CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND THE 2022 ELECTIONS

Rachel Kleinfeld, December 2022

The midterm election period proved mercifully free from violence and drama, following months of concern from democracy organizations and even the Department of Homeland Security.

While most experts did not expect Election Day violence (which is rare globally), why did more problems not arise from the army of volunteer poll watchers recruited by Steve Bannon? Why was there not more pre-election intimidation? And why did most election deniers accept their losses peacefully, particularly after an expected red wave failed to materialize?

In other words, how should organizations and philanthropists who have been working to support democracy and deter political violence understand what occurred during the 2022 elections, and what it means for future work supporting democracy and reducing violence?

Bottom Line Up Front:

It is impossible to "prove a negative." Thus, no one can know for certain what worked. But looking at the data and talking to the organizations in the field offer some likely hypotheses, which are discussed in more detail on the following pages.

- **Circumstances broke in favor of peace, aided by organizations that prepared the playing field.** Voters learned about the poor quality of candidates thanks to strong narrative work. Some GOP leaders benefitted from diminishing former president Donald Trump, his candidates, and his fraud narrative, but defamation lawsuits convinced others not to cry wolf. Violence organizations had lower capacity—that was thanks, in part, to private and public lawsuits. Twitter moderation, pressed by groups for years, probably kept social media spread lower.

- **Supply of violence-defeating measures was strong.** Groups working to stop election violence and ensure a well-run election were extremely coordinated and worked ahead of time to deescalate, defuse, and address situations before they became newsworthy. Preparation and hard work, most of it behind the scenes, was essential in securing our democracy this year.

- **Demand for violence was lower than expected.** Political violence might look spontaneous, but it is not: it grows when politicians and leaders gin it up, usually to build base loyalty and get

out the vote by "othering" or to intimidate particular targets for political gain. In 2020, Trump built demand for violence in this way, aided by a media echo chamber and willing political party. Thanks to a new dataset of threats against local and election officials, we now know that most of the election officials targeted with threats were in swing states and that threats spiked immediately after the 2020 election in the times and places Trump was trying to affect the vote.

Because the winners of the 2022 midterms (including previously unsung down-ballot roles such as secretary of state) are the actors who will determine whether the 2024 election is conducted fairly, the stakes were high for Trump. But political demand for violence was lower than I and other experts expected. Trump may be unique in generating violence and in his ties to violent groups. Midterm elections are more diffuse and harder to rally a national campaign around. Many election deniers won and had no need to cry fraud.

- **Violence remains unacceptably high**. It is likely deterring some candidates from running. It is now a significant campaign cost for some races, tilting the electoral playing field. Its role in primary elections is hindering the emergence of a more pro-democratic Republican Party. Its use in Arizona underscored that vigilantism is an electoral tactic.

  We should expect 2024 to be worse: Trump is again on the ballot in a national election, and hearings in the House may heighten polarization over the next two years. But we are gaining better data on where and how political violence is occurring that can help us understand how and why violence is being used and fine-tune our strategies accordingly.

Circumstances Broke in Favor of Peace—Aided by Organizations

Luck favors the prepared. Circumstances of the midterm elections broke toward peace—but they did so in part thanks to immense work done ahead of time to lay the groundwork.

- **Circumstance: Weak candidates made a fraud narrative less believable.** Thanks to geographically concentrated parties, many Republicans in 2020 did not know anyone who wasn't voting for Trump—and thus were more easily convinced that fraud had occurred. But the poor candidates on offer in so many states in 2022 led to an uptick in split-ticket voting or simply refusing to vote for some candidates. Even serious Republicans likely knew people who had doubts about these lesser figures.

