

Terrorism, Extremism, and the 2024 Elections

CTEC

The Center on Terrorism Extremism, and Counter Terrorism



Middlebury Institute of
International Studies at Monterey

Terrorism, Extremism, and the 2024 Elections

CTEC '24

Dr. Sam Jackson, J.M. Berger, Dr. Katharine Petrich,
Sarah Pollack, Dr. Amy Cooter, and Matthew Kriner

To cite this piece:

Berger, J.M., Amy Cooter, Sam Jackson, Matthew Kriner, Katharine Petrich, and Sarah Pollack.
Terrorism, Extremism, and the 2024 Elections. Monterey, CA: Center on Terrorism, Extremism,
and Counterterrorism, 2024.

[https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/terrorism-extremism-and-2024-elections.](https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/terrorism-extremism-and-2024-elections)

Contents

Introduction	4
Mainstreaming Hate in Political Campaigns	5
Dr. Sam Jackson	5
Lawful Extremism Risks for 2024	7
J.M. Berger	7
Mexico Nationwide Elections in 2024	9
Dr. Katharine Petrich	9
Weaponized Conspiracy Theories and the US 2024 Election Cycle	10
Sarah Pollack.....	10
The Nostalgic Group Spectrum and the US 2024 Elections	13
Dr. Amy Cooter	13
Militant Accelerationism and the US 2024 Elections	14
Matthew Kriner	14
About the Authors	18

To learn more about our ongoing work and the topics presented here, visit our [website](#), follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Bluesky](#) and subscribe to our [newsletter](#).

Click [here](#) for the online version.

Introduction

The global scale and schedule of elections taking place in 2024 has the ability to profoundly shape and reshape political, economic, and social dynamics at the global, national, and local levels. Expansive and diverse factors related to global elections contribute to the landscape for terrorism and extremism, increasing threats to security and liberty, and to the structures and systems that support democratic institutions and the peaceful transfer of power.

Some actors will seek to exert their power and influence through government systems, bending their processes and undermining their core values to legitimize extremist goals, while others will reject these systems altogether, focusing instead on their complete destruction and demise. Some will look to advance the progress of their own activity within modern society, while others attempt to return to a previous time in their country's history, or at least as they nostalgically envision that past. No matter the intention or the method, all will continue to embrace modern and emerging technologies to advance their interests.

At the Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism (CTEC), our mission is to drive change in pursuit of a more just world by advancing education, research, and analysis across the critical domains of domestic extremism, transnational emerging threats, and online trust and safety. Our ongoing work reveals that longstanding ideologies, narratives, and tactics reemerge in the context of 2024, reinvigorated by current events to harness and even weaponize people's beliefs, perspectives, prejudices, fears, and frustrations for a particular objective.

In this piece, CTEC's Directors and Senior Research Fellows share key insights into the Center's ongoing research and analysis across a range of dynamics and activities related to this year's elections, including impacts on terrorism and extremism. We'll first provide insights on legacy dynamics for how extremism and terrorism emerge and advance before delivering more detailed assessments on what is unfolding today. While each member of the senior leadership team's contribution reflects a core focus area of their current work, CTEC continues to rigorously study terrorist and extremist activity more broadly.

Mainstreaming Hate in Political Campaigns

Dr. Sam Jackson, Senior Research Fellow

In the aftermath of Donald Trump's election in 2016, in the context of the emergence of the "alt-right" and a realization that the country that elected Barack Obama was perhaps not so "post-racial" as some commentators hoped, anti-racist activists deployed a new slogan: make racists afraid again. This slogan suggests that, for at least a brief period of recent American history, explicit racism had become unacceptable in public life, but that this trend had recently reversed, with white supremacists feeling more confident to express their racism openly. Those who used this slogan wanted a return to when racism had to be disguised, or else the racist risked widespread backlash.

