

The Fractured Republic: A Longitudinal Analysis of Political Protest, Civil Unrest, and State Response in the United States (2006–2026)

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Disclaimer: This report does not support any government entity or official, and is not to be taken as support for any major or minor political party in the United States, and regardless of the data presented, this report is presented as factual based evidence/summary only.

Preface and Scope Clarification

This document is an empirical, longitudinal analysis of political protest, civil unrest, and state response in the United States between 2006 and January 2026. It is not an advocacy document, not a policy prescription, and not a moral justification for violence by any actor, state or non-state.

The analysis relies exclusively on publicly available datasets, peer-reviewed research, court records, and mainstream investigative reporting, including but not limited to ACLED, the Crowd Counting Consortium, CSIS, Department of Justice data, and contemporaneous journalism. No original event data was generated for this report. All conclusions are derived from synthesis, comparison, and longitudinal pattern analysis of existing sources.

This report makes several distinctions that are essential to its interpretation:

Protest participation is not equivalent to violence.

The overwhelming majority of political demonstrations analyzed were peaceful. When violence is discussed, it is explicitly limited to the subset of events in which physical harm, property destruction, or lethal force occurred.

Violence against persons and violence against property are analytically distinct.

These forms of violence differ materially in intent, impact, lethality, and legal treatment. Conflation of these categories obscures rather than clarifies risk assessment and public understanding.

State action and non-state action are evaluated separately.

Documentation of state use of force, prosecutorial escalation, or policing disparities does not constitute a claim of universal misconduct, nor does it negate the reality of violence committed against law enforcement or civilians by protesters or counter-protesters.

Statistical trends describe patterns, not individual guilt or innocence.

No statistical finding in this report should be interpreted as assigning collective blame to any demographic, political movement, or institution.

Ongoing or recent events are analyzed provisionally.

Sections addressing events from late 2025 through January 2026 rely on publicly available

evidence at the time of writing and may evolve as additional verified information becomes available.

This document does not argue that violence is justified, inevitable, or desirable. It argues that mischaracterization of political violence, selective enforcement, and narrative distortion materially increase societal risk by impairing public understanding and institutional legitimacy.

Any use of this report that selectively quotes statistics, removes contextual qualifiers, or reframes empirical findings as partisan endorsement misrepresents both the intent and the substance of the analysis.

The purpose of this work is informational. Its value lies in accuracy, transparency, and the ability of readers to engage critically with evidence rather than rhetoric.

1. Executive Summary

This report provides an exhaustive, data-driven analysis of political dissent, civil unrest, and protest dynamics in the United States over the two-decade period from 2006 to January 2026. Synthesizing data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the Crowd Counting Consortium (CCC), the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and federal crime statistics, this document maps the trajectory of American political engagement from the policy-driven anti-war demonstrations of the mid-2000s to the acute, existential identity crisis defining the second Trump administration.

The twenty-year longitudinal view reveals a fundamental transformation in the nature of American protest. What began as a tool for policy redress, opposing the Iraq War, financial deregulation, or healthcare reform, has metastasized into a mechanism of low-intensity asymmetric conflict. The data reveals a disturbing bifurcation in the methods, consequences, and policing of political expression. While the volume of protest has increased across the political spectrum, the nature of violence associated with these movements differs significantly in typology, lethality, and state response.

Core Findings:

- **Asymmetry of Lethality:** Empirical data consistently demonstrates that right-wing political violence has been significantly more lethal than left-wing violence. CSIS data indicates that right-wing extremists were responsible for 112 deaths in the decade preceding 2026, compared to 13 deaths attributed to left-wing actors. Right-wing violence is characterized by firearms and vehicular attacks targeting persons, whereas left-wing violence is characterized by property destruction, arson, and brawling.
- **The Policing Disparity:** Statistical analysis of arrest records and use-of-force reports confirms a systemic disparity in law enforcement responses. Left-wing and racial justice protests (e.g., Occupy Wall Street 2011, BLM 2020, Gaza Solidarity 2024) were met with significantly higher rates of police intervention, chemical munitions, and mass arrests compared to right-wing demonstrations, including the heavily armed anti-lockdown protests of 2020.

