

January 2025



**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND
HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY, POLITICS
& INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**RADICAL CURRENTS: MAPPING THE FAR-
RIGHT ROOTS OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT
EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES**

MARINOS SAVVA

JANUARY/2025



**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND
HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY, POLITICS
& INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**RADICAL CURRENTS: MAPPING THE FAR-
RIGHT ROOTS OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT
EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES**

**This thesis was submitted for distance acquisition of a
postgraduate degree in MSc in International Relations,
Strategy and Security at Neapolis University**

MARINOS SAVVA

JANUARY/2025

Copyrights

Copyright © Marinos Savva, 2025

All rights reserved.

The dissertation's approval by Neapolis University Pafos does not necessarily imply acceptance of the author's views by the University.

RESPONSIBLE STATEMENT

I Marinos Savva, knowing the consequences of plagiarism, I declare responsibly that this paper entitled **“Radical Currents: Mapping the Far-Right Roots of Anti-Government Extremism in the United States”**, the points where I have used ideas, text and/or sources of other authors are clearly mentioned in the text with the appropriate reference and the relevant reference is included in the section of the bibliographic references with a full description.

Marinos Savva

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	iii
Abstract	vii
Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
1.1 Research Problem	1
1.2 Purpose of the Study and Objectives	1
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Expected Contribution	2
1.5 Brief presentation of the chapters that follow	3
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	3
2.1 Understanding Extremism: Definitions, Challenges, and Typologies	3
2.2 Differentiating Anti-Government Extremism: A Comparative Analysis	4
2.3 The Complexity of Defining Anti-Government Extremism	6
2.4 Unveiling Anti-Government Extremism: Political, Ideological, Single Issue and Conspiratorial Catalysts	7
2.5 Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Anti-Government Extremism	8
Chapter 3 – Mapping Right-Wing Extremism in the US	9
3.1 White Supremacy	10
3.2 Anti-Communism	11
3.3 Anti-Government	11
3.4 “Trumpism” and the Alt-right	12
Chapter 4 – Underpinnings of AGE	12
4.1 The Shifting Sands of Hate: Ideological Evolution of Right-Wing Extremism in the US	12
4.2 Roots of Resentment: The Socioeconomic, Cultural, and Psychological Drivers	14
4.3 Who are these Extremists? Demographics of Right-Wing Extremism	17
Chapter 5 – A Unifying Theme Across the Ages	20
5.1 American Militias: A Legacy of “Resistance”	21
5.2 Pathways to Rebellion: Theoretical Insights into Anti-Government Extremism	24
Conclusion	26
Bibliography	29

Student Name: Marinos Savva

Postgraduate Thesis Title: Radical Currents: Mapping the Far-Right Roots of Anti-Government Extremism in the United States

This Master's Thesis was prepared during the studies for the distance master's degree at Neapolis University and was approved on..... [date of approval] by the members of the Examination Committee.

Examination Committee:

First Supervisor (Neapolis University Pafos).....[name, rank, signature]

Member of the Examination Committee:[name, rank, signature]

Member of the Examination Committee:[name, rank, signature]

Thesis Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to an excellent academic and my supervisor for this dissertation Dr Marina Eleftheriadou for her guidance and constructive feedback throughout this journey. Additionally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all my professors at Neapolis University who have significantly enriched my understanding of the field of International Relations, Strategy, and Security. Finally, I would like to thank my family for the constant support throughout this endeavor and especially my wife for her patience and unwavering support during all those challenging moments and late nights - not just for the completion of this dissertation but also for going down a professional path that is demanding for most families.

Thesis Dedication

To all my colleagues at the Agency and back home, who make a difference every day.

Abstract

Anti-Government Extremism (AGE) is a phenomenon that has evolved over a period of time that spans from the US Reconstruction Era all the way to contemporary times. It primarily emerges from a multifaceted interplay that includes historical grievances, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural shifts exacerbated by political polarization.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine AGE as a core element deriving from right-wing extremism, highlighting its underlying drivers, prominent manifestations, and historical trajectory. While acknowledging the broader spectrum of extremism, the study will underscore the deeply rooted distrust AGE adherents perceive against the federal government, unified under narratives of infringement of personal freedoms.

Furthermore, a systematic literature review will be employed in order to provide an analysis of key themes that highlight the interplay between AGE and right-wing extremist ideologies. Additionally, the dissertation will present how recruitment and radicalization methods have evolved and transformed over the years, and how the contemporary digital era enabled extremist groups like the *Proud Boys* and *Boogaloo Boys* to diversify their appeal attracting members across ideological and racial divides.

Finally, the integration of several theoretical frameworks – including *Relative Deprivation Theory*, *Social Identity Theory*, *Split Delegitimization Theory*, *Revitalization theory*, and *Moghadam's staircase model* – will be employed to explore how AGE has spread and remained resilient over the years. Ultimately the dissertation aims to address potential gaps in the literature and provide valuable insights for policymakers and academia, signifying the need to mitigate AGE's evolving and persistent threat, implementing an interdisciplinary strategy that will encourage further research.

Keywords: Anti-Government Extremism (AGE), Right-Wing Extremism, Extremist Groups, Historical Grievances, Relative Deprivation Theory, Split Delegitimization Theory, Social Identity Theory, Revitalization Theory, Moghadam's Staircase Model

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The phenomenon of Anti-Government Extremism (AGE), particularly in recent years has witnessed an emergence on a global scale. In the US this rise has been mainly materialized under a right-wing extremism setting. While AGE can also be derived from the left-wing side of the political spectrum, its most pronounced manifestations are rooted in the far right and its adherents. This dissertation will focus on providing a nuanced understanding of AGE focusing on its historical right-wing ideological, socioeconomic, and cultural drivers, in order to fully grasp its characteristics, evolution, and contemporary manifestations in the US.

1.1 Research Problem

The research aims to uncover the dynamics that make far-right politics particularly susceptible to anti-government narratives, showcasing how these beliefs continue to pose a threat to authorities and societal cohesion even today. Furthermore, it will attempt to address any ambiguity surrounding the theoretical framework, ideological components, modus operandi, and recruitment tactics of AGE, by offering an analysis of its historical trajectory through the prism of right-wing extremism. Finally, it will explore prime manifestations ranging from the early nativist and racial groups to modern-day *Militias* in an attempt to provide a holistic understanding of this phenomenon and how it manages to transcend and remain resilient through the ages.

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Objectives

The rationale behind the study lies in the growing prominence of AGE in the contemporary political landscape in the US. Additionally, there is an urgency to address several trends concerning this phenomenon, ranging from its historical roots and direct correlation with right-wing extremism to how it transitions from ideological rhetoric to extremist action. Finally, the accelerated proliferation of AGE in the digital age, which enables its adherents to “multiply” to an unprecedented degree - transitioning from the hierarchical models of the past to decentralized networks - is going to be explored.

The objectives of the study will:

- Provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of AGE and its core drivers.
- Highlight the intersection of AGE with right-wing extremist ideologies.

- Examine how the recruitment methods and the radicalization processes have evolved over time.
- Employ a theoretical framework - including *Relative Deprivation Theory*, *Social Identity Theory*, *Split Delegitimization Theory*, *Revitalization Theory*, and *Moghadam's staircase model* – to provide a nuanced understanding of the resilience of AGE through time.
- Conduct a systematic literature review to uncover dominant themes in AGE, addressing potential gaps in the literature.

1.3 Methodology

The dissertation employs a systematic literature review in an attempt to analyze relevant and non-academic resources that include historical documentation, policy reports, scholarly articles, books, and think tank reports from organizations like the *Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC)* and the *Anti-Defamation League (ADL)*. Additionally, the *Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)* tool from the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)* has also been utilized to provide a deep interdisciplinary perspective.

1.4 Expected Contribution

Ultimately the study will contribute with valuable insights across several domains, providing a comprehensive understanding of AGE, and addressing both practical and academic considerations. The findings besides identifying the drivers and repercussions of AGE are also expected to significantly impact the way anti-government sentiment is understood and mitigated. Concerning the academic contribution the dissertation will attempt to highlight ongoing trends and recent developments of AGE with a focus on the evolving nature of this phenomenon through the lens of right-wing extremism, ultimately filling any existing gaps in the literature. Additionally, this study aims to encourage the conduction of further research across several fields, particularly because this phenomenon transcends academia, impacting matters of national security and democratic resilience.

All in all, the goal of this dissertation is to raise awareness concerning the rise of AGE which historically has been a phenomenon largely underestimated by both governmental action and public perception. Unfortunately, these “neglect” patterns that are also witnessed today – particularly from a governmental counteraction perspective – have led to devastating consequences in the past.

1.5 Brief presentation of the chapters that follow

The following chapters explore the complex intersection of AGE with right-wing extremist ideologies. The *Literature Review* delves into the typologies and foundational definitions that characterize the concept of extremism in general. Additionally, it provides a comparative analysis of AGE highlighting the differentiating factors and characteristics from other Extremism types.

Moving on the dissertation discusses the complexities of defining AGE emphasizing how anti-government narratives form a distinct, ideologically fluid, and unifying theme motivating its adherents. Moreover, it offers insights into how extremist behavior derives from historical grievances by utilizing theoretical frameworks including *Relative Deprivation Theory*, *Split Delegitimization Theory*, *Revitalization Theory*, and *Moghadam's Staircase model*.

The study then proceeds to focus on mapping the landscape of right-wing extremism, tracing its historical trajectory, and identifying the impact cultural and historical shifts had on its evolution. The final chapters signify AGE's enduring existence as a consolidating thread for right-wing extremist groups, integrating also the aforementioned theoretical frameworks in an attempt to provide a nuanced analysis of the radicalization process of its adherents. The dissertation culminates with the *Conclusions* chapter which provides a synthesis of the findings and emphasizes the need to mitigate this threat utilizing an interdisciplinary strategy and further research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Extremism: Definitions, Challenges, and Typologies

When attempting to define extremism, this can certainly be a challenging endeavor as there isn't a clear-cut consensus on the matter. Several key elements encompass the definition of extremism with the most prevalent and universally accepted ones being a deviation from moderation (Kamali 2015). This manifests in holding extremist beliefs or engaging in extremism and is far outside the perceived norms and standards set by modern societies. (Borum 2011). Most dictionary definitions more or less describe extremism as the “*tendency to be extreme; the holding of extreme political or religious views, or advocacy of illegal, violent, or other extreme measures*” (Oxford English Dictionary n.d.). Immediately we can see where this falls short as providing a “*simplified*” definition does not incorporate the fact whether these “*extremities*” are violent or not or if they are confined only under segments of political and religious domains. (J. M. Berger 2018). Take for example that one

group may label a specific action as extremism while another views it as insurgency or freedom fighting. (Coleman and Bartoli 2009). Both cases share the “*tendency to be extreme*” but also share other commonalities for example enforcing violence. But does being extreme also mean being violent? Or is there an inclination to associate extremism with only violent perpetrators? (Schuurman 2020). Take for example a physical attack from an organized hate group that does not share the same weight as a random cyber-bullying case of a person due to his skin color or other type of discrimination (J. M. Berger 2018), but that doesn’t mean that all violent perpetrators are extremists. Despite this, the correlation between violence and extremism is prevalent and is also one of the key elements in “*securing*” a consensus of the academic community when attempting to provide a definition. (J. M. Berger 2018). All in all, it is safe to conclude that extremism can be broadly defined as the rejection of fundamental principles, and values, inherently opposing diverse beliefs and fostering societal division (Lowe 2017).