The "norm of racial equality" is a very thin principle that explicit discussions of racial hierarchies are not acceptable; or more simply, in [Jennifer Saul's words](#): Don't be racist, or at least don't be seen to be racist. [Tali Mendelberg](#) argues that this norm began to emerge in the 1940s; by the 1990s, nearly all politicians (and other public figures) recognized this norm enough that open appeals to race and racism were very rare. But racial appeals did not go away. Instead, politicians make statements that activate racial prejudice without necessarily making their audience aware of that. In a famous example, Lee Atwater (one of the architects of the Southern strategy) [said](#) that by the late 1960s, politicians couldn't use racial slurs for fear of backlash, but by talking about "forced busing, states' rights," and other issues that implicitly invoke race, those politicians can still capitalize on prejudiced voters – including those who would vigorously deny that they are prejudiced.

In many ways, Donald Trump's public life rejects this norm. He regularly makes blatantly racist statements: there were "[fine people](#)" among the white supremacists who attended the Unite the Right rally in 2017, and immigrants are "[animals](#)" who are "[poisoning the blood of the country](#)" on the 2024 campaign trail. Yet even Trump regularly denies accusations of racism: "I am the least racist person in this room," he [declared](#) during a 2020 presidential debate.

Politicians like Trump use a range of strategies to deny the obvious: that they

are trying to activate prejudice as a persuasive strategy. For example, he [uses](#) apophasis (or paralipsis) ("[I refuse to call Megyn Kelly a bimbo, because that would not be politically correct](#)") to introduce ideas while simultaneously denying responsibility. He uses what Jennifer Saul [calls](#) "figleaves" - rhetoric that provides "metaphorical cover for utterances that would otherwise be seen as clearly racist" or otherwise unacceptable in public life: we need "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on." For those who don't want to see Trump's Islamophobia as a form of prejudice, the end of this statement provides a veneer that these folks can point to in order to justify the idea that Trump isn't really bigoted, he's just worried about a set of contemporary political dynamics. Politicians are also fond of using dog whistles: coded statements that have a benign surface-level meaning but with a hidden, often offensive meaning that can only be recognized by the speaker's intended audience. For some speakers, "terrorist" is a dog whistle that invokes racial, ethnic, and religious bigotry; for some, "New York values" is a dog whistle that invokes antisemitism because it acts as a stand-in for "Jew York values," a common slur in certain circles.

However, it's certainly not the case that all hate speech used by politicians and others with a public platform is hidden or denied like this. When Trump declares that immigrants are "poisoning the blood" of the country (and doubles down when pressed on this rhetoric), he is openly and unambiguously engaging in [dangerous speech](#). Even putting aside the parallels between this rhetoric and that used by Nazi Germany to attack Jews, this dehumanizing language (implicitly equating immigrants with poison) is odious and increases the chances that one of his followers will feel justified in violently attacking immigrants.

The harms of hate speech are not limited to inspiring direct violence, though that is certainly a possible outcome. Hateful rhetoric can also be used to build support for lawful extremism (see Berger's section of this report), intimidate minoritized communities into withdrawing from public life, and more generally deny the dignity and humanity of those it targets. Hateful speech, particularly when mainstreamed in public discourse by politicians or others with a national platform, also legitimizes hateful speech and action, making its presence more tolerated and common across various social spheres. Social media [facilitates](#) this legitimization, especially when platform

policies likewise indicate tolerance for such exclusionary activity. Combined with other strategies, hate speech becomes a mechanism for supremacy – white supremacy, male supremacy, religious supremacy, and many other forms of extremist identity – by making it difficult or even dangerous for others to equally participate in social venues thus impacted by hate speech and its consequences

Lawful Extremism Risks for 2024

J.M. Berger, Senior Research Fellow

Substantial [lawful extremism](#) and legal extremism risks are expected in 2024, aggravated in part by ongoing international conflicts and the U.S. presidential election cycle.

Extremist harms, which target people based on group identities, run the gamut from very low levels (such as shunning or hate speech) to very high levels (such as terrorism and genocide).

Lawful extremism uses the mechanism of government to carry out such harms or to create legal permission structures for non-governmental actors to carry out harms. Governments may also exploit the lack of consensus on what constitutes extremism to punish political dissent. Lawful extremism may be employed by fascist politicians and regimes. Fascism and lawful extremism are not interchangeable terms. Extremism is primarily a social phenomenon, while fascism is primarily political.