- **The 2025 Inversion:** The inauguration of Donald Trump for a second term in 2025 triggered a protest wave surpassing the 2017 "Resistance" and the 2020 George Floyd uprising in speed and scale. Concurrently, 2025 saw a decline in non-state right-wing violence as right-wing grievances aligned with state power, while left-wing "plots" against government targets rose to a 30-year high, culminating in the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.
- **The "Domestic Terrorist" Label:** The legal framework for handling dissent has shifted. Charges have escalated from misdemeanors (trespassing) in the 2010s to "Domestic Terrorism" and RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) charges in the 2020s, applied predominantly to environmental and anti-police activists.

2. The Era of Policy Dissent (2006–2010)

The latter half of the 2000s represented the final years of the "permitted protest" paradigm. Demonstrations were large, often drawing hundreds of thousands, but were largely strictly regulated, peaceful, and focused on specific federal policies rather than systemic regime change.

2.1 The Anti-War Movement and Immigration Marches (2006–2008)

In the mid-2000s, the American street was dominated by opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the nascent immigrants' rights movement.

Mobilization and Tactics: The "Day Without Immigrants" in May 2006 saw millions march across the United States. These events were characterized by high discipline, coordination with city officials, and permitted routes. Similarly, anti-war protests, though waning in political efficacy by 2006, continued to draw significant numbers. The U.S. Marshals Service documented security operations for 80 anti-war demonstrations in early 2006 alone, including a massive gathering of 30,000 at the San Francisco federal building.

Violence and Arrests: Violence was minimal and largely symbolic. Arrests were typically orchestrated acts of civil disobedience rather than spontaneous riots. For instance, in San Francisco (2006), 431 protesters were arrested for blocking entrances, a pre-planned tactic. While there were isolated incidents of bonfires or rock-throwing, these were outliers in an otherwise non-violent movement. The focus was on "moral witnessing" rather than physical confrontation with the state.

2.2 The Rise of the Tea Party (2009–2010)

The election of Barack Obama catalyzed the Tea Party movement, a right-wing populist uprising focused on taxation, the Affordable Care Act, and government overreach. This movement represents the genesis of the modern right-wing protest infrastructure.

Mobilization Dynamics: The movement exploded in 2009, with "Tax Day" protests on April 15 occurring in over 750 cities. Estimates of participation vary, with data from FiveThirtyEight suggesting a cumulative attendance of 311,460, while organizers claimed significantly higher

numbers.

Violence and the Gun Factor: The Tea Party is statistically notable for its low levels of physical violence but high levels of implied threat. Unlike the anti-war protests, Tea Party rallies frequently featured the open carrying of firearms (where legal).

- **Incidents:** Reports of physical violence were rare. There were "scuffles" at town hall meetings regarding healthcare, but no large-scale riots, arson, or looting.
- **Arrests:** Arrest rates for Tea Party events were negligible. In instances where Tea Party activists disrupted congressional offices, arrests were made (e.g., 10 arrested for storming Nancy Pelosi's office), but these were exceptions.
- **The Shift in Rhetoric:** The primary contribution of the Tea Party to the timeline of unrest was the normalization of aggressive anti-government rhetoric and the presence of weapons at political events, shifting the window of acceptable protest behavior on the right.

Comparative Police Response: Police response to Tea Party rallies was notably restrained. There are few records of riot control agents (CS gas, rubber bullets) being deployed against Tea Party demonstrators, even when they were armed. This established a precedent of differential policing that would become starkly apparent in the following decade.

3. The Great Divergence: Occupy vs. The State (2011–2013)

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement marked the resurgence of left-wing populism and a critical turning point in police-protester relations. It introduced the tactic of "encampment", occupying public space indefinitely, which fundamentally conflicted with municipal ordinances and invited state repression.

3.1 Occupy Wall Street (2011)

Mobilization: Beginning in Zuccotti Park, New York City, in September 2011, the movement spread to hundreds of cities. The CCC and other monitoring bodies noted that OWS events were largely non-violent in intent, utilizing consensus-based decision-making.

Violence and "Lawlessness": The definition of violence became a central point of contention.