This raises a question though. Are there different types of extremism? This is again navigating through murky waters as there seems to be a combination of elements from different often contradictory ideologies (Meleagrou-Hitchens and Ayad 2023). Berger in his seminal work (J. M. Berger 2018) identifies several types of extremism: *religious, racial, nationalist, anti-government, anarchist, classist, single-issue movements, gender/sexual orientation/ sexual identity*. Admittedly many of these categories, to Berger's acknowledgement as well tend to overlap. A prominent example is the “*fusion*” of nationalist and racial types of extremism with anti-government extremism (AGE). Examples include the white supremacy movement in the US (Belew 2018). The same overlap with AGE can also be found with anarchist classifications as well (Lubrano 2024).

2.2 Differentiating Anti-Government Extremism: A Comparative Analysis

Categorizing AGE as a distinct type of extremism is challenging, to say the least. Prominent dictionary definitions by and large describe it as *the act of being opposed to or hostile towards governments or a particular government*. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary; n.d.). Therefore, if the main trait of AGE is fundamental opposition to governments due to being corrupt or ineffective, it still does not provide enough clarity for a precise definition and distinction from other types of extremism as this element could of course be about most types. Nevertheless, if we decided to accept this definition “*incontestably*” and acknowledge the fact that government opposition is the primary element of AGE, then the key to providing a definition might lie in the level of consistency of the fact that AGE extremists attribute every single crisis to government action (S. Jackson 2022). Additionally looking at

who engages in AGE we can observe that they arise from a plethora of narratives under one key characteristic: An us vs them construct.

Finally, comparing AGE with other types of extremism could provide more clarity on the definition. However, there seems to be a lack of a universally accepted exhaustive list of types of extremism. Despite this, using *J.M. Berger's* (2018) most common and consequential categorization, a comparative analysis will be provided. The first is comparing AGE with *Racial/Ethnic* types, which is basically an organized violent discrimination of individuals that differ in terms of racial/ethnic backgrounds (Mudde 2005). In this case, racially motivated extremism does incorporate AGE beliefs but tends to focus solely on race-based ideologies and not governmental institutions in particular. *Religious extremism* on the other hand is characterized by strict adherence to religious ideologies by aiming to replace the secular system with religious rule (e.g. Sharia). (J. M. Berger 2018). It is true that in some cases these two (2) types overlap as both reject governmental authority, the distinction however lies in the fact that religious extremists are anti-government when they oppose *divine laws*. Contrarily AGE does not abide by a religious agenda and targets specifically the government. When it comes to *Nationalists*, they tend to focus on promoting a nation's interest, often targeting perceived "*outsiders*" - immigrants for example - and are highly critical of globalization and multiculturalism. (J. M. Berger 2018). This support for strong exclusionary governments is the prime distinction with AGE, as nationalists only oppose governments when their beliefs are challenged, for example when the state is serving foreign interests or endangering their national identity. *Anarchist's* core beliefs lie in the dissolution of all forms of government and not just one specific regime, and this is the main distinction from AGE. However contemporary examples of anarchist movements, like *Black Bloc* (Van Deusen 2010), contrary to their historical predecessors, have shown to share more commonalities with AGE as they seem to embrace more "*hybrid*" anarchist beliefs, that oppose specific government policies and do not necessarily advocate for an anarchist society (Van Deusen 2010). Historical examples of *Classist* extremists have opposed the government in their path to address class oppression and establish a socialist society (German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2024). Despite this when it comes to comparing it with AGE, there is a clear distinction in the fact that AGE does not address these concerns as a central aim and is more focused on dismantling government power. When it comes to *Single-Issue* extremism, there are significant differences observed as well, due to the fact that these are not inherently extremist and focus on a singular cause, for example, the Covid-19 movements (Heinke 2022). Finally, Gender / Sexual Identity extremism targets specific narratives that oppose LGBTQ rights and enforce traditional gender norms and not a broader governmental framework (Roberts 2023).

2.3 The Complexity of Defining Anti-Government Extremism

The ambiguity of the definition of AGE renders its categorization into types challenging. Despite the general lack of research, there have been attempts by the academic community. *Ideological and Issue-Driven* (S. Jackson 2022) is a distinction that can be made and this categorization seems to have scholarly consensus with some also including conspiratorial beliefs in the mix as a sole category. (Bjorgo and Braddock 2022). This however seems to be a misaligned perspective; to say the least, as conspiratorial beliefs are more of a driver than a standalone category.

It is also worth noting that there seems to be a robust correlation with Right-Wing ideology to the point of “controversy”, as some scholars claim that there is a definite lack of distinction between them and that AGE should only be categorized under Right-Wing extremism (Peters 2022). However, from a historical context, there have been instances - albeit less frequent - where extremist acts that align with AGE, were carried out also by Far-Left extremists, like anarchists but were not categorized as such because anarchism was viewed as a separate phenomenon altogether (S. Jackson 2022). Also, in contemporary times there seems to be a deviation from traditional right-wing extremist “ideals” transforming to a more fluid manifestation of AGE. Take, for instance, contemporary hate groups like the *Proud Boys* (Nance, The Proud Boys 2021) which emphasize nationalism and "Western chauvinism," often opposing liberal and progressive values, and the *Boogaloo Boys* (Kenes 2021) which advocate for libertarian principles and resistance to perceived government overreach. Despite their far-right ideological underpinnings, both groups recruit members from diverse racial and ideological backgrounds including libertarians and people from BIPOC¹ communities. For instance, the *Boogaloo Boys* garnered attention for their vocal support of George Floyd and the protests against police brutality following his death (Beckett 2020). Also, a study undertaken by the University of Chicago posits that 7% percent of the people who participated in the January 6 US Capitol attack were not white (Pape 2022). Nevertheless, historically the vast majority of AGE cases do originate from the right-wing side of the political spectrum, driven by ideologies rooted deep in nativism, racial supremacy, and religious fundamentalism. (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.).

2.4 Unveiling Anti-Government Extremism: Political, Ideological, Single Issue and Conspiratorial Catalysts

¹ Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color.

AGE basically reflects deep-seated grievances that are fuelled by a combination of political and ideological drivers. From political repression to identity-based ideologies to a blend of disinformation and conspiracy theories, these oppositional worldviews challenge the legitimacy, authority, and policies of governmental institutions (Piazza 2023).

Starting off with *political repression* as one of the key motivators for extremists engaged in AGE (Bartusevičius, van Leeuwen and Petersen 2023). Their core beliefs stem from the concept of government infringement on their personal freedoms and refuse to submit to any form of authority (Bjorgo and Braddock 2022). Notable examples include the American Militia Movement (Pitcavage, Camouflage and Conspiracy: The Militia Movement from Ruby Ridge to Y2K 2001) and the more contemporary anti-covid measures movements all over the world (Hartleb, Schliefssteiner and Schiebel 2023). Concerning the latter, AGE was the key denominator of various groups from diverse backgrounds under one unified cause to oppose a government that restricts their personal freedoms (Malaz and Wouterse 2022).

Within the same premise, this *opposition to particular state policies* has been identified as one of the prevalent drivers for AGE in contemporary times. Ranging from frustrations with public health measures during the pandemic (Carothers and Press 2022), to socio-economic grievances (Pawlak 2018), and anti-immigration sentiments (Cameron and Owen 2024), extremists managed to capitalize on these “*fears*” and spread their narratives.

Populism is another significant driver “*infamous*” for fuelling AGE. Its foundations are normally rooted in narratives of conflict between “*ordinary people*” and “*the elite*”, and depending on these narratives, populists adopt a “*voice of the people*” persona that can attract followers across both sides of the political spectrum. (Dalibor, Kennedy and Singh 2018). Contemporary examples of populism overriding democratic rules and fuelling AGE include the events leading up to the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol (Viala-Gaudefroy 2021).

Finally, *conspiracy theories* play a significant role in the exacerbation of AGE, by interpreting events as being orchestrated by malevolent forces rendering opposition to governmental institutions as a “*divine mission*” against evil (Barkun 1990). Deeply reliant on disinformation (Korta 2018), they are frequently associated with Right -Wing ideology (Kaplan 1995), and have demonstrated remarkable resilience due to the narratives often stemming from a broader conspiratorial framework, adapted to align with contemporary issues and local concerns (Molas, et al. 2024). Examples include the QAnon adherents that portray the government as a malevolent entity controlled by hidden powers and resistance by resorting to violence is thoroughly justified (KPFA 2021).

2.5 Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Anti-Government Extremism

Anti-government extremism represents a crucial sociopolitical challenge that is influenced by a plethora of factors ranging from psychological to strategic. There has been extensive research from a theoretical perspective on the concepts of *terrorism* and *extremism* in general, however when it comes to addressing AGE holistically there appears to be a significant gap in the existing research. Therefore, in order to bridge this gap and provide an interdisciplinary perspective the most relevant theoretical frameworks relevant to AGE will be explored.

One particularly useful lens is *Relative Deprivation Theory* which focuses mainly on perceived dissatisfactions by people when they witness inequalities compared to others in a similar context. Basically, it's more of a subjective feeling of being deprived compared to others. (Gurr 1970) In the context of AGE, this gap between aspirations and realistic expectations can lead to extremist action that targets governmental institutions. Although a single-issue movement and not one that "abides" by either side of the political spectrum, the *Yellow Vest* movement in France is a strong example of this dynamic (Lüders, et al. 2021). This dynamic is also further explored with *Social Identity Theory* as it illustrates how certain people associate themselves with groups based on distinguishing *in-groups* - which these individuals identify - and *out-groups*, which are perceived as distinct to them. (Hogg 2016). A prominent example of this "association" is the *Freedom Convoy*, a series of mass protests in Canada against COVID-19 measures, where participants have aligned themselves under a collective group with shared grievances against the government (Sy 2023).

However, something that can be particularly relevant to the study of AGE due to the fact that it posits that people despite not rejecting the broader political system, view the government as complicit to the threat they perceive rejecting its legitimacy and justifying targeted attacks is *Split Delegitimization Theory* (Kerodal, et al. 2014). Alongside the other two (2) typologies, *Transformational Delegitimization* and *Extensional Delegitimization*, offer valuable insights concerning the classification of terrorist groups on their pathway to violence (Sprinzak 1991).

This pathway to violence is also illustrated in Fathali M. Moghaddam's *staircase radicalization model* (Moghaddam 2005), as it showcases how individual grievances manifest into acts of extremism. This again is highly relevant with AGE, as extremists "ascend" towards radicalization with perceived injustice and frustration against the government driving the initial steps. Examples like *Timothy McVeigh*, who was responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, reflect this progression, transitioning from disenfranchisement to radicalization.

Finally, a key prominent theory for the study of AGE is *Revitalization Theory* (Wallace 1956), as it explains how societies go through cultural, religious, and political transformations in response to crises. This applies to AGE movements as they often emerge from socioeconomic pressures and are discontent with government actions. *Militias* in the US are a notable example as they attempt to transform society as a response to governmental failure (Whitsel 2005).