  - **Preparation: A strong, consistent narrative illuminated these weak, extreme candidates and the importance of democracy.** The candidates were weak—but the narrative that they were weak and extremist did not arise spontaneously.[1] It took local and national news coverage parroting a unified narrative of extremism to show voters in swing states just how weak their candidates were. The more voters learned about election deniers,

[1] For example, while not an election denier, New Jersey Republican Ed Durr sailed into the New Jersey legislature because no one had researched and provided to the media his past comments that equated mask mandates with the Holocaust, claimed that there was legitimacy on "both sides" of the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally, and indicated other questionable views.

the less they liked them. Organizations used excellent communications to build this narrative and offered solid research so the media could report on candidate extremism. The decision to emphasize democracy was critiqued by many on the left but turned out to be correct. Voters who claimed that "the future of democracy" was a primary consideration for their voting choice, second only to inflation, were far more likely to vote against election deniers. Eight in ten were worried about political violence and 58 percent blamed Trump, including 30 percent of people who voted for him in 2020.

- **Circumstance: The split within the GOP meant some leaders preferred a "Trump loss" storyline to an "election fraud" narrative.** As the losing streak among Trump-supported candidates became clearer, the split in the GOP manifested. As losses rolled in, Trump's "loser" status probably also tamped his ability to mobilize his base. Meanwhile, GOP organizations that had long opposed Trump's hold or doubted the success of his strategies saw their opportunity to weaken Trump. Moreover, while having election deniers in position for 2024 would help any candidate willing to win an election through theft, pressure, or undemocratic means, they were less needed by GOP candidates who thought they could simply win a fair national election. For all these reasons, leading presidential challengers such as Governors Ron DeSantis (R-FL), who had just achieved an overwhelming win, and Greg Abbott (R-TX) were happy to accept the results and build a narrative that Trump had failed rather than that fraud had prevailed. Conflicting storylines also prevented the fraud narrative from getting a foothold.

    - **Preparation: Defamation lawsuits likely helped keep a false news echo chamber from forming.** While some politicians benefitted from an anti-Trump narrative, others tried to build a fraud narrative on election day. Gateway Pundit, MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell, and Kari Lake all offered fraud stories, as did groups like Turning Point USA that had helped Trump-selected candidates win their primaries.

      But far fewer groups joined this bandwagon than in 2020—possibly because of defamation lawsuits. Following a defamation lawsuit, One America News Network was deplatformed from YouTube and other sites. Fox News and Newsmax walked back 2020 fraud claims, Fox News cancelled Lou Dobbs's show the day after he faced a defamation suit, and some speculate that defamation lawsuit fears were why they and Newsmax largely refrained from covering the election denial movie *2000 Mules*. True the Vote, a crucial organization of the election denial movement, faced a temporary restraining order this time, and some of its leaders were jailed after being found in contempt of court, which impinged on their organizing. Lawsuits were no panacea: defamation litigation against Gateway Pundit and Lindell did not stop either from trying to build a 2022 fraud narrative, and election employees in Arizona noted that they would see a surge in threats after being singled out in Gateway Pundit stories. But lawsuits definitely dented the echo chamber effect and slowed the growth of false narratives.

- **Circumstance: Violent organizations were less mobilized than in 2020.** Violent groups have to keep their supporters engaged, just like any other membership organization. In the lead-up to the 2020 elections, anti–Black Lives Matter protests and protests against

coronavirus precaution mandates gave them multiple opportunities to organize, so their membership was engaged and ready to mobilize during the 2020 elections. According to the Bridging Divides Initiative, the Proud Boys, Patriot Front, and some local violent groups have maintained organizing efforts since then, using mainstream conservative causes such as opposition to "critical race theory" to bring out followers. But many groups have slowed their activities. While individual violence was still possible (as shown by the attack on Paul Pelosi, the attempt on Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and others), the sort of group intimidation that occurred in 2020 was less likely. But just as many Get Out the Vote efforts ramp up on four-year cycles, violent groups may also organize in advance of 2024 if a candidate tries to mobilize them against rivals.