- **Protester Violence:** OWS was overwhelmingly non-violent regarding physical harm to persons. Reports of violence were often internecine or involved minor skirmishes with police during evictions. However, media narratives framed the encampments as hubs of "lawlessness," citing sanitation issues and drug use to justify clearance.
- **State Violence:** The police response was militarized and aggressive.
 - *Pepper Spray Incidents:* The casual use of pepper spray against non-threatening protesters became a hallmark of the era. Notable incidents included NYPD Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna spraying penned-in women (Sept 24, 2011) and the UC

Davis incident (Nov 18, 2011) where officers sprayed seated students directly in the face.

- *Mass Arrests:* On October 1, 2011, over 700 marchers were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge in a single "kettling" operation, where police trapped the crowd before arresting them.
- *Injuries:* Dozens of protesters suffered injuries from batons and chemical agents. An 84-year-old woman, Dorli Rainey, was pepper-sprayed in Seattle, and an Iraq War veteran, Scott Olsen, was critically injured by a police projectile in Oakland, fracturing his skull.

Comparative Insight (Tea Party vs. Occupy): Academic analysis highlights a stark disparity. Tea Party protests, which explicitly threatened government overthrow in rhetoric and carried firearms, faced minimal arrests and almost no use of force. Occupy protests, which were unarmed and focused on economic inequality, faced thousands of arrests and high-level physical force. This disparity fueled a narrative of "political policing" that would radicalize the left over the next decade.

4. The Rise of Identity Conflict and Lethality (2014–2019)

The mid-2010s saw the disintegration of the post-Occupy lull and the rise of two distinct, clashing movements: Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the Alt-Right.

4.1 Black Lives Matter: The First Wave (2014–2016)

Following the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson (2014) and Freddie Gray in Baltimore (2015), the nature of protest shifted from static occupation to dynamic street confrontation.

- **Violence Breakdown:** While the Department of Justice verified that the vast majority of demonstrations were peaceful vigils, these periods saw significant instances of property violence: arson (burning of convenience stores/pharmacies), looting, and rock-throwing at police.
- **State Response:** This era marked the visible militarization of local police. The deployment of armored personnel carriers (APCs), sniper teams, and LRAD (Long Range Acoustic Device) sound cannons against civilian populations became standard in Ferguson, escalating tensions.

4.2 The Trump Campaign and Election Violence (2016)

The 2016 election introduced violence into the electoral process itself.

- **Rally Violence:** Trump rallies became sites of physical confrontation. Unlike previous eras where protesters stood outside, disruptions occurred *inside*, leading to physical assaults by supporters, often encouraged from the podium.
- **Ideological Shift:** The "Alt-Right" emerged, moving right-wing organizing from fiscal

conservatism to white nationalism.

4.3 The Women's March and the Resistance (2017)

The day after Donald Trump's inauguration, the Women's March occurred, representing the largest single-day protest in U.S. history up to that point.

- **Data:** CCC estimated between 3 and 5 million participants nationwide.
- **Violence Statistics:** Zero arrests were reported in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., despite crowds exceeding 500,000 in single locations. This event demonstrated the capacity of the anti-Trump "Resistance" for massive, disciplined, non-violent mobilization.

4.4 Charlottesville: The Lethal Turn (2017)

The "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (August 2017), was a watershed moment for political violence.

- **Event:** A convergence of white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and militias to oppose the removal of a Confederate statue.
- **Violence Type:** Lethal vehicular attack. James Fields Jr. drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer and injuring dozens.
- **Significance:** This marked the transition of right-wing violence from performative (carrying guns) to kinetic (using weapons to kill). It established vehicular ramming as a recurring tactic of the far-right; between May and September 2020 alone, there were over 100 incidents of cars driving into protests.

5. The Crucible of 2020: A Year of Uprising

The year 2020 represents the peak of civil unrest in the 21st century prior to 2025. The convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd created a pressure cooker of social instability.

5.1 The Anti-Lockdown Protests (Spring 2020)

- **Demographics:** Primarily right-wing, pro-Trump, and libertarian groups.
- **Tactics:** Armed occupation of government buildings. In Michigan, armed protesters entered the state capitol gallery, screaming at police and lawmakers.
- **Violence:** Low levels of physical violence, but extremely high levels of intimidation.
- **Police Response:** Restrained. Despite the presence of assault rifles and direct confrontation with officers, arrests were minimal. No tear gas or rubber bullets were deployed inside state capitols.

