Political Violence in the U.S.

Southern Poverty Law Center Report

HATE GROUPS 1999–2018

Researchers on Atrocity Prevention Warn: US on Path to Widespread Political Violence

Time to set up a domestic atrocity prevention program

Center for Strategic and International Studies (June 2020 Report) :
“...terrorism in the United States will likely increase over the next year in response to several factors.

One of the most concerning is the 2020 U.S. presidential election, before and after which extremists may resort to violence, depending on the outcome of the election.

Far-right and far-left networks have used violence against each other at protests, raising the possibility of escalating violence.
# Measuring Radical American Partisanship

## Moral Disengagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you say [Opposing party] are a serious threat to the United States and its people, or wouldn’t you go that far?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[1. They are a threat 2. I wouldn’t go that far]</td>
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<th>[Opposing party] are not just worse for politics—they are downright evil.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Many [Opposing party] lack the traits to be considered fully human—they behave like animals.</th>
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## Political Violence

<table>
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<tr>
<th>When, if ever, is it OK for [Own party] to send threatening and intimidating messages to [Opposing party] leaders?</th>
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<tr>
<th>When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary [Own party] in the public to harass an ordinary [Opposing party] on the Internet, in a way that makes the target feel frightened?</th>
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<th>How much do you feel it is justified for [Own party] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?</th>
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<tr>
<th>What if [Opposing party] win the 2020 presidential election? How much do you feel violence would be justified then?</th>
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Scales developed in collaboration with Nathan Kalmoe
What We’ve Seen So Far
(from forthcoming book Radical American Partisanship)

Moral Disengagement

- Outgroup Partisans are Serious Threat to US
- Outgroup Partisans are Evil
- Outgroup Partisans are Like Animals

Violence

- Leader Threats
- Citizen Threats
- Violence Today is Justified
- Violence is Justified if Ingroup Loses in 2020

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Nov-17 Oct/Nov 2018
Jun-19 Sep-19 Feb-20 20-Oct 20-Nov

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“Racial Resentment”

- Agree/Disagree
  - “Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors”;
  - “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class”;
  - “Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve”;
  - “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.”
Moral Disengagement and Racial Resentment

Average Racial Resentment Scores (0 to 1):
Democrats: 0.3
Republicans: 0.7
Hostile Sexism

Agree/Disagree

• 1. Most women fail to appreciate all that men do for them;
• 2. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men;
• 3. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
Moral Disengagement and Sexism

Average Hostile Sexism Scores (0 to 1):
Democrats: 0.3
Republicans: 0.6
“Violence directed at anyone because of their political opinions is never acceptable, regardless of what those beliefs might be.”
Takeaways

• About 1 in 5 Americans approve of political violence.
• 40 percent of Americans believe the other party is “evil.”
• This is driven by strong partisanship.
• It is made worse among Republicans who are high in racial resentment and hostile sexism.
• Leaders have an important role to play.
Thank you!
What does “violence” mean?

- Widespread violence by armed groups that kills lots of people: 9%
- Violence by armed individuals that might kill a few people: 17%
- Punching people, fistfights, beating them up: 21%
- Destruction of property: 23%
- Verbal insults and harassment: 28%
- Something else: 20%
- None of these are justified: 40%