  - **Preparation: Private civil suits and Department of Justice (DOJ) lawsuits undermined some groups' ability to mobilize.** Some groups likely became quiescent because of the natural ebb and flow of mobilization among militias and other violent groups. But private lawsuits against the Oath Keepers, a slew of white nationalists and apologists, amplification websites such as the white nationalist Daily Stormer, and others impoverished some organizations and kept leadership of others in too much disarray to mobilize. DOJ action against the Oath Keepers, in particular, may have dented that group, though similar action against the Proud Boys does not seem to have been as decisive.

- **Circumstance: Twitter demotion probably tamped down disinformation.** Some on social media repeated election deniers' claims, but without a platform on Twitter, Trump and other prominent deniers such as Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) were more limited in whom they could reach among the wider public.

  - **Preparation: Groups had worked for years to improve Twitter content moderation and particularly to get the site to enforce rules against hateful and violent speech**. January 6 provided a moment for this long-haul effort to break through. Elon Musk's abandonment of content moderation staff and policies is likely to be devastating if Twitter remains a force and groups will need to be prepared for a harder fight in 2024. Anti-Semitic and other hateful content on Twitter has already spiked in the last few weeks. Trump's reinstatement on Twitter (even given his contract with his own social media platform, Truth Social) would allow him direct contact again with tens of millions.

Demand Was Lower than Expected

- **Trump may be unique in the depth of his ability and capacity to mobilize violence.** Trump did not spontaneously organize violence in 2020. He and his coterie spent years, starting in 2016, building relationships with violence provocateurs and armed protest groups—from the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys to Bikers for Trump and state organizations like Cowboys for Trump. In addition to this unique capacity for organized violence, he may have a unique ability to call for individual acts of violence from a more devoted followership. More in Common's focus groups and survey data suggest that election denialism, for some people, was less a statement of

belief about election administration and more an expression of loyalty to Trump and a claim of grievance against his opponents. That follower commitment may make transferring such sentiments less easy than some of us had feared. However, it also suggests that the democracy community must be prepared for a renewal of violent activity should Trump be prosecuted and throughout his 2024 candidacy, but particularly during the primaries.

- **Losing election deniers lacked the capacity to mobilize violence.** Most of the losing election deniers lacked personal relationships with violent groups. A few who were Oath Keepers or militia members themselves had the relationships but had too little post-election money to mobilize many followers or lost so decisively that a cry of fraud lacked credibility. For instance, Pennsylvania Republican gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano had relationships with QAnon, but lost so decisively that he lacked the capacity to undertake the harder organizing needed to mobilize this more individualistic group. Kristina Karamo tried to call foul in her secretary of state's race in Michigan—but her loss was decisive, and she had raised only a few hundred thousand dollars compared to Jocelyn Benson's vast campaign chest, so lacked capital for a post-campaign attempt.

  If capacity played a serious role, it suggests we should keep an eye on Nevada, where the state GOP has connections with the Proud Boys; Wyoming, where the Republican Party chairman is an Oath Keeper; Oregon, whose state GOP leader has ties to the Ammon Bundy militia organization; Michigan, where the GOP in the state senate has ties to militias; Florida's Miami-Dade County, where Proud Boys have infiltrated the local party; and other localities where parts of the party infrastructure have been creating relationships with violent organizations.

- **Midterms may be less mobilizing than presidential elections.** All U.S. elections are local, but the diffusion of midterm election candidates may make it harder for violent groups to focus than in a national election. It is also hard for a candidate in one state to focus violence in another state when there is not a clear shared fate, as there is during a presidential election.

- **The majority of election deniers won (those who lost were in swing states**), as did national personalities with potentially violent followers Greene and Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO). They therefore had no reason to dispute their elections. Lake, the only denier who lost a close election and may still be hoping for national status, *is* challenging the results.