Chapter 3 – Mapping Right-Wing Extremism in the US

Driven by distinct historical events and cultural shifts, right-wing extremism in the US has developed through numerous movements and ideologies. Beginning with the emergence of *White Supremacy* (Zanden 1959) during the US Civil War up to the rise of neo-Nazism following World War II, (B. Thompson 2020) these movements have managed to adapt their perceptions and tactics continuously, able to remain relevant in an ever-shifting socio-political world. Moreover, the emergence of religious interpretations like *Christian Identity*² (Anti Defamation League (ADL) 2017) has provided a framework for the implementation of racial superiority, based on a theological foundation of the divinely favored white race. *White Supremacy* ideology has also been exacerbated, by the “exposure” of many individuals to certain environments like incarceration, signifying the emergence of groups like the *Aryan Brotherhood* (Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.) and subcultural trends like the *Racist Skinheads*. (Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.) This worldview had been solidified and shaped by drawing from religious doctrines and pragmatic responses to specific social conditions.

Moving beyond these racist “currents,” another trend, particularly during the 50s, was the rise of anti-communism exemplified by prominent figures and organizations like *John McCarthy* (Goodheart 2004) and the *John Birch Society*, (Gilles 2024) respectively. This has contributed significantly to the rise of the right-wing ideology, managed to foster a climate of fear and paranoia, and eventually become a breeding ground for anti-government perceptions and conspiratorial beliefs. This fundamental distrust has spread to contemporary anti-government movements such as the *Sovereign Citizen Movement* (Everytown Research & Policy n.d.) and modern-day *Militias* (Doxsee 2021), all of which share the conviction that the federal government directly threatens individual liberties. Finally, newer “ideologies” like the Alt-Right (Anti Defamation League (ADL) 2020) and Trumpism

² Christian Identity, a racist and anti-Semitic interpretation of Christianity, is closely tied to AGE. It frames the federal government as controlled and hostile to the “divinely chosen” white populations. Adherents justify resistance to government authority through this religious doctrine, viewing themselves as protectors of Christian and racial purity.

(Nolette 2020) have recently capitalized on populist fears, utilizing social media and conspiratorial rhetoric, presenting old doctrines in a new light. Collectively, these movements demonstrate how right-wing extremism continues to adapt, persist, and influence mainstream discourse.

3.1 White Supremacy

The modern manifestations of *White Supremacy* (Hoffman, American Christian White Supremacists 2017), which include notions of exclusion and racial superiority can trace their origins to the pro-slavery ideologies that prevailed in the American South prior to the Civil War. One of the most noteworthy examples is the infamous hate group the *Ku Klux Klan* (KKK) which formed in response to the efforts undertaken at the time to restore white dominance targeting mainly freed black American slaves (Parsons 2015). Over the years, and particularly during periods of societal upheaval, e.g. the early 20th century immigration influx and the emergence of the *Civil Rights Movement* (Scheinberg 1997), these groups have capitalized on these events adapting their propaganda to maintain their influence. Following the conclusion of WW2, and in the footsteps of its predecessors, *Neo-Nazism* emerged, carrying out its anti-Semitic and racist agendas through organizations like the *American Nazi Party* (Simonelli 1995). This eventually laid the groundwork for newer “editions”, such as the *Atomwaffen Division* (Ware 2019) that leveraged online platforms for propaganda dissemination and recruitment purposes.

The most important “branch” of white supremacy though, emerges from its religious dimension and is showcased mainly through racial interpretations of Christianity like the *Christian Identity* groups (Hoffman 2017). These groups exemplify this phenomenon, preaching bigotry, particularly against Jews and other people of color, advocating for racial superiority. However, religious manifestations were not the only “offspring” of white supremacy. A striking example during the 80s in the UK was the *racist skinhead* subculture (J. Pollard 2016). Although it started as apolitical and primarily defined by working-class solidarity and social isolation, it eventually morphed into something highly linked to far-right extremist groups, spreading worldwide, including the US.

Last but not least, white supremacy had managed to flourish under specific societal conditions. Particularly in prisons, groups like the *Aryan Brotherhood* (Pelz, Marquart and Pelz 1991) have been thriving since the 1960s blending their ideological perceptions that are determined by racial lines and under a unifying belief in white supremacy that is expressed through the adoption of racist symbols and slogans. Interestingly their “extremities” are not

confined within the sphere of hate crimes only but extend to other forms of criminality ranging from narcotics distribution and extortions to racketeering and arms trafficking.

3.2 Anti-Communism

Driven by geopolitical conflict in the early 20th century anti-communism emerged following the Russian Revolution. This “foreign” ideology embedded a cultural fear in an era that was known as the *First Red Scare* (Schmidt 2000). However, it was after the events of WW2, often referred to as the *Second Red Scare*, that anti-communist sentiments peaked (Storrs 2018). During this era, the infamous *McCarthyism* doctrine (Michaels 2017), along with organizations like the *John Birch Society* (Dallek 2023), led to the political repression and persecution of perceived communists across the US, which even after the collapse of the Soviet Union had managed to influence contemporary movements in their “fight” to defend the American constitutional ideals. To this day the fusion of these anti-communist ideals with patriotism has a lasting impact on the rise of right-wing extremism.

3.3 Anti-Government

Anti-government is another strand of right-wing extremism that encompasses several interconnected movements in the US. Driven by their deep distrust of government institutions and fuelled by perceptions of government overreach, these movements continue to pose significant challenges to law enforcement and public safety. Throughout the years they have managed to amass an army of fanatics, with overlapping memberships, and have repeatedly defied laws and engaged in violent confrontations with authorities. Prominent examples include the *Sovereign Citizens Movement* (J. M. Berger 2016) which primarily “addresses” matters concerning gun rights and constitutional liberties and rejects all forms of governmental authority, and the *Tax Protest Movement* (Anti Defamation League 2017) which mostly challenges the legality of federal taxation. Finally, the *US Militias* (Abanes 1996), which are primarily defined by their paramilitary and conspiratorial elements, justify the use of violence by focusing on their perception of defending constitutional rights against government infringement.

3.4 “Trumpism” and the Alt-right

Alt-Right (T. Pollard 2018) and “Trumpism” (Gorski 2018) adherents have been the main reshaping factor of right-wing politics in contemporary times. The Alt-Right movement gained prominence during the 2016 US Presidential elections. Disseminating a blend of white supremacist ideals, utilizing online subculture and social media, the Alt-Right manages to attract a new generation of right-wing extremists, disseminating xenophobic,

racist, and anti-Semitic content under the guise of free speech (Goodwyn 2017). Parallel to this and in close relation to it, “Trumpism”, which comprises political ideologies associated with US President-elect Donald Trump, employs a blend of nationalistic and populist rhetoric, repeatedly targeting governmental institutions like the FBI and the Department of Justice under the *Deep State* conspiratorial narrative³ (Lucey and Superville 2018). This new “doctrine”, amplified by President-elect Donald Trump's polarized speeches and confrontational demeanor, focuses particularly on matters of policing and immigration and constantly frames political opposition as existential threats to national sovereignty and personal freedoms.

Chapter 4 – Underpinnings of AGE

4.1 The Shifting Sands of Hate: Ideological Evolution of Right-Wing Extremism in the US

Historically far-right extremism in the US reflected a dynamic interplay of extremist ideologies within an ever-changing socio-political landscape. Over the years and despite these changes the underpinnings of these ideologies have managed to remain remarkably durable and consistent “upholding” their primary objectives which include conservatism, white supremacy, nativism, and opposition to federal government (Pitcavage 2019). These ideological shifts span from the *Reconstruction Era*⁴ in the South (Winter 2018), and the second resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 20th century (McAndrew 2017), to eventually shifting their focus to the Cold War’s anti-communist narratives (Heale 1990). Particularly the latter was marked by a pivotal transition with racial and xenophobic⁵ foundations to targeting a “new” enemy: communism, broadening the appeal of right-wing extremism to a wider societal conservative base.

Moving on and closer to the dawn of the 20th century, white supremacy groups like the *Aryan Nations* and the *Aryan Brotherhood* emerged and gained significant traction within the US correctional system (Montaldo 2019). While these groups primarily advocated for white nationalism, a core tenet of their beliefs also revolved around anti-

³ The *Deep State* is a conspiracy theory that refers to a hidden network within government, involving officials or agencies operating outside elected control. President Trump often invokes this conspiracy theory in his speeches.

⁴ The Reconstruction Era (1865–1877) followed the Civil War, focusing on rebuilding the South, readmitting Confederate states to the Union, and securing rights for formerly enslaved Black Americans.

⁵ This period saw the *Klan* expand its targets beyond African Americans to include Catholics, Jews, and immigrants, reflecting broader anxieties about demographic and cultural shifts.

government sentiments. This was highly appealing to incarcerated individuals who were feeling unjustifiably punished by law enforcement and the justice system in general.

However, the most dangerous offspring of right-wing extremism during this era was the birth of the *Paramilitary Movement* which emphasized constitutionalism, defending gun rights, and strict interpretations of the *Second Amendment*⁶ (Kates 1986). At the same time “doubling down” on anti-government sentiment – as a result of the perception of infringement upon their freedoms by the federal authorities – is the cornerstone of their beliefs. Events like *Ruby Ridge*, *Waco*, and the *Oklahoma City bombing* serve as prominent examples (Pruitt 2018) of how militant ideology in conjunction with anti-government beliefs can generate devastating consequences.

In contemporary times and particularly post-9/11, we have a rise in anti-Islamic sentiments (Panagopoulos 2006) accompanied by a surge in broader anti-immigration narratives from right-wing extremists (Miller Idriss 2021). As a result, this led to an increase in targeted attacks against immigrants including Muslim Americans. Following the election of Barack Obama, the first black American president, we also witnessed a significant surge in the *Militia movement* (Potok 2009) marked by the emergence of new “distinguished” groups like the *Oath Keepers* (McQueen 2021) and the *Three Percenters* (Sunshine 2016). Once again, these groups capitalized on heightened fears of governmental overreach, often infused with conspiratorial elements, justifying the use of violence and positioning themselves as defenders of constitutional rights.

Alongside this surge, there was also the emergence of a new “iteration” of right-wing extremism, one that embraces digitalization (Kor-Sins 2023). The rapid rise of the *Alt-Right* (Lough 2018) is a prominent example of this phenomenon, illustrating how online dissemination of extremist ideologies facilitated a decentralized structure, amplifying the influence of this movement, and enabling recruitment and mobilization on an unprecedented level. This shift precisely underscores the evolution of right-wing extremism into digital web-driven movements, signifying the departure from the traditional and more hierarchical structures of the past. Prominent manifestations of this new form include hate groups like the *Proud Boys* and the *Boogaloo Boys* which interestingly, despite having a direct correlation with *White Supremacy* and *Christian Identity* ideologies, managed to attract a

6 The Second Amendment was originally established as a safeguard against tyranny, “empowering” the historical militias, that consisted of civilians and acted as a counterbalance to standing armies. The right to bear arms was considered essential in order to resist government overreach or corruption. In contemporary times, modern-day Militias portray themselves as protectors of constitutional rights, particularly the Second Amendment, which they interpret as a mandate for armed resistance against perceived government tyranny.

significant number of individuals with diverse ideological and racial backgrounds⁷ (Beckett 2020, Rhodes 2023). This reflects a new form of modern militias not bound by racial or political boundaries, that operate within an ideologically fluid and decentralized organization, often united under shared perceptions of anti-government narratives. These movements in recent times often rallied around highly influential and controversial figures such as President-elect Donald Trump (Kunzelman and Whitehurst 2023), whose *Trumpism* rhetoric resonates with their beliefs.⁸ Unfortunately, this polarization as witnessed during the events of the *storming of the US Capitol* on January 6, 2021 (Thompson, Hassan and Hajj 2021), showcases how divisive rhetoric can lead to violent action and pose a significant threat to democratic institutions.