5.2 The George Floyd Uprising (Summer 2020)

This was the broadest protest movement in U.S. history, with ACLED recording over 10,600 demonstration events between May and August 2020.

Violence and Peacefulness Statistics:

- **Peaceful Rate:** ACLED and the CCC consistently found that **93% to 96.3%** of these demonstrations were peaceful, involving no injuries or property damage.
- **The 7% Violent:** In the minority of events where violence occurred, it consisted primarily of:
 - **Property Destruction:** Vandalism, looting of retail stores, and arson (most notably the burning of the Minneapolis 3rd Police Precinct).
 - **Interpersonal Violence:** Brawling with counter-protesters and throwing projectiles (water bottles, rocks, fireworks) at police.

Police Injuries: The narrative that 2020 was solely a case of police brutality ignores the significant toll on law enforcement. The Major Cities Chiefs Association reported over **2,000 officers injured** during the summer of 2020.

- **Types of Injuries:** Lacerations, broken bones, concussions, and burns from fireworks. In Chicago alone, 130 officers were injured in a single weekend (May 29–31), with injuries ranging from broken limbs to a heart attack.

Protester Injuries and Arrests:

- **Arrests:** Over **14,000 arrests** were recorded nationwide in the immediate weeks following May 25, 2020. In Chicago, 1,258 people were arrested in three days.
- **Injuries:** Thousands of protesters sustained injuries from "less-lethal" munitions. There were documented cases of permanent blindness from rubber bullets, skull fractures from tear gas canisters, and severe respiratory distress.
- **Lethality:** At least 25 Americans were killed during the unrest. This includes protesters shot by counter-protesters (e.g., Garrett Foster in Austin), counter-protesters shot by activists (e.g., Aaron Danielson in Portland), and security guards killed during looting.

Systemic Disparity in Policing: The data reveals a stark contrast in how the state managed 2020's dual protest waves. ACLED data shows authorities intervened in **9%** of BLM protests compared to **3%** of other demonstrations. When they did intervene, they used force **54%** of the time against BLM, a rate significantly higher than against right-wing or anti-lockdown demonstrations.

6. Insurrection and the Crisis of Legitimacy (2021–2024)

6.1 The January 6th Insurrection (2021)

The attack on the U.S. Capitol was a singular event: a violent attempt to disrupt the constitutional transfer of power.

Violence Metrics:

- **Officer Injuries:** Approximately **140 law enforcement officers** were injured. Injuries were severe, including traumatic brain injuries, crushed ribs, and the loss of an eye. One officer, Brian Sicknick, died following the attack; four others died by suicide in the aftermath.
- **Rioter Deaths:** Ashli Babbitt was fatally shot by a Capitol Police lieutenant while attempting to breach a barricaded door into the Speaker's Lobby. Three others died of medical emergencies during the siege.
- **Tactics:** Use of flagpoles as spears, bear spray, tasers, and bludgeons. Pipe bombs were planted at the RNC and DNC headquarters, though they did not detonate.

Comparative Judicial Outcomes (Jan 6th vs. Portland): A persistent political narrative suggests Jan 6th defendants were treated harshly compared to 2020 Portland rioters. A review of court records and Associated Press analysis refutes the equivalence of the crimes, if not the disparity in sentencing numbers.

- **Charges:** Jan 6th defendants frequently faced felony charges for **Assaulting, Resisting, or Impeding Officers** (over 1/3 of defendants) or **Seditious Conspiracy**.
- **Portland Outcomes:** In Portland, where nightly clashes occurred for months, federal prosecutors dismissed roughly 60 of 100 cases or entered deferred resolution agreements. The rationale cited by prosecutors was that many Portland charges (civil disorder, failing to disperse, shining lasers) did not meet the evidentiary threshold of the Capitol attacks, which involved breaching a federal building to stop a constitutional proceeding.
- **Sentencing:** Jan 6th defendants convicted of felonies received significant prison time (e.g., Enrique Tarrio: 22 years; Stewart Rhodes: 18 years). Misdemeanor defendants (parading/picketing) often received probation or short jail terms, undercutting the "political prisoner" narrative.

