s status in influencing terrorism has revealed the complex interplay between patriarchy, ideology, and

extremist activities (Kunst et al., 2021). These studies offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of extremism and its interaction with societal structures.

Regarding counter-extremism measures, examining strategies employed in different countries provides valuable lessons. Studies focusing on measures against right-wing extremism in illiberal populist regimes, such as Hungary, offer insights into the challenges of combating extremism within specific political contexts (Gaudette et al., 2020). Understanding the nuances of counter-extremism efforts in diverse political landscapes is crucial for developing effective and contextually relevant interventions. Moreover, research on the precursors and growth of left-wing violent extremism in New Zealand highlights the importance of proactive measures to mitigate the risks posed by extremist ideologies (Doerr, 2017). Identifying early indicators of radicalization enables authorities to implement targeted interventions to prevent the escalation of extremist activities.

The influence of religion on extremist ideologies has been a subject of study, with research pointing to the overlap between Christian religiosity and right-wing extremism (Jaško et al., 2022). This intersection underscores the complex relationship between religious beliefs and extremist narratives, shaping the ideological foundations of extremist groups. Furthermore, exploring the similarities and differences between gang members and extremists provides insights into the psychological profiles of individuals involved in extremist activities (KIM, 2023). Understanding the commonalities and distinctions between these groups allows policymakers to tailor interventions to address specific risk factors associated with extremism.

#### 4.6. Impact of Right- and Left-Wing Extremism

Both forms of extremism pose challenges to societal stability and security, and effective responses must consider the unique characteristics and motivations of each type. The analysis of right-wing and left-wing extremism reveals several key insights that can enhance our understanding of these ideologies and their implications for society.

Both right-wing and left-wing extremisms are ideologically complex and multifaceted. Right-wing extremism is often rooted in nationalism, racial superiority, and a desire to preserve traditional values, while left-wing extremism focuses on social equality, challenging capitalism, and dismantling oppressive structures. The analysis highlights that these ideological orientations are not static and can evolve over time. For example, in contemporary Turkey, the crisis of capitalism has led to alliances that blend elements from both left and right-wing ideologies, demonstrating the fluidity and hybrid nature of political movements.

The psychological needs and values underlying political orientations vary across regions, reflecting the complexity of extremist beliefs. Research shows that identity diffusion and extremist attitudes in adolescence can contribute to left-wing extremism, emphasizing the role of social psychology in shaping extremist beliefs. Additionally, the link between women's status and terrorism reveals how

ideologies of patriarchy intersect with different forms of extremism, illustrating the multifaceted nature of radicalization.

Right-wing and left-wing extremisms manifest through different forms of activism and violence. Right-wing extremism is commonly associated with hate crimes, racially motivated attacks, and domestic terrorism, often perpetrated by groups like white supremacists and neo-Nazis. In contrast, left-wing extremism involves actions that may escalate from protests to riots, property destruction, and confrontations with law enforcement. The interconnectedness of hate crimes and terrorism is highlighted, suggesting that hate crimes can be seen as a form of terrorism driven by similar motivations.

The goals of right-wing extremism typically involve upholding or restoring a perceived traditional order based on racial, cultural, or national identity, often targeting minority groups and institutions perceived as threats. On the other hand, left-wing extremism seeks to dismantle existing power structures and replace them with systems that promote equality and justice, targeting corporations and government institutions perceived as perpetuating inequality. This distinction underscores the different societal impacts and challenges posed by each form of extremism.

Media representation plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of right-wing and left-wing extremisms. Right-wing extremism is often associated with hate crimes and domestic terrorism, leading to increased media attention and public fear. In contrast, left-wing extremism is sometimes perceived as a response to societal injustices, but media coverage often focuses on violence and property destruction during protests. Understanding how media influences public perceptions is crucial for addressing the spread of extremist ideologies.

The legal and political contexts surrounding right-wing and left-wing extremisms are distinct, with different implications for law enforcement and policy responses. Right-wing extremism often leads to law enforcement efforts targeting hate crimes and domestic terrorism, while left-wing extremism involves addressing violent protests and radical activism. The political affiliations of these extremist groups also shape the narrative around extremism and influence policy decisions. For example, right-wing extremists may receive support from nationalist or anti-globalist political factions, while left-wing extremists often intersect with progressive movements and critiques of capitalist systems.