Supply of Violence-Dampening Measures Was High

As already demonstrated, organizations did an immense amount to capitalize on propitious circumstances. While the 2020 election featured a heroic, last-minute effort as organizations came together in real time to deter political violence, in just two years, a professional, effective, and highly collegial field has formed. These organizations played an essential role in addressing disinformation prior to the election, reducing fears of fraud, preparing communities, and de-escalating threats that did occur.

- **Good communication techniques were well deployed and effective.** In 2020, voters simply seeking information were often directed to misinformation sites. This time, organizations worked months and even years ahead of time to buy domain names and structure ad buys so that voters looking for actual information (as well as those hoping to find more disinformation) instead found their way to good information. Prebunking activities and radical transparency and communication from election officials also prevented misinformation from gaining the upper hand. Media coverage of presentations on what government could do to prevent intimidating activity around elections likely spread awareness among government officials while possibly deterring threats.

- **When drop box intimidation began, successful lawsuits fended it off**. As soon as efforts to intimidate voters at drop boxes began, organizations sued. A lawsuit convinced one group in Yavapai County, Arizona, to voluntarily call off their drop box monitoring plans. A second set of drop box monitors were forced to stop by a court order from the same case. The DOJ weighed in with a persuasive brief that assisted this lawsuit when a lawsuit from another organization had failed. The court's injunction also prohibited the carrying of firearms within 250 feet of a ballot drop box. The DOJ's weight in the case likely assisted in sending a message beyond Arizona that efforts to intimidate voters before and on Election Day would be taken seriously, including by going to court if necessary.

- **States, localities, and law enforcement were prepared to act quickly, thanks to outside help**. Organizations spoke to government officials, such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Major Cities Chiefs Association of police chiefs, and other entities about what they could do to deter intimidation that was perfectly legal under the First and Second Amendments. These efforts likely played an important role: for instance, in Seattle, prepared election officials took down intimidating and misleading signs near ballot dropboxes during the primaries. When the person behind the signs sued, the Seattle government prevailed in court—aided by amicus briefs and assistance from outside organizations. In Arizona's Maricopa County, the sheriff announced ahead of time that threats against election workers and voters were unacceptable and would be prosecuted, and that while protests would be allowed, nothing that put lives in danger would be permitted.

- **Efforts to build community resilience ahead of time paid off**. A variety of pro-democracy/anti-violence organizations helped at least a dozen high-risk communities make common-sense plans to deal with everyday problems that would increase trust and safety, while connecting community groups, election officials, and law enforcement. Some organizations worked with government officials to help them understand the threats they could face, how to prevent and deter them, and de-escalation techniques. These meetings were at times standing-room-only due to demand. This preparation meant when places like Michigan and Wisconsin faced small Election Day issues, election administrators dealt with them quickly while social media commentators were ready to push back on false information immediately. Other incidents were prevented or stopped before they escalated.

- **Poll watchers may have responded well to Vet the Vote's successful recruitment of 63,000 veterans to the polls.** These veterans likely reassured voters and poll watchers concerned about election integrity—while also reducing fears of fraud within the military community itself, which has been targeted with disinformation and for extremist recruitment because of its members' skills and societal trust. Thus, this effort was a two-for-one: it reduced doubt within the veterans' community while enhancing trust more broadly.

- **Election administration was conducted so well that there was not much that could be used to create fears of fraud**. I am on record writing that good election administration is "necessary, but not sufficient" to deter violence, but want to stress here the first part of that phrase. Efforts such as the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence and other initiatives to ensure adequate funding and excellent administration worked in most of the country, preventing most fraud narratives from gaining believability.

- **Organizations working to reduce violence and support democracy were highly prepared.** Organizations were monitoring situations closely and felt well prepared to handle incidents and defuse each episode that arose. Organizations dealt with a number of incidents that might have caused violence in 2020, from a planned armed protest to a threatened vehicle convoy and a robocaller falsely telling voters that polls were closed. In each case, organizations were able to contact federal, state, and/or local law enforcement to use pre-existing plans created by groups in the last few years to enable peaceful handling of armed protests, ensure public safety with a vehicle convoy while allowing First Amendment–protected activity, or track the caller. They reported so much "muscle memory" of working together that "[Election Day] Tuesday was just another day" doing what they had long been doing, as one put it.