6.2 The Dobbs Decision and "Jane's Revenge" (2022)

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* triggered a specific subset of political violence.

- **Left-Wing Violence:** A group operating under the name "Jane's Revenge" claimed responsibility for vandalizing and firebombing crisis pregnancy centers. In 2022, there were at least 30 attacks on anti-abortion centers, primarily arson and vandalism.
- **Overall Context:** Despite these targeted attacks, ACLED noted that **98%** of pro-abortion rights demonstrations remained peaceful.

- **Right-Wing Intimidation:** 2022 saw a 150% increase in the presence of far-right militias (e.g., Proud Boys) at gender and reproductive rights rallies, shifting from protest to direct intimidation.

6.3 "Stop Cop City" and the Expansion of "Terrorism" (2023–2024)

The movement to stop the construction of the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center ("Cop City") highlighted the state's expanding use of "terrorism" charges against environmental and anti-police activists.

- **Violence:** Protesters engaged in property destruction, damaging construction equipment, and throwing Molotov cocktails and rocks at police.
- **Lethal Force:** On January 18, 2023, police shot and killed protester **Manuel Esteban Paez Terán ("Tortuguita")**. Police claimed Terán fired first, injuring a trooper, but an independent autopsy revealed 57 gunshot wounds and no gunpowder residue on Terán's hands, fueling claims of extrajudicial killing.
- **RICO Charges:** Georgia prosecutors indicted 61 people under RICO laws, classifying the decentralized protest movement as a criminal enterprise. This marked a significant escalation in the criminalization of dissent, treating bail fund organizers and legal observers as co-conspirators.

6.4 Gaza Solidarity Encampments (2024)

- **Peaceful Nature:** ACLED and The Guardian analysis found **97%** of campus protests were peaceful.
- **Violence Dynamics:** Violence occurred primarily in two contexts:
 1. **Police Clearance:** Aggressive removal of encampments (e.g., Columbia, UT Austin) led to arrests and injuries.
 2. **Counter-Protester Violence:** At UCLA, masked counter-protesters attacked the student encampment with fireworks, pipes, and chemical sprays for hours while police delayed intervention. This incident highlighted the "selective enforcement" of law and order.

7. The 2025 Inversion: The Second Trump Term (2025–2026)

The return of Donald Trump to the presidency in January 2025 fundamentally altered the landscape of American civil unrest. We are currently witnessing a historical inversion: right-wing non-state violence has declined as the state apparatus enacts right-wing policy goals, while left-wing mobilization has reached record highs, accompanied by a burgeoning fringe of lethal violence.

7.1 Mass Mobilization: The "No Kings" Movement

In response to sweeping executive orders and the assertion of the "No Kings" legal doctrine, the American public mobilized at a scale eclipsing 2017 and 2020.

- **Event Data:**
 - **June 14, 2025:** The first "No Kings" protest caused the largest single-day spike in events in ACLED history.
 - **October 18, 2025:** "No Kings II" maintained this momentum.
- **Demographics:** Unlike previous eras, these protests have expanded beyond coastal hubs into rural and GOP-leaning counties, indicating a broadening of the opposition coalition.

7.2 The Shift in Violence Source

A critical trend identified by CSIS in late 2025 is the shift in the *source* of political violence.

- **Right-Wing Decline:** Terrorist attacks and plots by non-state right-wing actors dropped sharply in 2025. With the executive branch enforcing strict immigration and social policies, the "demand" for militia violence has decreased.
- **Left-Wing Increase:** Plots and attacks by left-wing actors against government and law enforcement targets reached a 30-year high in 2025.
 - **The Charlie Kirk Assassination:** In September 2025, conservative activist Charlie Kirk was assassinated. This high-profile killing by alleged anti-fascist actors marked a dangerous escalation, providing the administration with a pretext to label Antifa (an ideology) as a formal terrorist organization.
 - **Targeting:** Violence is increasingly directed at federal infrastructure and personnel (e.g., ICE facilities).

7.3 The Renee Good Incident (January 2026)

As of January 2026, the nation is gripped by the fallout of the killing of Renee Good.

