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Political Violence and the 2024 Election
This is not new: it's recurred over time
Demographic Shifts
America has been undergoing a massive and rapid shift in racial – but also gender and other hierarchies.

No democracy has ever successfully made all these transitions before.

We are trying to do it in the midst of a major advance in global authoritarianism.
Political structures
Around 85% of Congressional seats are basically impossible for the other party to win. This abets a strategy of getting out your base, not playing to the base then moving to the center.

Winner Take All Elections & Safe Seats exacerbate violence

In 2022, 83% of the U.S. House was elected by just 8% of Americans.

Despite tens of millions of voters casting ballots in the 2022 general election, a staggering 359 of 435 U.S. House seats were effectively decided months ago by just 8% of voters nationwide.

Violence serves multiple goals:

- Intensify Base
- Control your party
- Eliminate the middle
- Remove opponents
- Put supporters in key positions

It can come from the state – Insurrection Act

It can be politically inspired but plausibly deniable: Stochastic/militia groups
Threats to Congress

Serious threats to federal judges
Threats Against State & Local Officials

Threats against state legislatures, current term and campaign

- Insults: 86%
- Harassment: 43%
- Threats: 43%
- Attacks: 4%

~1/5 of local electeds report threats every 3 months in an off-year

Numbers are higher in cities: In San Diego

75% of elected officials report being threatened/harassed

Hate Crimes: at a 21 Century High (with 400 fewer agencies reporting)

Threats don't differ much by party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>32%*</td>
<td>45%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed about the same</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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**San Diego:** Moderates most threatened & harassed

**Local officials in 2023** (average across 4 surveys)

**Likelihood of experiencing event in a three-month period**

- Insulted: Democrat 49% vs. Republican 43%
- Harassed: Democrat 38% vs. Republican 32%
- Threatened: Democrat 18% vs. Republican 18%
In 1870s, violence was used to chase VOTERS away from polls.

Now it is being used to chase CANDIDATES away from running.

Especially minorities, women, and young people.

BDI/Civic Pulse/Brennan Center and Rachel Locke et al University of San Diego
Ricky Walter Shiffer attacked the FBI’s Cincinnati office following Trump’s Truth Social rant. He had also been at the January 6 insurrection.


“Who Will Rid Me Of This Meddlesome Priest?”

Threats can now be targeted against judges, prosecutors, witnesses, FBI – particularly those mentioned by Trump, Tucker Carlson, Libs of TikTok

Swatting, Bomb Threats

In late 2023-2024 we’ve seen a sharp increase in swatting and bomb threats, which require nothing but a telephone.

Alert Number: I-011224-PSA
January 12, 2024

Malicious Actors Threaten U.S. Synagogues, Schools, Hospitals, and Other Institutions With Bomb Threats

OVERVIEW

FBI, DHS, and NCTC are warning the public of ongoing bomb threats by malicious actors targeting synagogues, Jewish community centers, schools, hospitals, airports, government buildings, and other public institutions in the United States. These actors threaten to detonate supposedly hidden explosives or commit violence against the recipients or their families.

To date, FBI, DHS, and NCTC have not identified explosive devices - real or otherwise - or actual attempts to cause explosions at locations associated with these threats. However, every threat or incident of a suspected explosive device should be considered valid until all reasonable precautions have been taken.

DETAILS

Since 8 December 2023, the FBI has opened investigations on more than 100 separate threats targeting more than 1,000 institutions in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Many of these messages contain similar wording and were sent using publicly available encrypted email tools. The threats originate from multiple IP addresses, which are likely obscured using tools such as Virtual Private Networks.
The left is justifying violence more
We are seeing dry runs which lower inhibitions – as we saw in Portland
State escalation of violence lays the groundwork for more
Election Period

Mid-September to November 5, differs by state
- Some intimidation around ballot boxes and voting booths. Isolated local incidents of armed or intrusive monitoring.
- Threats against election officials in battleground states, and in left-leaning or minority counties in states with election deniers in power (such as Florida, Texas, and Nevada).
- Intimidation of immigrants and minority groups.
- In states with election deniers in power, some use of state or local police to intimidate voters.

Post-Election to Inauguration

November 6 to January 20
If there is a period of uncertainty:
- Threats against election officials and anyone determinative of outcome (for example, those certifying the results), companies involved in election activities, media organizations that call the race, and individuals with decisionmaking power.
- Armed rallies nationally, often at locations of election-related decisionmaking.
- Threats against law enforcement.

If decision is thrown to Congress:
- Threats against members of Congress and staff, including at local offices.

Post-Inauguration

January 20, 2025, and onward
If Trump wins:
- Spike in hate crimes and violence against minorities, including in schools.
- Use of the Insurrection Act to send the military to cities with riots, expanding to left-leaning and minority cities with peaceful protests.
- DHS agencies used to round up migrants, which will mistakenly include documented immigrants and American citizens.
- Mass internment camps for those caught in roundups and for new migrants at the border, with poor conditions and high deaths in custody and en route.
- DOJ, FBI, and armed IRS agents investigate and conduct securitized audits of and legal retaliation against critics and opposition.

If Biden wins:
- Beginning of some guerrilla activities against the federal government.
- Increased levels of hate crimes, though not at the level of a Trump win.
- Continued overcrowding and deaths in custody at the border.

Ongoing

- Hate crimes and attacks against people or places that are visibly/presumed Jewish.
- Hate crimes and attacks against people or places that are visibly/presumed Palestinian or Muslim.

If Trump appears to be the winner:
- Mass protests, mostly peaceful but with violent factions causing property damage.
- Inflammatory events (such as poor or brutal policing or encounters with counterprotesters) that turn some protests into riots.

If Trump appears to be the loser:
- Violent armed rallies at homes and offices of officials perceived as capable of altering the results and at sites and times of election-related decisionmaking.
- Threats against judicial targets overseeing election litigation.
- MAGA-friendly states send police to seize ballots for a recount.
How to Address the Problem

TRIGGERS
People who commit violence or events that make it more likely

AMPLIFIERS
People & groups creating a climate that is more conducive to violence and threats.

INCENTIVES
Institutions, policies, and social norms that make violence an option for achieving power, status, etc.
How to Address the Problem

**TRIGGERS**
- Joy to the polls, atmosphere of community, belonging, positivity deters violence
- Training police,
- Time and place laws,
- Separate protestors and counter-protestors
- Deterrent arrests
- Deterrent messages that some actions are a crime

**AMPLIFIERS**
- Build resilient community connections to who can tamp down rumor/violence
- Support in-group members who will speak against violence
- MEDIA: Stop normalizing. Make clear that it’s mostly threats, not actually violence.
- Stop aggrandizing with pictures of violent people
- Emphasize agency and the helpers
- Educate and Innoculate against conspiracy, mis-/dis-information

**INCENTIVES**
- Change primaries, RCV, Final Four/Five to alter political incentives, change who a politicians’ base is
- Crack down on grift