The Reichsburger Collective

Why in news?

In one of the largest ever counter-terrorist operations in Germany, the police had arrested 25 individuals of a far-right group (The Reichsbuerger), for plotting to violently overthrow the German state.

What is Reichsburger?

- **Reichsburger** - Reichsburger loosely translates to **"Imperial Citizen"** or "**Citizens of the Reich**", the German Empire founded in 1871.
- They do not believe in the post-World War II Federal Republic of Germany and its legal system **(Grundgesetz).**
- The Reichsburger movement is not homogenous and consists of groups and individuals with varying beliefs, like far-right views, the superiority of race, and anti-Semitism (Any form of prejudice against the Jewish people).
- Some members believe Germany is still occupied and secretly run by western powers including the U.S., the U.K., and France.
- **Reich citizens** - They consider themselves citizens of the German Reich and not the Federal Republic.
- **Selbstverwalter (self-governors)** - They claim legal and territorial autonomy and the right to leave the State any point of time.
- Some people are followers of both ideologies.

What strategies are employed by the Reichsburger?

- Sending letters to government agencies seeking confrontation
- Refuse to pay taxes
- Reject identity documents like passports issued by the Federal Republic of Germany
- Use modified car number plates and fantasy documents
- Declare their own national territories called the **"Second German Empire," the "Free State of Prussia" or the "Principality of Germania"**
- Idea of applying for a certificate of citizenship called "**Yellow certificate**," an official document issued by the Federal Republic of Germany that confirms German citizenship
- Displaying anti-Semitic behaviours such as blaming Jews for unemployment to Holocaust-denying conspiracy theories

What is the current trend of right-wing extremism in Germany?

- **Current picture** – The right-wing extremists attempted to gain mainstream

acceptance by taking advantage of protests against government during the Covid-19 time.

- Several groups such as Kingdom of Germany, United German Peoples and Tribes (GdVuSt), etc. aims to propagate right-wing extremism in the country.
- The group, which consisted of members of a shadowy far-right movement had even set up a 'council' to take over.
- It has been reported that many Reichsbuerger are strongly influenced by **QAnon**, an American far-right political movement that conspired against Donald Trump during his tenure as President of the USA.
- **Steps taken** - Germany combats extremism through
    - **Banning organisations** – It weakens their structure and allows for the confiscation of financial and material resources
    - **Banning controversial symbols and marks** - Usage of certain symbols and signs, including those representing Nazism, is banned by law.

References

1. The Hindu | The Reichsbürger collective
2. The Hindu | Resurgence of far-right extremism in Germany

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