Violence and Intimidation Remain Too High for a Fair Democracy

The groups that worked to deter political violence and uphold democracy in 2022 probably saved our democracy. They deserve to be recognized for their achievements and supported in 2024. But the level of political intimidation and violence in America is still too high. While less picture-worthy than the clambering mobs of January 6, 2020, what is occurring should not be accepted as routine. Moreover, the patterns discovered in this election should help prepare for 2024.

- **Candidate intimidation was a pain point throughout the election, particularly during the *primary* elections**, when many Republicans tried to court a primary base through violent rhetoric and ads, before such efforts were toned down for the general election. The effects were felt by fellow Republicans—to be expected when a faction tries to take over a party. For instance, Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY) was forced to barely campaign in her own state because of threats, her campaign appearances were not advertised ahead of time, and she did not appear at the state Republican convention, where the party chair was an Oath Keeper. While she might have lost in any case, such hobbling of a campaign is precisely the point of intimidation. The Michigan Republican Party had to cancel a primary night event because of threats. Within the

Republican field, these primary-focused threats and violent rhetoric to court the base may have prevented the emergence of a clear anti-violent, pro-democracy faction within the party.

- **Election officials were targeted mainly in Arizona**. Arizona was the one state that faced the sort of fraud claims and violent threats expected nationally. The problems in Arizona started during the primary campaign, which was held in August—closer to the general election than many other states. While election officials faced a barrage of threats after the 2020 elections—particularly in swing states and California—threats and harassment were down in most locations by the 2022 elections. However, in Arizona, threats and intimidating communications continued. During the primaries, some election workers quit after strangers in tactical gear photographed employees and their license plates and surveilled them outside a ballot-counting center.[2] Two days after the primary election, on August 4, Maricopa County's information security officer emailed the FBI asking for more help for a staff that was being "intimidated and threatened."

- **Arizona's Maricopa County supervisor was forced into hiding because of threats.** Geolocated data on threats against election officials and local officials (now being collected by a consortium led by the Anti-Defamation League and Bridging Divides Initiative), could have tipped off organizations that Arizona, where threats were concentrating, was going to be a particular hot spot. In the future, real-time geographic data that links where local official and electoral threats are occurring will be essential to helping the pro-democracy field anticipate problems and focus deterrence. It could be made even more so if linked to data on violent incidents and to information geolocating spikes in online chatter.

  But this year, the data only arrived after early voting was underway, and three circumstances collided to increase problems in Arizona. First, in a state already primed for fraud, there was a significant gaffe in election administration at about a quarter of voting locations in the state's largest precinct, whose ballots featured ink that was too light to be read by the voting machines. Second, Republican gubernatorial candidate Lake lost in a tight race (unlike other potential Republican presidential or vice presidential contenders for 2024, who won or lost in a landslide). Thus, she had an incentive to undermine the election, as well as the support of Trump, with his potential to mobilize violence. Finally, unlike Mastriano or Senate candidate Herschel Walker of Georgia, Lake is seen as a possible national candidate by the Republican National Committee (RNC). A leaked call while votes were still being counted shows an RNC campaign attorney telling a Maricopa County lawyer that there were "a lot of angry people out there" that the campaign "can't control"—a statement Maricopa County took to be a threat to unleash violence.

- **The role of the RNC is notable** in the Arizona case. It indicates that institutionalized parts of the party, possibly at the national level, may be willing to consider the threat of violence as a political tool for a sufficiently promising candidate. The role of party infrastructure suggests paying closer attention to where political interest and capacity to mobilize violence coincide.