Legal extremism includes extremist activities that are not carried out by the government or political authorities but which fall within the confines of the law.

This framework [defines extremism](#) as the belief that an in-group's health and safety can never be separated from the need to take hostile action against an out-group.

An International Problem

Lawful and legal extremism present challenges all over the globe, deeply complicated by the lack of consensus on a definition of extremism. For instance, the conflict in Palestine is characterized by often-contested charges of extremism on both sides pertaining to Hamas terrorism, settler

extremism, and the Netanyahu administration's determination to inflict collective punishment on Palestinians. In addition to in-theater violence, the conflict has stoked antisemitic and Islamophobic sentiments worldwide. Russia has also greatly expanded its [designation of people and groups as extremist](#), driven in part by its disastrous war on Ukraine.

Lawful religious extremism and the persecution of people based on religious identity will continue worldwide in 2024. Examples include (but are not limited to) an [Indian citizenship law](#) specifically designed to deny citizenship to Muslims, the ongoing persecution of [Muslim Uyghurs](#) in China, and the mainstreaming of far-right extremist movements in [Italy](#) and [Germany](#), among many others.

Lawful extremism has also led to government-sanctioned hostile action against LGBTQIA+ communities around the world. According to [Human Rights Watch](#), same-sex relationships are criminalized in at least 67 countries, up to and including death penalties, and at least nine have laws that criminalize the expression of transgender or non-conforming identities. Several U.S. states have also recently attempted to implement laws [targeting transgender communities](#), although some of these measures have been dead on arrival, defeated or overturned.

Domestic U.S. Context

The United States is not immune to these pressures. In addition to the anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation cited above, the American far-right has engaged in a years-long ever-escalating effort to demonize migrants and refugees who seek to enter the country, egged on by the head of the mainstream Republican Party, former president Donald Trump, whose [increasingly dehumanizing rhetoric](#) toward immigrants is cause for alarm. Trump has called undocumented immigrants "vermin" and accused them of "poisoning the blood" of the country, while attacking some people for their racial identity using immigration-related insinuations—most prominently his [chief primary opponent Nikki Haley](#), who is of Indian descent, and his notorious ["birther" campaign](#) against former president Barack Obama throughout the 2010s.

A [robust right-wing media ecosystem](#) and [right-wing political figures](#) have planted a flag of extremist rhetoric firmly within the mainstream of American political discourse, attacking people with transexual identities, often with

[the color of authority](#), and [endorsing Trump's increasingly eliminationist positions](#) on immigrants. Key political networks have mobilized in favor of implementing a sweeping program of lawful extremism should Trump be elected again. At the state level, some Republicans are already implementing such programs, for instance by [criminalizing educators](#) who discuss gender identity or the history of race relations in America. There are few reasons to believe that these initiatives would be scaled back or reversed if Trump loses the presidential election.

Mexico Nationwide Elections in 2024

Dr. Katharine Petrich, Interim Executive Director

On June 6, 2024, Mexico will go to the polls in the largest general election in the country's history; [20,367 seats](#) will be in play, ranging from the presidency to city councils. The election is significant not only because of its vast size and scope, but also because it represents a major window of opportunity to reshape Mexican politics and the country's internal power dynamics. The election will almost certainly drive political violence and targeting of candidates, as elections have done [consistently since 2000](#). Much of this violence will be perpetrated by drug trafficking organizations ('cartels'), which rely on political corruption and intimidation to maintain a robust and diversified portfolio of illicit activities.

Violence by drug trafficking organizations is at an all time high. Since the 2018 election of the current president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, violence has trended consistently upward in Mexico, and is increasingly characterized by [spectacular, terroristic violence](#) carried out by groups using [military grade weaponry](#). On an organizational level, drug trafficking organizations [have shifted](#) over the last twenty years from highly structured, hierarchical organizations to flatter, decentralized cells which have significantly more freedom in their operations. This organizational shift is a defensive reaction to Mexico's [highly successful leadership decapitation campaign](#) and provides the groups with greater resilience to detection and disruption. Their activities have evolved as well; while drug trafficking organizations still dominate the trafficking of cocaine, fentanyl, and heroin into the United States, they are increasingly involved in other crimes, including ones that are political hot button issues in the United States like migrant smuggling. Regardless of crime type, drug trafficking organizations

rely on political corruption and intimidation to enable and expand their activities, compete effectively against rivals, and protect themselves from disruption by state or international forces.