4.2 Roots of Resentment: The Socioeconomic, Cultural, and Psychological Drivers

Throughout time right-wing extremism in the US drew from a diverse cross-section of individuals characterized by their individual perspectives and personal experiences across socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological factors. This “multilateral” process fuelled certain inclinations and formulated a specific mindset among these individuals creating a sense of identity, purpose, and even convenient scapegoats – be it the government or other social groups - for their grievances. From a socio-economic perspective, these inclinations were particularly prevalent among struggling communities found in the Midwest, like the *Rust Belt* region (Clarke and Broekaert 2024), where the closing of the manufacturing industry, in the post-1950s exacerbated local economies. From a cultural aspect, rapid societal transformations, influenced by the effects of mass immigration (Behdad 1997), starting in the early 20th century all the way to the contemporary migration flows of the early 21st century (McNeil 2020) have contributed to creating a sense of dislocation among these populations that yearn for a more “prosperous” reality like the one they had in a bygone era. Every single aspect and “modification” to the socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological patterns, fostered a particular mindset characterized by an “us vs. them” dichotomy that resonates with far-right extremist narratives. This is something “cunningly” manipulated and

⁷ An example of this diversity is the Proud Boys leader, Enrique Tarrio, who is of Cuban descent.

⁸ A prime example of President Trump's controversial and populist narratives was undertaken during his 2024 presidential campaign. Trump marked the beginning of his campaign at Waco, Texas drawing attention for its symbolic timing and location. The rally coincided with the 30th anniversary of the events on the *Branch Davidians* compound, constantly framing himself as a victim of political persecution, rallying his supporters against ongoing legal investigations and federal authorities. The rally highlighted his enduring influence among his base, which resonated with anti-government narratives.

fuelled by political polarization and religious beliefs and collectively serves to direct grievances against the federal government and other marginal groups.

Socioeconomic factors can be considered a “cornerstone” of radicalization, and this dynamic is certainly not confined only to right-wing groups (Nawaz 2024) . In the US a prominent example was the decline of the manufacturing industry particularly in the *Rust Belt* region. Following the economic growth that started back in the mid-19th century all the way to the 1950s, the automotive and steel industries flourished providing a thriving local economy that drew numerous families across the country seeking the “American Dream”. Following the decline though, which was accompanied by the closure of many of these industries, led to economic hardships and a massive population decline in this region as people sought to migrate, in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Those left behind were faced with the harsh realities of not only grappling with financial struggles but also the loss of community cohesion and a lifestyle that was tied to certain traditions. As a result, this led to devastating social consequences, ranging from a rise in criminality to an unprecedented opioid crisis. Within this reality of erosion is where the rise of right-wing extremism flourished as these marginalized people started directing their resentment and frustration at corporations, immigrants, BIPOC communities, and the government (Berlet and Sunshine 2019).

The *2008 global financial crisis* serves as another illustrative example of a period that was already riddled with pre-existing tensions due to the economic strains on the American middle-class family (Hershbein 2018). Many businesses collapsed; people saw their long-hard savings lost whereas by and large government measures proved inadequate to mitigate the issue. The situation was also exacerbated by the unfulfilled promises of revitalizing the economy from politicians, reinforcing perceptions of a corrupt system and solidifying political alienation. An “us vs them” mentality once again took hold, particularly among blue-collar families who viewed the government’s actions as detrimental to their interests. Finally, there seems to be a strong correlation between these harsh socioeconomic conditions and the creation of a radical environment especially receptive to narratives that offer clear-cut “scapegoats” to blame, often migrants, minorities, and governmental institutions (Delgado 2024).

Rapid societal change that produces cultural anxieties also plays a pivotal role in shaping right-wing extremist views. Contemporary phenomena like multiculturalism and the rise of movements like the *LGBTQ movement* in the late 20th century have somewhat generated a sense of unease among certain populations - primarily white - that are more

clung to traditional values (Balleck 2018). These changes are after all perceived as a direct threat to their cultural norms, and this is where right-wing extremist adherents step in to offer “protection” of their traditional American ideals.

Religion also adds another level of complexity to the matter. Strong Judeo-Christian traditions have been a main characteristic of the US society ever since the founding of this nation⁹ (Biagni 2021, Smith 2024) . However, sometime around the mid-20th century, a cross to extremism was witnessed with the emergence of extremist interpretations of these religious ideologies. Take for example *Christian Identity* (Balleck 2018) that embraces racial hierarchy and antisemitism, *Norse Paganism*¹⁰ (Carless 2017) that references Viking culture to vindicate white superiority and even some *Evangelical* offshoots (Balleck 2018) that emphasize conservative values to the point that turn into militant rhetoric, exemplify this alarming trend. All of these manifestations have been actively recruiting supporters even more so today labeling any divergence from cultural norms as a decline in morality.

Finally, cultural tensions are heavily influenced by immigration. From the early 20th century influx of migrants coming from the European peninsula to the contemporary flows flocking from the *third world* to Europe and the US, have ignited fears of cultural displacement. Particularly in areas that are unaccustomed to large-scale migratory flows, immigrants are depicted as a direct threat to the safety and well-being of the “homogenous” population, with many right-wing narratives like xenophobia and racism flourishing and fostering paranoia and even outright hostility towards these people. A prime example was the anti-immigrant narratives during the *Tea Party Movement*¹¹ (Balleck 2018), regarding the claims that immigrants received financial benefits, they did not work for, from the government (Foner and Simon 2015) .

4.3 Who are these Extremists? Demographics of Right-Wing Extremism

When it comes to demographic patterns, data illustrates that individuals resonant with right-wing extremism tend to exhibit pronounced commonalities in terms of ideological alignment and mobilization. Firstly, from an ideological perspective White Supremacists, Anti-Government extremists, and Milita adherents account for the vast majority of violent

⁹ This perception is highly popular among conservative circles. The opposite view though - liberal – claims that this perception is false based on the fact that the US Constitution does not mention Christianity as a founding principle of the nation.

¹⁰ While traditional Norse Paganism is a spiritual practice that celebrates Norse mythology and cultural heritage, it has been co-opted by AGE groups as a symbol of cultural identity and resistance.

¹¹ The Tea Party Movement is a political movement in the United States that emerged in early 2009, primarily in response to the federal government’s fiscal policies, particularly the bailouts and stimulus measures enacted during the 2008 financial crisis. It represents a populist, conservative branch of the Republican Party and is deeply rooted in the principles of small government, fiscal responsibility, and individual freedoms.

attacks, which primarily favor targets like government institutions, law enforcement, and private property (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.) .

In terms of offenders, there seems to be a clear indication that the majority of them who are associated with right-wing extremism are middle-class individuals (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.). Key findings also underscore the prominence of young males to right-wing extremism with a heightened propensity to engage in violence ranging from minor offenses to mass casualty attacks (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.). This accurately reflects the “perilous” fusion of perceived grievances, and ideological radicalization when it combines with an impressionable age. Finally, despite men having the “largest piece of the pie” when it comes to engaging in right-wing extremism, women also assumed significant roles within this phenomenon, with a notable shift towards increased participation in recent years (Sciarone 2024).

Furthermore, individuals with military backgrounds and subsequently with tactical and weapons knowledge, tend to be overrepresented among right-wing extremist groups (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.), with an inclination also to induce mass casualty crimes as well (Jensen, Kane and Akers 2023). Additionally, evidence indicates the trend of violent crimes being committed by lone actors, with over two-thirds of extremist crimes being attributed to individual action showcasing a trend in isolated radicalization (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.). Interestingly this overrepresentation is associated with the propensity of these individuals not having criminal records, as the vast majority have never served time in prison (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.).

In terms of education, right-wing extremists are often portrayed as working-class people with little to no education. However empirical analysis challenges this assumption by presenting data that showcases a notable concentration of right-wing adherents with high school and even post-secondary education (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.). These findings underscore that right-wing extremism transcends traditional educational misconceptions and encompasses broader educational levels.

When it comes to regional distribution patterns, research indicates that far-right extremism movements maintain a strong presence across regions like the South and the

Midwest (Roth 2021). Particularly rural areas are “preferred” as operational hubs due to reduced law enforcement “control”¹² (Farris and Holman 2024), but mostly due to “elevated” nativist beliefs. In terms of target locations, despite the recent decentralized nature of attacks that span across several states, there is a clear tendency to target large urban centers, particularly in states like California, Texas, and New York (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism n.d.). These states besides their symbolic importance¹³, collectively account for a substantial share of these attacks due to population density which basically translates to more available targets.

In terms of structure and leadership, right-wing extremism over the years has undergone significant transformations, primarily influenced by historical shifts in ideologies, organizational structure, recruitment methods, and tactics. In the past, we witnessed more military-style organizations, with a robust chain of command – like the *Ku Klux Klan* – driven by rigid ideological directions. Furthermore, we had the presence of strong “charismatic” leaders - like *Hiram Wesley Evans*¹⁴ (A. Jackson 2024) and *George Lincoln Rockwell*¹⁵ (Balleck 2018) - who besides serving as a unifying force, also directed the actions of these groups for many years under a centralized hierarchical command.

In contemporary times, right-wing extremism evolved with the emergence of digitalization that facilitated a more decentralized-leaderless structure, while still maintaining its ideological underpinnings. From early online platforms like *Stormfront* (Bowman - Grieve 2009) in the 1990s to modern forums like *8chan* (Baele, Brace and Coan 2020), this digitization amplified right-wing extremist narratives broadening their appeal. Additionally, through this transformation, we witnessed the rise of new charismatic figures that, unlike their predecessors who had direct organizational ties, leveraged these platforms to disseminate their political agenda (Parris 2023). In recent years, from *Alt-Right* political influencers to even President Donald Trump, there are clear examples of how this

¹² Primarily in rural areas of the US, law enforcement is carried out by the Sheriff’s office which is known to employ a more lenient approach to enforcing federal legislation, concerning the activities of right-wing extremist groups (e.g. gun safety policies).

¹³ California, Texas, and New York hold symbolic importance for right-wing extremists as centers of federal power, progressive policies, cultural diversity, and economic influence. Targeting these states amplifies anti-government messages by striking at perceived hubs of liberalism, multiculturalism, and centralized authority.

¹⁴ Hiram Wesley Evans was one of the key figures responsible for the second resurgence of the KKK in the 1920s. He served as the *Imperial Wizard*, which is basically the national leader of the KKK, and under his leadership, the group reached the height of its influence, with millions of members across the US.

¹⁵ George Lincoln Rockwell was an American neo-Nazi and white supremacist who founded the *American Nazi Party (ANP)* in 1959. Rockwell was one of the most infamous figures in the post-World War II far-right movement in the US and is often regarded as the father of the modern white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements in America.