[2] While not an issue of violence, election officials were also targeted with immense numbers of requests for documents, FOIA requests, and other bureaucratic demands by conspiracy theorists. Some believe that the goal was to hamper officials' ability to prepare for the 2022 election. The fact that they were able to carry out a safe, secure election in the face of such unprecedented bureaucratic hurdles is further testament to the work being done in election administration.

- **Violence and threats against elected leaders are suppressing the emergence of a pro-democracy faction of the GOP.** The use of threats to prevent a pro-democracy Republican faction from emerging within the GOP first materialized during the second impeachment vote against Trump. Rep. Peter Meijer (R-MI) and Rep. Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH) described colleagues breaking down because threats would influence their votes, supporting Cheney's claim that "if you look at the vote to impeach, for example, there were members who told me that they were afraid for their own security—afraid, in some instances, for their lives. . . . Members of Congress aren't able to cast votes, or feel they can't, because of their own security." Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO) explained that "the majority of [Republican colleagues] are paralyzed with fear. . . . a couple of them broke down in tears." Threats also affected Republicans' ability to speak against the 2020 fraud narrative. For instance, the Republican majority leader of the Pennsylvania state senate, Kim Ward, explained that if she didn't back Trump's post–election 2020 claims, "I'd get my house bombed tonight."

- **Threats are also affecting legislative voting.** Violence has also been used to affect more routine votes. For instance, Greene doxed colleagues who voted along with Democrats for the Build Back Better package, which led to immediate threats, intimidating other Republicans who might want to support future bipartisan legislation.

- **Violence and threats against elected leaders is affecting who can run and who can win**. Threats against members of Congress are ten times higher than just five years ago, and too many cases are moving from phone lines and the internet to real life: a man was convicted for felony stalking of Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA); Speaker Nancy Pelosi's eighty-two-year-old husband was attacked by an assailant wielding a hammer; and police were called multiple times to Greene's home in a "swatting" incident, where the police are used in the hopes of creating an incident or injury. Sitting members of Congress alone have spent more than $6 million from official or campaign accounts for personal security since 2021. A *New York Times* study found that lawmakers of color spent an average of more than $17,500 and Democrats spent more $9,000 more than Republicans. That level of spending will deter down-ballot candidates, but outliers suggest it might also seriously affect some national candidates' viability: Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) has spent almost $900,000 and Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) nearly $600,000.

  These numbers suggest that violence is tilting the campaign playing field, making it harder and more costly for some candidates, particularly women and people of color, to run (I have no data on LGBTQ candidates but would expect the "groomer" rhetoric that has particularly targeted that community to affect the choice of some to run, just as I would expect spiking anti-Semitism to deter some Jewish candidates). The effect of cost and threat keeping some people from running is likely even more pronounced at the local level, where the reward is lower while the cost of being threatened in one's own community is great. Public threats that target a candidate's identity can also make that identity group feel less safe.

- **The GOP is not done with "othering" to build a base.** After Trump dined with Nick Fuentes, a white supremacist Holocaust denier who openly wishes for a Catholic theocracy in the

United States, and Kanye West (now Ye), a Black celebrity who has nevertheless voiced anti-Black as well as anti-Semitic claims, some in the GOP condemned the event, but many did not. The use of dehumanizing language and other tactics known to increase political violence has not ceased, and should be expected to return in 2024. Nor should Trump himself be downplayed—even his comments about suspending the Constitution have not evoked widespread condemnation. He was a dark horse candidate in the 2015 primary and could prevail again.

Future Political Violence May Not Look Like January 6

- **Laws, rather than vigilante violence, might be used to keep people from voting in deep red states.** Although election deniers lost every election in battleground states that could be decisive to the 2024 presidential election, the majority of election deniers won, because they were running in deep red states where the GOP candidate who wins the primary will always win. Fifteen states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming, have multiple election deniers in federal roles as well as Republican trifectas and triplexes (governor, control of both chambers of the state legislature, attorney general, and secretary of state) who could use the powers of state governments to affect future voting. It is worth remembering that the full force of Jim Crow disenfranchisement was used in eleven states of the Deep South.