[Local level candidates](#) are the most vulnerable and have been historically the most targeted. This is both a function of Mexico's uneven projection of federal power throughout its territory and because local level officials are often key to securing lucrative trafficking routes or avoiding disruption by the state. The smaller the representative area, the higher the danger for candidates - of the [178 mayors \(and former mayors\) killed between 2004-2017](#), [53%](#) represented villages with less than 20,000 people. While there are [some plans to offer protection](#) to candidates who feel threatened, accessing those resources is a complex, slow process, making it a less than meaningful option.

Concerningly, this violence has impacts beyond the targeted candidate or their party - a single act of electoral violence [directly reduces voter turnout](#) by 1% at the municipal level and by 2% at the federal level. Such violence also has a massive deterrent effect on potential candidates - [presidents of both major parties in Mexico](#) (the Partido Revolucionario Institucional and the Partido Acción Nacional) have raised warnings about their candidates withdrawing from races due to the threat of violence. This kind of artificially narrowing of the candidate pool undermines democracy principles by diminishing the civil engagement those principles rely upon. More immediately, this narrowing also makes it easier for drug trafficking organizations and other corrupt actors to place their preferred candidate in office.

Looking ahead, it is likely that violence and intimidation will continue to increase until June. We should expect to see social media platforms being used to spread graphic imagery and warnings in the form of [digital narco-mensajes](#). The complex interplay of domestic politics, criminal dynamics, and international pressures requires a nuanced policy approach that incorporates not only the immediate threat picture but also the embedded causes of violence and history of political instability in Mexico.

Weaponized Conspiracy Theories and the US 2024 Election Cycle

Sarah Pollack, Director of Tech Policy and Strategy

Within the context of the US 2024 election cycle, we already see a reinvigorated embrace of conspiracy theories motivating people to support a particular politician or political party and to perceive other candidates and political parties as a threat to their own existence and the future of the country. Typical of this trend, the conspiracy theories emerging in the national discourse are beliefs and perspectives that have been around for a long time but see waves of popularity and embrace when new “evidence” of the conspiracy is presented. These conspiracy theories have an established, direct connection to violence, and further pose significant risks to the necessary trust in democratic electoral processes that sustain these political systems. In this context, these conspiracy theories are weaponized; some adherents who believe these theories and accept their conspiracist worldview also believe that they must take action to stop the conspiracy from successfully happening, or else they and this country face an existential crisis.

To effectively examine this, we have to first understand the lasting impact of the QAnon movement on the threat of weaponized conspiracy theories in the 2024 election cycle, while also acknowledging that QAnon itself no longer exists as the movement we saw in the 2020 election cycle. QAnon’s lasting impact was its mainstreaming and consolidating of a series of conspiracist beliefs into an overarching movement that believed an elite class made up of Democratic politicians and liberal-leaning figures is threatening our world and our existence, requiring people to take up action.

The movement’s growth from 2016-2021 enabled QAnon and its lingo, aesthetics, and worldview to be injected into a series of longstanding conspiracy theories and reinvigorate them in the current context - be they related to COVID-19 origins and response measures, politicians running a secretive child abuse cult, or election denialism. This provided multiple entry points for people with different concerns and perspectives who take interest in any one particular theory to embrace the movement’s broader beliefs. Importantly, and as we saw in this period, as conspiratorial communities are able to organize themselves effectively online, the risk of offline violence and

the threat to democratic institutions only grows.

Today, the network of adherents to conspiracy theories that inspire harm remains and no longer needs QAnon branding to stay primed for believing in and acting on new evidence of the government's and Democratic politicians' threat to their existence. Instead, we see a series of conspiracy theories injected into discussions and debates on particular events' unfolding.