“symbolic” leadership operates effectively without the need for a traditional hierarchical foundation.

Recruitment methods have also evolved alongside technology. Traditional methods of recruitment and dissemination of propaganda such as pamphlets, word of mouth, and print media, gave way to more sophisticated and encrypted communication apps - like *Telegram* - and information forums on the *dark web* (Conway, Scrivens and Macnair 2019). The utilization of these technologies facilitated the rapid spread of right-wing extremism, radicalizing individuals, and transcending geographic and cultural boundaries.

Furthermore, ever since the post-Vietnam War era, individuals with military backgrounds and subsequently with tactical and weapons knowledge, tend to be overrepresented among right-wing extremist groups. In the past, this inclination was more evenly divided, as military veterans also showcased significant representation in left-wing movements – like the *Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW)* group – which mainly promoted political activism and was by and large peaceful (Rowe 2011). However, by the 1980s there was an overwhelming shift towards right-wing conservative politics. This was mainly due to the election of Ronald Reagan which marked a resurgence of conservative values in American politics, including strong patriotism, anti-communism, support for the military, and even anti-government narratives¹⁶ (Dreier 2011). Within this context, many veterans resonated with Reagan's emphasis on restoring national pride, honoring them after years of feeling marginalized and criticized during the war. In contemporary times right-wing military veteran overrepresentation still exists and in part is due to several reasons ranging from political discontent to psychological and socioeconomic factors (Boguslaw 2024). Finally, this representation has also been linked with the tendency to engage in acts of extremism as showcased in the events of the January 6 Capitol Attack (Dreisbach and Anderson 2021).

When it comes to patterns of violence from right-wing extremists, during the early 20th century we witnessed a surge of attacks particularly driven by racial, nativist, and white supremacy beliefs. These groups constantly targeted black Americans and other minorities like Jews. Their modus operandi remained the same over the years and had even intensified, during the *Civil Rights Movement* in the 1950s and 1960s (Heikkila 2021). Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, the same extremist beliefs that resonated with white supremacist and nativist groups still accounted for the vast majority of right-wing extremism attacks, albeit

¹⁶ One of Reagan's most famous statements “Government is not a solution to our problem. Government is the problem” which was said during his first inaugural address has become an unofficial slogan for right-wing extremists.

significantly decreased in terms of frequency compared to the past. In the 1990s however, we witnessed a significant escalation of anti-government extremism, marked by high-profile incidents like the *Ruby Ridge*, *Waco*, and *Oklahoma City bombing* events (Pruitt 2018). Finally, in contemporary times the government still remains a primary target for right-wing extremists that also expanded their target “audience” to include immigrants and marginalized communities like the *LGBTQ* (Gabbatt 2022). They have even turned to targeting critical infrastructure like power grids signifying a broader disruption pattern transcending symbolic types of attacks (Wendling 2023).

Chapter 5 – A Unifying Theme Across the Ages

Historically, starting from the *Reconstruction Era* federal oversight, particularly in areas in the South, “legitimized” grievances against the government by framing it as a threat to traditional American values, that incorporate racial hierarchy and personal liberties. Policies aimed at freeing black Americans faced widespread rejection with hate groups such as the *Ku Klux Klan (KKK)* capitalizing on the spread of racist propaganda and fears of demographic change. These nativist sentiments managed to continue into the early 20th century as well, intensifying with the influx of European migrants, promoting once again opposition to the government and specifically federal immigration reforms. *McCarthyism* and the *Second Red Scare* epitomized anti-communist beliefs and laid the foundations of widespread paranoia. Reinforced by conspiratorial elements, the government was deemed “compromised” by foreign influences seeking to subvert traditional American values in favor of an advancing communist ideology. The same elements remained further along time with the rise and expansion of white supremacy which intertwined with racially charged interpretations of Christianity. The government once again is portrayed as a tool of liberal elites and hostile foreign forces with one thing in mind, to undermine white heritage and eradicate the divinely favoured status of the white race. However, in order to fully grasp the correlation that reinforces the argument of how right-wing extremism embedded anti-government narratives as its primary element, it is crucial to explore the most critical manifestation of AGE. The *American Militias*.

5.1 American Militias: A Legacy of “Resistance”

The *American Militias* can be defined as a collection of private organizations that are characterized by paramilitary elements. Deeply tied to anti-government sentiments and strict interpretations of constitutional liberties, these groups often cite patriotism and self-

preservation as their core tenets challenging democratic institutions through extremist means (Pitcavage 2001). The origins of the *US Militias* can be traced back to the colonial history of the US where militias were formed to participate in the *Revolutionary War* under the *Second Amendment*. In contemporary history, these groups have evolved into something different than their historical counterparts, as they have developed their own interpretations of the historical *Second Amendment*, infused with resistance against the federal government (Pell Center 2019).

In the 1970s movements like *The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord*¹⁷ (CSA) (Hamm 2007) and the *Sovereign Citizens Movement*¹⁸ (J. M. Berger 2016) laid critical groundwork for the rise of modern *Militias* by solidifying anti-government narratives into their core beliefs. It was in the 1990s though that *Militias* gained momentum largely due to a series of high-profile incidents that amplified the attention surrounding these groups. The events of Ruby Ridge¹⁹ (Wilson 2017) and Waco²⁰ (Wilson 2023) were pivotal moments in their confrontation with the federal government, reaching a tragic apex with the Oklahoma City bombing²¹ (Chermak and Freilich 2008, Anti Defamation League (ADL) 2020). To signify the severity of this resurgence in the '90s, it's important to note that some of the most prominent militias, like the Michigan Militia and the Militia of Montana had quoted over ten thousand (Levitas 2002), and twelve thousand members (Hoffman 2017) respectively.

Following a short period of decline, in the Post 9/11 period and particularly after the election of President Obama these groups experienced a significant revival once again

¹⁷ The CSA, founded in 1976 by James D. Ellison, began as a peaceful commune but quickly evolved into a paramilitary group. Central to this transformation was Ellison's adoption of *Christian Identity* teachings, which combined apocalyptic visions with *White Supremacy* and *Antisemitism*. Its members amassed weapons and trained for violent confrontations with the government, culminating in the 1985 siege of the CSA compound by the FBI. Although the group disbanded following Ellison's arrest, its anti-government legacy influenced future acts of domestic terrorism, including the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

¹⁸ The Sovereign Citizens Movement does not rely as heavily on overt racial or religious doctrines, yet it shares a profound distrust of federal institutions. Adherents of this decentralized network challenge legal norms with pseudo-legal claims and "paper terrorism," contending that a hidden authority replaced the legitimate "Common Law" government. The diversity of Sovereign Citizens' membership, spanning various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, does not diminish their collective hostility toward perceived government overreach.

¹⁹ During the events of *Ruby Ridge*, the killings of both Weaver's son and wife sparked widespread criticism, with many viewing the deaths as a result of excessive use of force by Law Enforcement Authorities. The Weaver family deaths became a symbol of the perceived government overreach with even the infamous anti-government extremist *Timothy McVeigh* sharing personal information about FBI sniper Lon Horiuchi who killed Weaver's wife, at gun shows hoping someone would assassinate him.

²⁰ The event sparked significant backlash particularly from the political far-right citing how the entire operation and siege was a disproportionate response to a situation that could have been resolved with peaceful means. To this day the incident remains a pivotal moment in US history that has forever shaped the public perception of law enforcement and fuelled perceived government overreach narratives, becoming a symbol to militias and AGE groups.

²¹ The Oklahoma City bombing was the most horrific incident in the history of anti-government extremism (AGE) in the US having a profound impact on the severity, view, and perception of domestic terrorism and the dangers it carries. The bombing caused public panic and managed to bring AGE groups, like the *US Militias*, to the forefront, shifting them from obscurity and placing them on the radar as a serious domestic threat.

fuelled by perceptions of government overreach and a continuous narrative of anti-government sentiments (NBC News 2012). The emergence of groups such as the *Three Percenters*²² (Nance 2021, Chicago Sun Times 2023) and the *Oath Keepers*²³ (Nance 2021)—both of which still continue to exert lasting influence through their deeply rooted anti-government ideologies—underscores the persistent and enduring sway of these narratives within modern right-wing extremism.

Furthermore, the *Alt-right* and “*Trumpism*” era has provided a platform for “understanding” and the spread of their ideological agenda under the guise of free speech. Within this context, Alt-right influential figures (e.g. Richard Spencer²⁴ and Steve Bannon²⁵) alongside President Trump who is perceived as the new patriotic leader, validate their existence. Trump's rhetoric often resonates with these groups, incorporating narratives of government overreach along with conspiratorial elements (Russell 2024), and even paving the way for the rise of new groups like the *Proud Boys*²⁶ (Nance 2021), and the *Boogaloo Boys*²⁷ (Nance 2021), highlighting the growing appeal of anti-government ideologies, which have attracted adherents from both sides of the political spectrum.

Again, in order to showcase the contemporary severity of this phenomenon it is worth mentioning that in 2023 there were still 52 active *Militias* across the US. (McAdam 2024). While this number might suggest a decline in their presence compared to the past, what is truly troublesome is the rapid rate at which these groups tend to form, often influenced by political events. For example, *Militias* grew explosively after President Obama's election, expanding from 42 groups in 2008 to an all-time peak of 334 in 2011. (Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) 2016).

Right-wing extremism in the United States has historically been defined by a shared hostility towards the federal government. Despite different strands that resonated with

²² The *Three Percenters* were founded in 2008. Their name derives from the days of the American Revolution and the alleged claim that only three percent of colonists fought the British. They are particularly known for stockpiling weapons and military training, attracting civilians, military veterans, and active law enforcement. The group's involvement in violent activities, ranging from shootouts to bombings, exemplifies how anti-government extremism characterizes contemporary right-wing militias in the United States.

²³ Founded in 2009 by *Stewart Rhodes*, the *Oath Keepers* oppose federal overreach, emphasizing strict constitutionalism and gun rights. Their involvement in armed standoffs and the January 6 Capitol attack reflects their anti-government stance. Similarly to the *Three Percenters* they also draw heavily from individuals with military and law enforcement backgrounds.

²⁴ *Richard Spencer* is an American white supremacist and far-right political activist who is one of the leading figures in the modern *Alt-Right* movement. He is particularly known for his extremist rhetoric advocating for a white ethnostate.

²⁵ *Steve Bannon* is an American political strategist, media executive, and far-right activist. He is best known for his role as Chief Strategist to President Donald Trump during the early months of Trump's 2016 administration. He resigned after internal clashes and public controversies due to his far-right, nationalist, and anti-immigration rhetoric.

²⁶ The *Proud Boys* are often considered one of the more prominent far-right extremist groups in the United States, vocally endorsing Trump.

²⁷ The *Boogaloo Boys* are another AGE group that despite not being pro-Trump explicitly, they do find common ground with the vast majority of his rhetoric.

various groups—ranging from white supremacy and anti-communism to religious and nationalistic underpinnings—anti-government sentiment by and large seems to remain a constant unifying theme across them all. This is particularly evident in modern manifestations of right-wing extremism, which increasingly transitions from “traditional” narratives to AGE and conspiracy theories. This shift that embraces themes of personal freedom and anti-elitism also seems to appeal to a more diverse crowd, including individuals with libertarian and liberal views, and even minority backgrounds. This ideological broadening of anti-government narratives while maintaining its extremist underpinnings has become a unifying feature of contemporary right-wing extremism, with its cross-demographic appeal.