- **Florida appears to be testing the use of law enforcement as a form of state violence.** While recent U.S. political violence has taken the form of vigilante and militia group activity, it is worth remembering that globally, most political violence involves incumbents holding on to office—and using the powers of the state to assist. A mix of vigilante and supportive state violence also maintained Jim Crow disenfranchisement. In Florida, a specially created state election police unit publicly arrested twenty people—most of whom were Black—who voted but may have violated bureaucratic rules, generally unknown to them and potentially non-litigable. The highly publicized arrests could have had deterrent value all the same. Florida also refused to allow the DOJ to monitor its elections, a relatively routine function undertaken nationwide by the Civil Rights Division. Such legal but questionable uses of state power could become the norm in the states in which election deniers did win their offices.

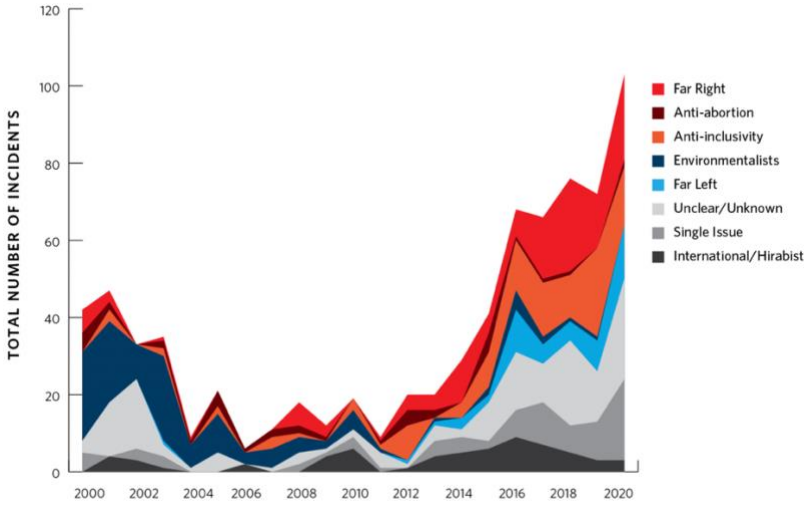
- **Meanwhile, non-state political violence is most likely in blue states with demographic change and swing states**. Datasets on hate crimes and data on January 6 insurrectionists suggests both are most prevalent in places that are altering demographically, which tend to be blue states like California, not deep red areas. The data from the Anti-Defamation League and Bridging Divides Initiative on threats and harassment against local officials and election workers suggest that these are also highest in swing states and California.

- **The recent spate of mass killings, while not political itself, is likely correlated with the election season.** Mass shootings aren't "political" violence—but they are related. The violence against an LGBTQ club in Colorado is likely related to rhetoric about "groomers" that became prominent in the last two years. Public health experts see violence as contagious—

because of strong copycat effects, each event makes the next more likely, leading to clustering once one mass shooting occurs. Thus, the November spate of mass killings starting with the killing of an "othered" group that has been ideologically highlighted should be seen as another outlet of violence that is connected to our political violence problem.

The mass killing in Colorado attracted more media attention, but the spike in hate crimes over the last few years piling atop partisan violence also suggests that we are nowhere near out of the woods regarding political violence.

Global Terrorism Database Incidents 2000-2020



Source: University of Maryland Global Terrorism Database, coded by author

Conclusion

While her fellow Supreme Court justices weakened the Voting Rights Act, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote that abandoning this piece of legislation was "like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet." Circumstances broke in favor of democracy in 2022—but luck accrues to the prepared. Organizations and the philanthropists who supported them played an immense role and deserve credit for the relatively nonviolent, successful 2022 elections.

We will need more of the same in 2024 for U.S. democracy to continue stepping back from this dark chapter.