Notably in the United States, dynamics and developments related to people entering the United States through the southern border with Mexico are [reinvigorating](#) the Great Replacement Theory as well as [election denialism](#). By design, these conspiracy theories utilize an established fact, in this case that rates of migrant encounters by US Border Patrol at the US-Mexico border [recently reached a new high point](#), as the "evidential proof" that the replacement conspiracy is underway. As this "evidence" is presented to adherents already primed to appreciate the information as proof of the conspiracy, the sense of existential threat can, and has previously, helped to inspire individuals to believe they must take violent action.

Ultimately, this violence often takes place against people based on their protected characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation, as well as their perceived role within a corrupt government or political system. Recent history has shown how belief in the Great Replacement Theory, which posits elites in the form of government officials and Jewish people are attempting to replace the white population with people of other races and ethnicities, has resulted in violence. Attacks including in [El Paso, TX in 2019](#), and [Buffalo, NY in 2022](#), were at least partially inspired by belief in this conspiracy theory and perpetrated horrific violence against people of color and immigrant communities. Another individual embracing this theory and the belief that Jewish people were directing and masterminding the replacement of white people attacked the Tree of Life Synagogue in [Pittsburgh, PA in 2018](#).

Conspiracy theories around how the election is supposedly being manipulated for a particular result by government officials and political leaders have similarly contributed to violence against individuals such as [former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband](#), the [recent murder and beheading of man](#) in Pennsylvania by his son who believed him to be a

federal government employee, and the insurrection of [the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021](#).

As we journey towards Tuesday, November 5, 2024, as well as the weeks following Election Day and its results, we continue to expect to see emerging current events presented through the filter of these conspiracy theories; injecting new terminology, symbolism, and energy into longstanding frameworks for perceiving a threat against conspiracy believers and their vision for their country. Election season is a time for action, to vote, campaign, and fundraise in support of one's vision and values for one's country and future. But through the lens of these conspiracy theories and their weaponization, people can instead believe that the action they must take is a violent and countervailing one.

The Nostalgic Group Spectrum and the US 2024 Elections

Dr. Amy Cooter, Director of Research, Academic Development, and Innovation

Nostalgic groups are those that believe that modern society is somehow degenerate or even harmful compared to some imagined past, though the precise historical time frame they reference and the specific reasons they value it may differ across groups. Some, for example, may vocally yearn for a time when only white people held political and economic power, while others spurn overt racism and instead focus on the increasing size and perceived scope of the federal government. Nostalgic groups have been very active in both political and extremist activities in recent years, and we expect that to continue in this 2024 election cycle.

GOP candidates including Donald Trump have been most successful when overtly appealing to the fears and resentment at the core of this nostalgic outlook, and such rhetoric undergirds numerous potential threats this year. Immigration and fears that immigrants are threatening jobs, safety, or culture are likely to be among the hottest flashpoints, with the conflict between the state and federal governments over practices at the Texas border becoming an easy touchpoint for candidates looking to weaponize pre-existing distrust of federal officials. Perceptions that the Democratic

Party as a whole is fundamentally opposed to nostalgic groups' concerns and values (and, for some, perceptions that Democrats are backtracking once-strong border policies) automatically stokes a deep distrust in President Biden and other party candidates, such that their involvement in immigration issues enhances the perception of their threat. Violence at the border, anti-Latino hate crimes, and various protest actions around the country are likely to develop as this issue gains more coverage and attention.

This infiltration of nostalgic extremism into mainstream politics will continue at the local level in coming months. Moms for Liberty (M4L) has dominated headlines in recent years both for their embrace of this nostalgic framework in the professed interest of protecting school children and for their connections to extremist organizations like the Proud Boys. M4L has suffered deep reputational damage in recent months due to allegations that certain chapter leaders undermine the very family-based morality they claim to uphold, yet the organization's impact remains on educational practices and anti-trans statutes across the country. Alarming, similar actors are likely to adopt their goals and tactics due to the successes M4L enjoyed. Violence that occurred during or in response to some of M4L's activities may be replicated with local candidates or political topics as November approaches. Bomb threats and swatting attacks, which were inspired by M4L's rhetoric, will likely continue against political candidates and others who are perceived as threatening various actors' efforts to return to an idealized society.