5.2 Pathways to Rebellion: Theoretical Insights into Anti-Government Extremism

To fully understand the persistence and evolution of AGE within right-wing extremism, it is crucial to bridge historical patterns with theoretical frameworks. The historical trajectory of right-wing extremism in the US demonstrates a consistent reliance on anti-government narratives as a unifying theme. However, the drivers require deeper theoretical insights to explain why these sentiments endure and adapt over time.

Relative Deprivation Theory identifies that grievances that lead to radicalization often derive from people who perceive a gap between their lived reality and their socio-economic anticipations. This is particularly relevant to the socio-economic conditions of individuals who were affected by the *Rust Belt* region decline and the *2008 economic crises* that developed anti-government sentiments. In the case of the *Rust Belt* region, people grew up expecting stable livelihoods within thriving communities. After the closure of many industries people were feeling deprived of this expectation and as a result of their grievances, they immediately sought out scapegoats for the situation (e.g. federal government, corporations, migrants, etc.). More or less the same happened in the *2008 economic crisis* where people lost their savings and homes and were left helpless by the government. Contrastingly though major banks were favoured with bailouts. This disparity between the realities of financial troubles and the expectations of governmental protection cultivated an anti-government climate, where the federal government was viewed as complicit or even orchestrated the situation. In both cases, *Relative Deprivation Theory* signifies the gap between individual expectations and what the people actually receive. Within this context, AGE is particularly “alluring”.

Social Identity Theory focuses on the classification people tend to give themselves within in-groups and out-groups. Within the context of AGE, an “us vs them” concept is

devised that designates the government as the dangerous out-group. In order to reach this outcome, there are two (2) processes present. First, there is the identification process where marginalized individuals in their search for a sense of belonging, seek out collective identities that will offer an interpretation of their perceived grievances. AGE movements which are founded around notions of collective patriotism, personal freedoms, and distrust of authorities form a powerful alluring in-group. The second element here is the comparison and differentiation process. AGE classifies federal authorities as an out group due to their beliefs of infringing on personal freedoms. Within this context, AGE adherents compare themselves with individuals or entities that are also under the “auspices” of the government (e.g. immigrants, banks, etc.) and are subsequently considered part of this “dangerous” out-group. This differentiation from their “enemies” reinforces their moral superiority and strengthens the in-group’s cohesion.

In the case of *Split Delegitimization*, Ehud Sprinzak conceptualized how some groups tend to reject and oppose specific institutions but not necessarily all forms of authority. This is highly relevant with AGE groups as for instance *Militias* might reject the authority of federal agencies like the FBI but respect local law enforcement (e.g. Sheriff’s Office). Also, modern-day hate groups like the Oathkeepers and Proud Boys reject the legitimacy of the government by opposing and targeting state officials, but at the same time rally around political figures like President Donald Trump and other right-wing officials who are sympathetic towards their cause. Ultimately this selected rejection of authority that is demonstrated by AGE adherents is what drives targeted acts of extremism.

The “ascent” to extremist action is signified in *Moghaddam’s Staircase Model* which illustrates how discontent individuals rooted in feelings of perceived injustice climb up the stairs towards violent action. On the ground floor, we have individual grievances driven by feelings of cultural displacement, economic hardships, or societal change. As they ascend they start feeling betrayed by the government due to their needs being ignored and undermined. Climbing up the stairs they seek explanations that would offer viable solutions to their problems, and this is where they encounter extremist groups ultimately resonating with their narratives as it validates their grievances. In turn, this “connection” deepens their feelings of injustice and resentment towards federal authorities. Finally, on the top floor, their worldview becomes increasingly “black and white” where the use of force is deemed justifiable to rectify the injustice that was brought upon them. *Timothy McVeigh’s* trajectory is a prime example of this progression as he moved from personal grievances to frustrations over incidents like Waco and Ruby Ridge culminating with the Oklahoma City bombing.

Finally, Anthony Wallace, argues that *Revitalization Movements* emerge in response to socio-cultural crises, promising to restore or “revitalize” an idealized version of the past.

Within this context AGE extremists, drawing from the *US Revolutionary* past often present themselves as defenders of the “founding principles” and constitutional rights. This narrative posits Anti-Government Extremists within a romanticized interpretation of American history, as the only “moral denominator” establishing their legitimacy, portraying at the same time federal authorities as corrupt and having deviated from traditional values. Additionally, this narrative is further “enhanced”, as these groups view themselves as the “drivers” for a revamped society in an attempt to restore a long-lost golden age. This is carried out by any means possible including extremism. All in all, *Revitalization Theory* precisely identifies how economic, demographic, or cultural crises often trigger surges in AGE.

Conclusion

Coming to a conclusion and as the foregoing analysis identified, interestingly across all these right-wing strands, there seems to be an overarching theme: that of opposing government authority. Ever since the post-Civil War and the opposition to slavery abolishing policies all the way to the emergence of contemporary *US Militias*, anti-government sentiments seem to be the underlying factor that characterizes all these right-wing extremism manifestations. Government overreach and restriction of constitutional freedoms and gun rights are some of the common narratives among AGE adherents. This in turn precisely encapsulates a broader widespread belief of the perceived threat the federal government poses, with events like *Ruby Ridge*, *Waco*, the *Oklahoma City bombing*, and the *January 6 Capitol attack* being stark reminders of the imminent risk of AGE.

Furthermore, the digital era has reshaped the organizational structure of these groups, transforming them from a strictly hierarchical organization to decentralized networks able to attract more members utilizing the widespread availability of social media and the internet. This narrative is exacerbated by populist rhetoric which interestingly also resonates with people from diverse backgrounds - other than traditional white supremacists - including but not limited to BIPOC communities and libertarians. This diversification stems directly from a common theme of Anti-Government narratives which profoundly emphasizes individual liberties, anti-elitism, and conspiracy theories, that precisely define the contemporary elements that *Alt-right* followers and new iterations of right-wing extremism like the *Proud Boys* and the *Boogaloo Boys* uphold.

Additionally, the critical analysis of the reviewed literature revealed how the phenomenon of AGE has proven to be an evolving threat, that historically continues to reinvent itself blending different right-wing ideological strands ranging from nativism, white supremacy, and anti-communism to religious fundamentalism, and populist rhetoric. The

dissertation explores AGE within this broad framework of right-wing extremism strands in order to showcase its contemporary relevance and manifestations in the US. Additionally, it illustrates how AGE evolved over time, highlighting why it is particularly “responsive” at an overwhelming rate, to the right-wing side of the political spectrum.

Furthermore, employing a theoretical perspective the dissertation offers a comprehensive understanding of the ideological, socioeconomic, and cultural underpinnings. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives converge to show that AGE is driven by perceived deprivations (*Relative Deprivation Theory*), augmented by strong in-group vs out-group dynamics (*Social Identity Theory*). Moreover, AGE adherents selectively reject specific governmental institutions while retaining others (*Split Delegitimization*), proceeding along a gradually ascending path towards violence (*Moghaddam’s Staircase*), that seeks to revitalize an idealized long-lost past that would bring an end to their perceived injustices (*Revitalization Theory*).

Finally, concerning the strategy to address this phenomenon, it is imperative to account for the historical changes in US culture and how it has evolved over time. Historical instances of economic destabilization, demographic changes, migration influx, and cultural shifts in general have offered a growing fertile ground for anti-government narratives to flourish. As a result, this conveniently also creates scapegoats for the situation often found among migrants, political elites, and of course the federal government itself. All in all, by exploring the historical underpinnings alongside the socio-economic and cultural disparities of the US society, an interdisciplinary approach should be adopted that aims to highlight the interconnected drivers and manifestations of AGE. Showcasing these dynamics will enable policymakers and academia to implement a comprehensive strategy to mitigate the evolving threat of AGE.

At the end of the day, this dissertation besides providing a nuanced understanding of the evolutionary dimensions of AGE hopes to attract further inquiries on the matter, ultimately leading to policy innovations and interdisciplinary interventions. In line with the objectives of the dissertation, the aforementioned findings underscore the enduring and resilient capabilities of AGE highlighting the fact that it cannot be considered anymore as an isolated fringe phenomenon. Treating it as a non-isolated phenomenon is the key to confronting it and like with every “pathogenic” situation we first need to identify and address its distinct drivers that span socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological dimensions.

Bibliography

Abanes, Richard. 1996. "A Call to Arms." In *Rebellion, Racism & Religion*, 20-28.

Dwner Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Anti Defamation League (ADL). 2020. *Alt Right: A Primer on the New White Supremacy*.

18 June. Accessed January 12, 2025.

<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgroundunder/alt-right-primer-new-white-supremacy>.

—. 2017. *Christian Identity*. 04 05. Accessed January 12, 2025.

<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgroundunder/christian-identity>.

- . 2020. “The Militia Movement (2020).” *Anti Defamation League*. Accessed December 27, 2024. <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/militia-movement-2020>.
- Anti Defamation League. 2017. *Tax Protest Movement*. ADL report, New York: Anti Defamation League (ADL).
- Baele, Stephane J., Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan. 2020. “The ‘tarrant effect’: what impact did far-right attacks have on the 8chan forum?” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 15 (1): 1-23.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2020.1862274>.
- Balleck, Barry. 2018. “Christian Identity.” In *Modern American extremism and domestic terrorism : an encyclopedia of extremists and extremist groups*, 67-69. Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO.
- Balleck, Barry. 2018. “Focus in the Family.” In *Modern American extremism and domestic terrorism : an encyclopedia of extremists and extremist groups*, 117-119. Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO.
- Balleck, Barry. 2018. “George Lincoln Rockwell.” In *Modern American extremism and domestic terrorism : an encyclopedia of extremists and extremist groups*, 298-300. Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO.
- Balleck, Barry. 2018. “Introduction.” In *Modern American extremism and domestic terrorism : an encyclopedia of extremists and extremist groups*, 25. Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO.
- Balleck, Barry. 2018. “Tea Party Movement.” In *Modern American extremism and domestic terrorism : an encyclopedia of extremists and extremist groups* , 359-361. Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO.
- Barkun, Michael. 1990. “Racist Apocalypse: Millennialism on the Far Right.” *American Studies* 121-140.
- Bartusevičius, Henrikas, Florian van Leeuwen, and Michael Bang Petersen. 2023. “Political repression motivates anti-government violence.” *Royal Society Open Science*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.221227>.
- Beckett, Lois. 2020. “Boogaloo Boi’ charged in fire of Minneapolis police precinct during George Floyd protest.” *The Guardian: The Far Right*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/23/texas-boogaloo-boi-minneapolis-police-building-george-floyd>.
- Beckett, Lois. 2020. “White supremacists or anti-police libertarians? What we know about the ‘boogaloo’.” *The Guardian*.