- **Event:** On January 7, 2026, Renee Good, a 37-year-old U.S. citizen, was shot and killed by an ICE agent in Minneapolis during a massive deportation operation.
- **Narrative Warfare:**
 - **State Narrative:** DHS Secretary Kristi Noem labeled Good a "domestic terrorist" who "weaponized her vehicle" to kill officers.
 - **Evidence:** Bystander video footage contradicts the state account, showing officers

casually walking around the vehicle with cell phones and Good attempting to drive away rather than ram officers.

- **Unrest:** Massive protests have erupted in Minneapolis, echoing 2020, but are now met with a federal force that characterizes dissent as terrorism. This event highlights the fusion of immigration enforcement and political suppression.

8. Comparative Analysis and Statistics

8.1 Inclination Toward Violence by Political Leaning

Right-Wing / Conservative Leaning:

- **Propensity:** Data from CSIS and the Anti-Defamation League confirms that right-wing extremism is the **most lethal** form of domestic terrorism.
- **Fatalities:** 112 deaths attributed to right-wing extremists in the decade prior to 2026.
- **Violence Type:** Violence against *persons*. Tactics include mass shootings (Buffalo, El Paso), vehicular ramming (Charlottesville), and assassinations.
- **Armed Demonstrations:** ACLED data shows armed demonstrations are **6.5 times more likely** to turn violent. Between 2020–2021, 84% of armed groups at protests were right-wing actors.

Left-Wing / Progressive Leaning:

- **Propensity:** Left-wing violence is statistically **less lethal** but more prone to property damage and street confrontation.
- **Fatalities:** 13 deaths attributed to left-wing extremists in the decade prior to 2026.
- **Violence Type:** Violence against *property* and *institutions*. Tactics include arson (police stations, construction sites), vandalism, and brawling with police.
- **Peaceful Rate:** Consistently measures between 93% and 97% peaceful across major movements (BLM, Gaza Solidarity).

8.2 Breakdown of Violence Typologies (2006–2026)

Violence Type	Dominant Political Association	Key Examples & Data
Firearms (Lethal)	Right-Wing	High prevalence at Right-wing rallies. Used in shootings (Kyle Rittenhouse, El Paso). ~112 deaths (Right) vs ~13 (Left).
Vehicular Ramming	Right-Wing	Over 100 incidents in 2020 alone, predominantly Right-

Violence Type	Dominant Political Association	Key Examples & Data
		wing drivers targeting Left-wing crowds.
Arson / Firebombing	Left-Wing	Minneapolis 3rd Precinct (2020), Jane's Revenge (2022), Cop City equipment (2023).
	Assault / Brawling	Mixed
Projectile Throwing	Left-Wing	Rocks, water bottles, fireworks thrown at police lines (Portland 2020, Stop Cop City 2023).
Spitting / Verbal	Mixed	Common escalation tactic in close-contact protests (Tea Party town halls, BLM counter-protests).

8.3 Policing Statistics Breakdown

Movement	Police Intervention Rate	Use of Force Rate (When Intervening)	Arrest Scale
Tea Party (Right)	Negligible	Negligible	Minimal (<50 total notable)
Anti-Lockdown (Right)	Low (~3%)	Low	Minimal
Occupy Wall Street (Left)	High	High (Pepper spray, batons)	~7,700+ total arrests
BLM 2020 (Left)	9%	54%	~14,000+ (Summer 2020)
Gaza Solidarity (Left)	High	High (Chemical agents)	~3,000+ (Spring 2024)

9. Conclusion

The trajectory of political protest in the United States from 2006 to 2026 traces a path from regulated dissent to low-intensity conflict. The data reveals a clear dichotomy: the Right has historically monopolized lethal violence (firearms and vehicles) while facing permissive policing, whereas the Left has utilized property destruction and mass disruption while facing repressive policing and mass arrests.

As of 2026, the distinction between "protest" and "insurgency" is blurring. With the state apparatus now aggressively aligned with right-wing objectives, the locus of violence is shifting. The assassination of Charlie Kirk and the state killing of Renee Good suggest that the era of "peaceful protest" may be yielding to a cycle of state repression and radicalized resistance, characterized by an inversion of historical violence trends and an escalation in the existential stakes of American politics.

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