We do not expect another January 6th style event, where a site of symbolic national importance is attacked and invaded by a coordinated mob; this is for a few different reasons, and one of them is the criminal sanctions many insurrectionists have received alongside other disruptions to nostalgic group organizing. However, nostalgia's power to motivate people to seek the glory of an imagined past has not dissipated. Organizing and violence may again occur at state capitols or other sites, such as those connected to vote counts or other election processes, as some people believe another "stolen" election is underway. Other themes that drove the January 6th insurrection also continue to be relevant, such as the White Christian Nationalism espoused by the insurrectionists, and continued concerns about the outsized risk of violence military veterans may pose. The vast majority of veterans are not extremists, but extremists who successfully exploit military veterans tap into the skills and knowledge that military service provides. Veterans will likely

continue to be targets of extremist recruitment and other targeting for this reason.

Militant Accelerationism and the US 2024 Elections

Matthew Kriner, Director of Strategy, Partnerships, and Intelligence

It is not hyperbole to assert that the future of liberal democracy in America could be at stake in the upcoming election. Both political candidates would have you believe that they are the arbiters and protectors of the true political spirit of America while their opponent exists as the political archenemy to the system. But below this doomsday level rhetoric is a far more pernicious view of political systems in the United States and across the Western democratic world: a waning faith in liberal democracy offering solutions to grievances. There is no denying that faith in democracy has experienced a backsliding across the Western world in recent years [as polls have captured](#) and as individual and movement actors have demonstrated through actions to undo what they perceive as degenerative effects on their society's standing. A shared narrative across each nation's manifestation or threat actor that dips into this broader political sentiment is the increasing perception that there is no political solution to the challenges we collectively face.

The narrative has served as both an explicit [call to arms](#) as well as an implicit influence on individuals undergoing a process of radicalization to violence. Whether at the level of a lone actor mass shooting perpetrator or a broad political movement, the no political solution narrative imparts an urgency onto its audience to take matters into their own hands because either the enemy has become too strong or the system is too corrupt to adequately address the threat they perceive. When viewed in context of that above mentioned democratic backsliding, the narrative presents a dire threat to the short term viability of democratic governance. This is especially true in a year in which the notion of democracy appears to be on the ballot in elections around the world.

Concerningly, the no-political-solution narrative has gained considerable foothold in both the mainstream political arena, as well as the specific milieus of various threat actors which threaten the stability of liberal democratic system. In the mainstream, [the January 6th Insurrection](#) stands

apart as a prime example of what could manifest when the notion reaches a critical threshold. One of the greatest risks associated with a saturation of the no political solution narrative within a more mainstream political party or candidate's campaign is the extent to which that moves the acceptable levels of violence towards achieving political goals. It also extends the range of mobilizing mechanisms that can facilitate a dissident turning into a threat actor by "[laying the groundwork for escalation to violence.](#)"

A principal example of this dynamic was the [Boogaloo movement](#), which served as a hallmark example of how a loss of faith in the political system and extremist anti-systems narratives can converge to create a robust [threat to political figures](#) and the stability of the government as a whole. However, the most concerning trend at this stage is the extent to which this narrative has found a foothold in the militant accelerationism movement. In the [Accelerationism Research Consortium's \(ARC\)](#) evaluation of the [no political solution narrative](#) within the context of [militant accelerationism](#), it has found that its prominence in the vanguard of extreme right terrorism exists as a cautionary tale of what the narrative can become tied to, or manifest as, in a more explicitly violent or terroristic dynamic.

This particular overlap presents a far more aggressive threat posture when the notion of no political solution mixes or combines with the racist and antisemitic conspiracy theories prominent in the militant accelerationism ecosystem. From [Christchurch](#) to [Pittsburgh](#) to [El Paso](#) to [Buffalo](#), militant accelerationist terrorists have acted upon a twisted belief that the democratic system had become so corrupted by a conspiratorial cabal that the only solution which remained was for them to take up arms and violently lash out at innocent non-white civilians. Each perpetrator became a dark martyr for a growing ecosystem on Telegram known as Terrorgram, a space dedicated to violently hastening the eradication of liberal democratic governance. In that space, figures like those that perpetrated the attacks listed above become another link in a growing "chain reaction of extreme-right terrorism," as Graham Macklin has described it. This chain reaction is not incidental.