External factors, such as economic conditions, social developments, and political trends, influence the rise of extremism. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the spread of right-wing extremism, with online platforms playing a significant role in propagating extreme ideologies during times of crisis. Additionally, the influence of religion on extremist ideologies, particularly the overlap between Christian religiosity and right-wing extremism, underscores the complex relationship between religious beliefs and extremist narratives.

The analysis highlights the intersection of extremism with other social issues, such as gender biases, racism, and economic inequality. For example, the role of

anti-Asian rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic in fueling right-wing extremism raises concerns about the normalization of extremist ideologies and the potential increase in hate crimes. Similarly, the relationship between hate crime and socio-economic factors like local deprivation suggests that addressing social inequalities is crucial for preventing the spread of extremist ideologies.

## 5. The Role of Social Media

Extremism, especially in the realm of social media, has emerged as a significant concern in contemporary society. The proliferation of extremist ideologies and behaviors facilitated by online platforms has attracted considerable attention from researchers across various fields. Studies have investigated the characterization of climate change discourse during extreme weather events on social media (Roxburgh et al., 2019), the detection of extremism and radicalization on platforms such as Twitter (Rajendran et al., 2022), and the classification of multi-ideology extremism using deep learning techniques (Gaikwad et al., 2022). These inquiries underscore the widespread presence of extremist content on social media, with terrorist organizations and conspiracy theory groups utilizing these platforms for propaganda, recruitment, and radicalization (Gaikwad et al., 2022).

Furthermore, scrutiny has been directed towards the mainstream media's depiction of political extremism, with terms associated with political extremism increasingly surfacing in news media in the U.S. and the UK (Rozado & Kaufmann, 2022). This reflects a broader societal acknowledgment of the existence and impact of extreme political attitudes that diverge from the mainstream ideology. The impact of social media on political discourse has been a central focus of research, particularly concerning figures like Bolsonaro in Brazil, where the direct influence of social media on political preferences has been emphasized (Feres Junior et al., 2024). Additionally, research has documented a shift towards more extreme political attitudes, notably with the emergence of movements like the alt-right, highlighting the role of social media in fostering extreme political ideologies (Moss & O'Connor, 2020).

The correlation between social media usage and the reinforcement of populist attitudes has also been explored, with studies indicating a reinforcing cycle between social media news consumption and the adoption of more extreme positions (Schumann et al., 2021). This dynamic emphasizes the potential for social media to contribute to societal polarization by amplifying extreme viewpoints. Moreover, the distortion of norms on social media, where individuals with more extreme beliefs dominate discourse, has been identified as a factor leading to false perceptions of community norms (Robertson et al., 2024). This phenomenon underscores how social media platforms can inadvertently amplify extreme voices, distorting overall discourse.

The escalation of extreme speech on social media platforms has raised concerns regarding the role of these platforms in shaping public discourse (Johnson, 2018). The efficacy of social media as a tool for disseminating extremist ideologies is

evident, with organizations leveraging these channels to propagate their beliefs and attract followers (Gaikwad et al., 2021). Detecting and monitoring extremist content online has become imperative in combating the dissemination of extremist ideas through social media (Dragos & Constable, 2023). The anonymity provided by the internet and the broad reach of social media have exacerbated the spread of extremist ideologies, necessitating effective detection mechanisms (Mussiraliyeva et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research on the impact of social media recommendations on opinion consensus suggests that social media algorithms may contribute to extremism and polarization by reinforcing individuals' existing opinions (Auletta et al., 2022, 2023). The attraction to politically extreme users on social media has been identified as a factor contributing to political segregation and intergroup conflict (Goldenberg et al., 2023). Understanding the mechanisms that drive individuals to engage with extreme content on social media is crucial in addressing the spread of extremist ideologies online.

The rise of extremism, particularly on social media, highlights the need for countermeasures. The pervasive nature of extremist content online, facilitated by platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and other social media channels, underscores the necessity for effective strategies to combat its spread.

## 6. Countermeasures to Extremism

The analysis of right-wing and left-wing extremism suggests several effective countermeasures to address the complex and evolving nature of these ideologies. One key approach is to promote ideological fluidity and adaptability. Educational programs and public dialogues that expose individuals to a variety of political perspectives can encourage critical thinking and demonstrate that ideological beliefs can evolve over time. Supporting interdisciplinary research that explores the intersections and fluidity between different political ideologies, such as the blending of left and right-wing ideas in certain contexts, can also help in understanding and predicting shifts in extremist movements.