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/08/boogaloo-boys-movement-who-are-they-what-do-they-believe>.
- Behdad, Ali. 1997. "Nationalism and Immigration to the United States." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 6 (2): 155-178.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.6.2.155>.
- Belew, Kathleen. 2018. *Bring The War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Berger, J M. 2016. *Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe*. Research and Policy Report, Washington, DC: Program on Extremism at George Washington University, 3-6.
- Berger, Jonathan M. 2018. "Delenda Est." In *Extremism*, 1-20. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Berger, Jonathan M. 2018. "What is Extremism?" In *Extremism*, 26-43. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Berlet, Chip, and Spencer Sunshine. 2019. "Rural rage: the roots of right-wing populism in the United States." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 480-513.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1572603>.
- Biagni, William. 2021. "The United States was founded on Judeo-Christian values." *FSU NEWS.com*. <https://eu.fsunews.com/story/opinion/2021/10/31/united-states-founded-judeo-christian-values/6215716001/>.
- Bjorgo, Tore, and Kurt Braddock. 2022. "Anti-Government Extremism: A New Threat?" *Perspectives in Terrorism* 2-8.
- Boguslaw, Daniel. 2024. "There's a Bigger Driver of Veteran Radicalization Than Donald Trump." *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/04/11/military-veterans-extremism-risk/>.
- Borum, Randy. 2011. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 7-36.
- Bowman - Grieve, Lorraine. 2009. "Exploring "Stormfront": A Virtual Community of the Radical Right." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 989-1007.
- Cameron, Dell, and Tess Owen. 2024. *Judges and Border Police Targeted by Anti-Government Extremists, Doxed as 'Traitors'*. October.
<https://www.wired.com/story/judges-border-police-targeted-extremism/>.
- Carless, Will. 2017. "An ancient Nordic religion is inspiring white supremacist terror." *The Center for Investigative Reporting: Reveal*. <https://revealnews.org/article/an-ancient-nordic-religion-is-inspiring-white-supremacist-jihad/>.
- Carothers, Thomas, and Benjamin Press. 2022. "The Four Dynamics That Drove Protests in 2021." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Carnegie Endowment for

- International Peace, January. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2022/01/the-four-dynamics-that-drove-protests-in-2021?lang=en>.
- Chermak, Steven M., and Joshua D. Freilich. 2008. "Citizen Militias." *Encyclopedia of Social Problems*, 123-124.
- Chicago Sun Times. 2023. "Chicago Police Officer Under Investigation for Wearing Three Percenter Extremist Symbol at Protest." *Chicago Sun Times*. 6 March. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/crime/2023/3/6/23627776/three-percenter-cpd-chicago-police-department-cop-extremist-symbol-racial-justice-protest-proud-boy>.
- Clarke, Colin P., and Clara Broekaert. 2024. "Springfield, Ohio, Is a Microcosm of American Political Violence." *Lawfare Media*.
<https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/springfield--ohio--is-a-microcosm-of-american-political-violence>.
- Coleman, Peter, and Andrea Bartoli. 2009. *Addressing Extremism: White Paper 2*. White Paper, The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR), Teachers College, Columbia University, and The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR), George Mason University.
- Conway, Maura, Ryan Scrivens, and Logan Macnair. 2019. *Right-Wing Extremists' Persistent Online Presence: History and Contemporary Trends*. ICCT Policy Brief, The Hague: International Center for Counter Terrorism. doi:DOI: 10.19165/2019.3.12.
- Dalibor, Rohac, Liz Kennedy, and Vikram Singh. 2018. *Drivers of Authoritarian Populism in the United States: A Primer*. Center for American Progress.
- Dallek, Mathew, interview by Terry Gross. 2023. *A Historian Details How a Secretive Extremist Group Radicalized the American Right* (2023 May).
- Delgado, Daniel. 2024. "Trump's MAGA forces scapegoat immigrants to divide and conquer voters." *People's World*. <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/trumps-maga-forces-scapegoat-immigrants-to-divide-and-conquer-voters/>.
- Doxsee, C. 2021. "Examining Extremism: The Militia Movement." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. 12 August. Accessed January 3, 2025.
<https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-militia-movement>.
- Dreier, Peter. 2011. "Reagan's Real Legacy." *The Nation*.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/reagans-real-legacy/>.
- Dreisbach, Tom, and Meg Anderson. 2021. "Nearly 1 In 5 Defendants In Capitol Riot Cases Served In The Military." *NPR*.

- <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military>.
- Everytown Research & Policy. n.d. *Armed Extremism Primer: Sovereign Citizens*. Accessed 01 01, 2025. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/armed-extremism-primer-sovereign-citizens/>.
- Farris, Emily, and Mirya Holman. 2024. "Local Gun Safety Enforcement, Sheriffs, and Right-Wing Political Extremism." *Urban Affairs Review* 60 (2): 706-734. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/107808742312036>.
- Foner, Nancy, and Patrick Simon. 2015. "Legal Status." In *Fear, Anxiety, and National Identity: Immigration and Belonging in North America and Western Europe*, 9-11. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Gabbatt, Adam. 2022. "Anti-LGBTQ+ attacks by US extremist groups surge as right spews vitriol." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/18/increase-anti-lgbtq-attacks-rightwing-extremist-groups>.
- German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. 2024. *Left-Wing Extremism*. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/topics/left-wing-extremism/left-wing-extremism_node.html.
- Gilles, Nellie. 2024. "Traitors within': How one group tried to radicalize the American right in the '60s." *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/03/nx-s1-5176529/john-birch-society-movement-conspiracy-politics>.
- Goodheart, Lawrence B. 2004. "The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today ." *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 41-55.
- Goodwyn, Wade. 2017. "Alt-Right, White Nationalist, Free Speech: The Far Right's Language Explained." *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2017/06/04/531314097/alt-right-white-nationalist-free-speech-the-far-rights-language-explained>.
- Gorski, Philip. 2018. "Religious Nationalism and Right Wing Populism: Trumpism and Beyond." *Contending Modernities*. <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/theorizing-modernities/religious-nationalism-and-right-wing-populism-trumpism-and-beyond/>.
- Gurr, Ted Robert. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Works.
- Hamm, Mark. 2007. "The Legacy of Lost Causes: The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord." In *Terrorism as a Crime: From Oklahoma City to Al-Qaeda and Beyond*, 96-97. New York: New York University Press.
- Hartleb, Florian, Paul Schlieffsteiner, and Christoph Schiebel. 2023. "Querdenker: From Anti-Measure Activism to Anti State Extremism." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 17(1).

- Heale, M. J. 1990. "The Anticommunist Consensus." In *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within 1830 - 1870*, 167-177. London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Heikkila, Niko. 2021. "Racial Myths and the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan." *American Studies in Scandinavia* 21-141. doi:<https://doi.org/10.22439/asca.v53i1.6224>.
- Heinke, Daniel H. 2022. "The Security Threat Posed by the Corona-skeptic Querdenken Movement in Germany." *CTC Sentinel* 15 (3).
- Hershbein, Brad. 2018. "How the Great Recession hurt the middle class—twice." *Brookings Institution*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-the-great-recession-hurt-the-middle-class-twice/>.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2017. "American Christian White Supremacists." In *Inside Terrorism*, 150-175. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2017. "American Christian White Supremacists." In *Inside Terrorism*, 162-175. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hogg, Michale A. 2016. "Social Identity Theory." In *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory*, by Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji and Neil Ferguson, 3-19. Bristol: Springer International Publishing.
- Jackson, Ava. 2024. *The Fight for Purity: Hiram Evans and the Second Ku Klux Klan*. Student Paper, Rock Island: Augusta Digital Commons. <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/englstudent/3/>.
- Jackson, Sam. 2022. "What is Anti-Government Extremism?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9-18.
- Jensen, Michael, Sheehan Kane, and Elena Akers. 2023. "Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS): Mass Casualty Extremist Offenders with U.S. Military Backgrounds." *START*. [https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/PIRUS - Mass%20Casualty%20Extremist%20Offenders%20with%20Military%20Background-Final%20%283%29.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/PIRUS%20Mass%20Casualty%20Extremist%20Offenders%20with%20Military%20Background-Final%20%283%29.pdf).
- Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. 2015. "Extremism, Terrorism and Islam: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives." *ICR Journal* 6(2) 148-165.
- Kaplan, Jeffrey. 1995. "Right Wing Violence in North America." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 44-95.
- Kates, Don B. 1986. "The Second Amendment: A Dialogue." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 49, no. 1 143-171.

- Kenes, Bulent. 2021. "Boogaloo Bois: Violent Anti-Establishment Extremists in Festive Hawaiian Shirts." *European Center for Populism Studies*.
<https://www.populismstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ECPS-Organisation-Profile-Series-2>.
- Kerodal, Ashmini G., Joshua D. Freilich, Steven M. Chermak, and Michael J. Suttmoeler. 2014. "A test of Sprinzak's split delegitimization's theory of the life course of far-right organizational behavior." *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 307-329.
- Kor-Sins, Ryan. 2023. "he alt-right digital migration: A heterogeneous engineering approach to social media platform branding." *New Media & Society* 2321-2338.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211038810>.
- Korta, Samantha. 2018. *Fake News, Conspiracy Theories, and Lies: An Information Laundering Model for Homeland Security*. Master's Thesis, Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School.
- KPFA. 2021. *Conspiracy Theories and Political Extremism: Understanding Brain Behavior in an Uncertain World*. Talk It Out Radio. 30 May.
<https://kpfa.org/episode/talk-it-out-radio-may-30-2021>.
- Kunzelman, Michael, and Lindsay Whitehurst. 2023. "Prosecutor: Proud Boys viewed themselves as 'Trump's army'." *Associated Press*.
<https://apnews.com/article/proud-boys-enrique-tarrio-capitol-riot-trial-4dc5d0d36bc4c39ea924412dbb51780b>.
- Levitas, Daniel. 2002. "Militia Madness." In *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*, 373. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.
2018. *Alt-Right: Age of Rage*. Directed by Adam Bhala Lough. Produced by Michael Karbelnikoff and Alex Needles.
- Lowe, David. 2017. "Prevent Strategies: The Problems Associated in Defining Extremism: The Case of the United Kingdom." *STUDIES IN CONFLICT & TERRORISM* 917-933.
- Lubrano, Mauro. 2024. "Hidden in Plain Sight: Insurrectionary Anarchism in the Anti-Government Extremism Landscape." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 37-61.
- Lucey, Catherine, and Darlene Superville. 2018. "Trump accuses DOJ of being part of 'Deep State'." *Associated Press*.
<https://apnews.com/article/8720fde079e84237b8e6cca4219aafb2>.
- Lüders, Adrian, Karolina Urbanska, Robin Wollast, Armelle Nugier, and Serge Guimond. 2021. "Bottom-up Populism: How Relative Deprivation and Populist Attitudes

- Mobilize Leaderless Anti-Government Protest.” *Journal of Social and Political Sociology* 506-519.
- Malaz, Shahhoud, and Lieke Wouterse. 2022. *Preventing Possible Violence Based on Anti-Government Extremism on the Local Level: RAN Local Meeting Conclusion Paper*. <https://ec.europa.eu/ran>, European Commission.
- McAdam, Travis. 2024. “Continued Insurrection Fallout Forces Militias to Adapt.” *Southern Poverty Law Center*. 4 June. Accessed December 27, 2024. <https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-extremism-2023/militias-adapt>.
- McAndrew, Tara. 2017. “The History of the KKK in American Politics.” *JSTOR Daily*. <https://daily.jstor.org/history-kkk-american-politics/>.
- McNeil, Taylor. 2020. “The Long History of Xenophobia in America.” *Tufts Now*. <https://now.tufts.edu/2020/09/24/long-history-xenophobia-america>.
- McQueen, Eric. 2021. *Examining Extremism: The Oath Keepers*. Examining Extremism Blog Series, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-oath-keepers>.
- Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, and Mario Ayad. 2023. *The Age of Incoherence? Understanding Mixed and Unclear Ideology Extremism*. Research Report, Washington, D.C.: George Washington University: Program on Extremism.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary;. n.d. “Anti-Government Definition.”
- Michaels, Jonathan. 2017. “The Red Scare at Full Tide.” In *McCarthyism: The Realities, Delusions and Politics Behind the 1950s Red Scare* , 141-183. New York: Routledge.
- Miller Idriss, Cynthia. 2021. “From 9/11 to 1/6: The War on Terror Supercharged the Far Right.” *Foreign Affairs* <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/war-on-terror-911-jan6>.
- Moghaddam, Fathali M. 2005. “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration.” *American Psychologist* 161-169.
- Molas, Barbara, Anne Craanen, Sabrina Tripodi, Kacper Rękawek, and Thomas Renard. 2024. *Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections*. ICCT Report, International Center for Counter Terrorism.
- Montaldo, Charles. 2019. “The Aryan Brotherhood: One of the Most Notorious Prison Gangs.” *ThoughtCo.com*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-aryan-brotherhood-971943>.
- Mudde, Cas. 2005. *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge.