Across their propaganda publications, the nebulous leadership of Terrorgram has endeavored to connect numerous narratives into a single cohesive construct that aids in their mobilizing individuals to violence and towards society's collapse. In one such publication, the so-called Terrorgram

Collective states that the document was “written by and for those who prefer to die on their feet rather than live on their knees.” Within that 268 page document, there are three explicit references to the no-political-solution narrative. The thrust of the message is that the system is so thoroughly shambolic that voting is pointless and the only solution to protecting the racist political and social interests of the author is to violently destroy that which is irredeemable.

As the United States enters another election period that will undoubtedly be highly contentious, the conditions are primed for exploitation by militant accelerationists. Whether one looks at the no political solution narrative in the context of a discrete terrorist threat or a defined political movement, even a mainstream one such as the MAGA movement, the reality is clear—it presents a clear and present danger to any and all liberal democratic systems.

Authors

Dr. Sam Jackson: *Senior Research Fellow, Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*

Dr. Sam Jackson is a Senior Research Fellow at CTEC and the author of *Oath Keepers: Patriotism and the Edge of Violence in a Right-Wing Antigovernment Group* (Columbia, 2020). He is an expert on antigovernment extremism, conspiracy theories, and online extremism. Jackson holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from Syracuse University, an M.A. from the University of Manchester, and a B.A. from the University of Tennessee.



J.M. Berger: *Senior Research Fellow, Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*

J.M. Berger is a Senior Research Fellow at CTEC and an internationally recognized expert on extremism, including theory, ideology and propaganda. Berger is the author of three non-fiction books: *Extremism* (MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, 2018), *ISIS: The State of Terror* (with Dr. Jessica Stern, 2015), and *Jihad Joe: Americans Who Go to War in the Name of Islam* (2011). Berger is also a research fellow with the VOX-Pol Network of Excellence and a PhD Candidate at the Swansea University School of Law.



Dr. Katharine Petrich: *Interim Director, Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*

Dr. Katharine Petrich is the Interim Director of CTEC and an expert on transnational crime and terrorism, with regional concentrations on the Horn of Africa and Latin America. She works on international security threats, particularly those concerning disruptive non-state organizations (terrorists and transnational organized criminals) and asymmetric conflicts, as well as their associated second order effects like financial crime and corruption. She holds a PhD from Northeastern University, and both an M.A. and B.A. from the University of San Diego.



Sarah Pollack: *Director of Tech Policy and Strategy*

Sarah Pollack is the Director of Tech Policy at CTEC. An internationally recognized expert on trust and safety, she has designed successful strategies for launching and updating cross-platform technical solutions that increase prevention and detection capabilities through responsible information-sharing and well-informed policies and practices for major tech companies and the public sector. She is an expert on conspiracy theories, their escalation trajectory towards violence, and meaningful interventions in that space.



Dr. Amy Cooter: *Director of Research, Academic Development, and Innovation (RADI), Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*

Dr. Amy Cooter is the Director of Research, Academic Development, and Innovation (RADI) at CTEC and the author of *Nostalgia, Nationalism, and the U.S. Militia Movement* (Routledge, 2024). Her academic work focuses on antigovernment extremism and she has studied a range of groups who use a nostalgic understanding of the past to justify their actions. Her primary expertise is on U.S. domestic militias, and groups of armed individuals who see it as their civic duty to uphold the Constitution the way they believe it should be interpreted. Cooter holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Michigan and B.A. in sociology and psychology from Vanderbilt University.



Matthew Kriner: *Director of Strategy, Partnerships, and Intelligence (SPI), Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*

Matt Kriner is the Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Intelligence (SPI) at CTEC. He specializes in researching and analyzing militant accelerationism, US domestic violent extremism, transnational far-right extremism, extremist exploitation of digital and social media technologies, threat assessment and radicalization.



Terrorism, Extremism, and the 2024 Elections

CTEC '24

Dr. Sam Jackson, J.M. Berger, Dr. Katharine Petrich,
Sarah Pollack, Dr. Amy Cooter, and Matthew Kriner