Addressing psychological and social influences is another valuable strategy. Implementing early intervention programs in schools and communities can tackle identity diffusion and the psychological factors that contribute to radicalization, particularly in adolescents. These programs could include mentorship, counseling, and social skills development. Additionally, developing gender-sensitive approaches to counter-extremism strategies is important, as it recognizes the role of patriarchal beliefs in the radicalization process and addresses the intersection of gender, terrorism, and extremist ideologies.

It is also essential to differentiate and address the various forms of activism and violence associated with extremism. Law enforcement agencies should develop tailored responses that consider the specific characteristics of right-wing and left-wing extremism. For example, strategies to address hate crimes and domestic terrorism linked to right-wing extremism may differ from those needed to manage

property destruction and confrontations associated with left-wing extremism. Strengthening hate crime prevention by treating hate crimes as a form of terrorism and focusing on community engagement, legal frameworks, and public awareness campaigns can further help prevent these interconnected behaviors.

Clarifying goals and objectives in countermeasures is vital for their success. Policies should be developed to address the root causes of both right-wing extremism, such as fears of losing cultural identity, and left-wing extremism, such as perceived social injustices. These policies should aim to promote social cohesion and inclusivity, reducing the perceived need for extremist actions. Additionally, ensuring that government institutions and policies are fair and just to all societal groups is critical. This might involve reforms aimed at reducing corruption, increasing transparency, and ensuring that all groups feel represented and protected.

Influencing public perception and media representation is another key area of focus. Media outlets should be encouraged to report on extremism in a balanced and objective manner, avoiding sensationalism. Media literacy programs can also help the public critically assess media content. Developing and disseminating counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies, using both traditional and social media, can address the specific grievances and concerns that drive individuals toward extremism.

Adapting legal and political frameworks is necessary to address the challenges posed by extremism. Legal reforms should be considered to update hate crime laws, redefine terrorism to include domestic threats more comprehensively, and ensure that law enforcement has the tools needed to investigate and prosecute extremist activities. Maintaining political neutrality in counter-extremism efforts is also crucial to avoid the perception that these measures are politically motivated and to build public trust.

Mitigating the impact of external factors is another important strategy. Addressing the economic and social factors that contribute to the rise of extremism, such as unemployment, social inequality, and community disintegration, can reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies. Developing crisis management strategies to handle the spread of extremism during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is also essential. This could involve monitoring and countering extremist propaganda online, providing accurate information, and supporting vulnerable communities.

Finally, addressing intersecting social issues is crucial in the fight against extremism. Strengthening policies that combat racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination can reduce the grievances that extremist groups exploit. Supporting community-based initiatives that foster inclusivity and bridge social divides can promote intergroup dialogue and collaboration, reducing the social fragmentation that often leads to extremism.

These countermeasures reflect a comprehensive approach to combating extremism, recognizing the need for tailored, context-specific strategies that address the diverse and evolving nature of extremist ideologies. By focusing on prevention,

education, legal frameworks, and social cohesion, it is possible to reduce the influence of extremist movements and promote a more stable and inclusive society.

## 7. Conclusion

Addressing the complexities of right-wing and left-wing extremism requires a complex and refined approach. The analysis highlights the need for strategies that are adaptable to the fluid nature of ideological beliefs and that recognize the various psychological, social, and economic factors contributing to radicalization. By promoting educational initiatives that encourage ideological adaptability, implementing early intervention programs, and developing gender-sensitive approaches, society can mitigate the root causes of extremism.

Moreover, tailored law enforcement responses that differentiate between the forms of activism and violence associated with each type of extremism are necessary for effective prevention and intervention. Public perception and media representation also play a significant role in shaping the narratives around extremism, making it essential to foster responsible media reporting and develop counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies.

Legal reforms and policies aimed at promoting social cohesion, inclusivity, and equitable governance are vital in reducing the perceived need for extremist actions. Addressing intersecting social issues such as racism, sexism, and economic inequality can further diminish the grievances exploited by extremist groups.

Ultimately, the success of these countermeasures relies on a comprehensive approach that integrates prevention, education, legal frameworks, and social cohesion. By addressing the diverse and evolving nature of extremist ideologies, it is possible to create a more stable and inclusive society that resists the allure of extremist movements.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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