- Nance, Malcolm. 2021. "The Oath Keepers." In *They Want to Kill Americans: The Militias, Terrorists, and the U.S. Radical Right*, 102-104. New York: St. Martin's Publishing Group.
- Nance, Malcolm. 2021. "The Proud Boys." In *They Want to Kill Americans: The Militias, Terrorists, and Deranged Ideology of the Trump Insurgency*, 76-82. New York: St. Martins Press.
- Nance, Malcolm. 2021. "Three Percenters." In *They Want to Kill Americans: The Militias, Terrorists, and Deranged Ideology of the Trump Insurgency*, 105-108. New York: St Martins Press.
- Nance, Malcolm. 2021. "TITUS's Armed-Militias Wing." In *They Want to Kill Americans: The Militias, Terrorists, and Deranged Ideology of the Trump Insurgency*, 86. New York: St. Martins Press.
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. n.d. "Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)."
<https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus>.
- Nawaz, Fahim. 2024. "Socioeconomic hardships, religiosity, and radicalization: A non-linear exploration." *Cogent Social Sciences*.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2286042>.
- NBC News. 2012. "Election, economy spark explosive growth of militias." *US News*. 8 March. Accessed December 28, 2024.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/election-economy-spark-explosive-growth-militias-flna360382>.
- Nolette, Paul. 2020. "Trumpism and the Dual Tracks of American Polarization." *Political Science Faculty Research and Publications* 127.
- Oxford English Dictionary. n.d. "Extremism." Accessed 11 11, 2024.
https://www.oed.com/dictionary/extremism_n.
- Panagopoulos, Costas. 2006. "Trends: Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (4): 608-624.
- Pape, Robert. 2022. "The Jan. 6 Insurrectionists Aren't Who You Think They Are." *Foreign Policy Magazine*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/06/trump-capitol-insurrection-january-6-insurrectionists-great-replacement-white-nationalism/>.
- Parris, Tionne. 2023. "The Alt Right: Trump, Terrorism and the Digital Age: Part Two." *U.S. Studies Online (USSO)*. <https://usso.uk/research/the-alt-right-trump-terrorism-and-the-digital-age-part-two/>.

- Parsons, Elaine Frantz. 2015. "Two: Ku-Klux Attacks Define a New Black and White Manhood." In *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during the Reconstruction*, 93-100. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Pawlak, Patryk. 2018. *Yellow Vests Protests in France*. Policy Brief, PISM Bulletin. https://pism.pl/publications/Yellow_Vests_Protests_in_France.
- Pell Center. 2019. "A Well-Regulated Militia." *Pell Center*. 8 August. Accessed December 28, 2024. <https://www.pellcenter.org/a-well-regulated-militia/>.
- Pelz, Mary E., James W. Marquart, and Terry C. Pelz. 1991. "Right - Wing Extremism in the Texas Prisons: The Rise and Fall of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas." *The Prison Journal* 23-37.
- Peters, Evangeline Lynn. 2022. *The Mobilization to Violent Extremism: A Qualitative Case Study of Anti-Government Right-Wing Extremists*. Dissertation, Saint Leo: Saint Leo University.
- Piazza, James A. 2023. "Drivers of Political Violence in the United States." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 11-14.
- Pitcavage, Mark. 2001. "Camouflage and Conspiracy: The Militia Movement from Ruby Ridge to Y2K." *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no.6 957-981.
- Pitcavage, Mark. 2019. "Surveying the Landscape of the American Far Right." *Program on Extremism at George Washington University*. <https://extremism.gwu.edu/surveying-landscape-american-far-right>.
- Pollard, John. 2016. "Skinhead culture: the ideologies, mythologies, religions and conspiracy theories of racist skinheads." *Patterns of Prejudice* 398-419.
- Pollard, Tom. 2018. "Alt-Right Transgressions in the Age of Trump." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 76-88.
- Potok, Mark. 2009. *The Second Wave Return of the Militias*. Intelligence Report, Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).
- Pruitt, Sarah. 2018. "How Ruby Ridge and Waco Led to the Oklahoma City Bombing." *History.com*. 22 May. Accessed January 10, 2025. <https://www.history.com/news/how-ruby-ridge-and-waco-led-to-the-oklahoma-city-bombing>.
- Rhodes, Christopher. 2023. "Why 'white' supremacists are not always white." *AlJazeera Opinions*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/6/2/why-white-supremacists-are-not-always-white>.
- Roberts, Karl Anton. 2023. "Mixed ideologies and what they mean for preventing and countering violent extremism." *Beyond Ideological Categories*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

- Roth, Clare. 2021. "Midwest Now 'Hotbed' For Far-Right Extremist Groups." *WOSU Public Media*. <https://www.wosu.org/news/2021-01-19/midwest-now-hotbed-for-far-right-extremist-groups-splc-says>.
- Rowe, Daniel. 2011. "From Warriors to Protestors: A Potted History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War." *New Histories*.
<https://newhistories.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/volumes/2011-12/volume-3/issue-6-war-peace/from-warriors-to-protestors-a-potted-history-of-vietnam-veterans-against-t>.
- Russell, Berman. 2024. "Trump's 'Deep State' Revenge." *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2024/11/intelligence-agencies-trump-loyalists/680625/>.
- Scheinberg, Stephen. 1997. "Right-Wing Extremism in the United States." In *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk*, by Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, 72-93. New York: Routledge.
- Schmidt, Regin. 2000. "The Origins of the Red Scare." In *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943*, 24-28. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press.
- Schuurman, Bart. 2020. "Non-Involvement in Terrorist violence." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14 14-26.
- Sciarone, Jessica. 2024. "Radicalization Pathways among Women in U.S. Far-Right Extremist Networks and Implications for Deradicalization." *Journal for Deradicalization* 1-25. <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/861>.
- Simonelli, Frederick. 1995. "The American Nazi Party, 1958-1967." *The Historian* 553-566.
- Smith, Peter. 2024. "Many believe the founders wanted a Christian America. Some want the government to declare one now." *Associated Press*.
<https://apnews.com/article/american-founders-christian-nation-conservative-beliefs-4ea388e8d80c54016a6a4460cbef9b82>.
- Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). 2016. "Antigovernment militia groups grew by more than one-third in last year." *Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)*. 4 January. Accessed January 2, 2025.
<https://www.splcenter.org/news/2016/01/04/antigovernment-militia-groups-grew-more-one-third-last-year>.
- Southern Poverty Law Center. n.d. *Aryan Brotherhood*. Accessed January 12, 2025.
<https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/aryan-brotherhood/>.
- . n.d. *Racist Skinheads*. Accessed January 12, 2025.
<https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/racist-skinhead/>.

- Sprinzak, Ehud. 1991. "The Process of Delegitimation: Towards a Linkage Theory of Political Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3 50-68.
- Storrs, Landon R. Y. 2018. "McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, 16 April. doi:DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.6.
- Sunshine, Spencer. 2016. "Profile on the Right: Three Percenters." *Political Research Associates*. 5 January. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://politicalresearch.org/2016/01/05/profiles-on-the-right-three-percenters>.
- Sy, Cedric. 2023. *CONGRUITY OF THE FREEDOM CONVOY AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM THROUGH SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY*. Honours Thesis, Alberta: MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY.
- Thompson, A. C., Lila Hassan, and Karim Hajj. 2021. "The Boogaloo Bois Have Guns, Criminal Records and Military Training. Now They Want to Overthrow the Government." *Frontline PBS*. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/boogaloo-bois-military-training-outrage-overthrow-government/>.
- Thompson, Brooke. 2020. "Not So Homegrown Hatred: Neo-Nazis in America." *SEC 312: Domestic Terrorism*.
- Van Deusen, David. 2010. *Emergence of The Black Bloc & The Movement Towards Anarchism*. The Black Bloc Papers, Green Mountain Anarchist Collective. Accessed November 16, 2024. <https://mirror.anarhija.net/usa.anarchistlibraries.net/mirror/d/dv/david-van-deusen-green-mountain-anarchist-collective-emergence-of-the-black-bloc-the-movement-t.pdf>.
- Viala-Gaudefroy, J. 2021. "How Donald Trump's Populist Narrative Led Directly to the Assault on the US Capitol." *The Conversation*. 13 January. <https://theconversation.com/how-donald-trumps-populist-narrative-led-directly-to-the-assault-on-the-us-capitol-153277>.
- Wallace, Anthony F.C. 1956. "Revitalization Movements." *American Anthropologist* 264-281.
- Ware, Jacob. 2019. *Siege: The Atomwaffen Division and Rising Far-Right Terrorism in the United States*. Policy Brief, The Hague: International Center for Counter Terrorism (ICCT).
- Wendling, Mike. 2023. *How the US power grid is a target for far-right groups*. 10 March. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64832129>.

- Whitsel, Bradley. 2005. "Anti-Government Movements and the Revitalization Process: An Examination of Anthony F.C. Wallace's Theory of Revitalization As Applied to Domestic Terrorist and Extremist Groups." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 72-100.
- Wilson, Jason. 2023. "30 Years Later: Waco and Extremism." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. 19 April. Accessed December 15, 2024. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2023/04/19/30-years-later-waco-and-extremism>.
- . 2017. "Ruby Ridge, 1992: the day the American militia movement was born." *The Guardian*. 26 August. Accessed 12 20, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/26/ruby-ridge-1992-modern-american-militia-charlottesville>.
- Winter, Aaron. 2018. "The Klan is history: A historical perspective on the revival of the farright in 'post-racial' America." In *Historical Perspectives on Organized Crime and Terrorism*, by James Windle, John Morrison, Aaron Winter and Andrew Silke, 148-171. New York: Routledge.
- Zanden, James Vander. 1959. "The Ideology of White Supremacy." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 385-402.