

Dubbs, Kara (Judiciary)

From: Robert Pape <rpape@uchicago.edu>
Sent: Friday, 1 July, 2022 12:25
To: Dubbs, Kara (Judiciary)
Cc: Trifone, Stephanie (Judiciary-Dem); Gill, Sonia (Judiciary-Dem); Ahmed, Danniyal (Judiciary-Dem)
Subject: Fwd: 06-07-22 - Written Questions for the Record from the Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Attachments: QFR Notice - Pape.pdf; QFRs - Pape - Grassley.docx

Dear Senator Grassley,

I am delighted to answer your questions about [my recent testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee](#) on political violent sentiments spreading into the mainstream and appreciate the opportunity to expand on my views more fully about the relationship between rhetoric by political leaders and violence.

I respond to your questions below one at a time, but naturally present the foundation of my views more expansively in answering the first question.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I would be delighted to meet with you in Washington DC at your convenience to discuss these issues further.

With great respect,

Robert A. Pape

Question 1: Would you agree that calls from Democratic politicians led to an increase in violent outcomes [during the George Floyd protests]?

My argument about the ability of political rhetoric to encourage political violence is not partisan. When political leaders of any stripe call for violence, these calls increase the chances that violence will happen. However, it also matters whether political leaders directly support the organization and target the operational direction of that violence. Under all of those conditions – calls by political leaders for violence, calls that directly support the organization of potentially violent actors at specific time and place, and calls that explain the precise nature of the violent action the actors should enact – we should expect that violence is more likely to occur than if the call is limited to vague encouragement.

Hence, to the extent that Democratic leaders called for violence during the George Floyd protests, those calls would encourage political violence.

However, it would be a mistake to draw an equivalence between former President Donald Trump's calls for violence before and on January 6th, 2021, and statements by Democratic politicians during the George Floyd protests.

In the case of Trump, we see all three elements: (1) a call by the country's highest political leader for violence; (2) at a specific time and place; and (3) with a clearly specified goal. The result was a spectacular mass assault on our nation's most precious symbol of democracy, the US Capitol, to stop our Constitution's most precious democratic process, the peaceful transfer of power to a duly elected government.

First, Trump issued a call for violent actors to gather near the Capitol on January 6th, when he tweeted on December 21 that he planned a rally for that day that would be “wild” – a signal immediately recognizable to the Proud Boys and militia groups that they should appear.

Second, Trump called explicitly in his speech on January 6th for the crowd to “fight like Hell” and that they “could never take back their country with weakness,” clear calls for aggressive behavior – interpretable as calls for violence, but alone, not necessarily calls for violent action.

Third, and most importantly, Trump in his speech on January 6th went further than merely vague calls for violent action to call for the precise nature of the violent action and timing of the action that the potentially violent actors should enact: he told his assembled followers to specifically target “weak” Republicans like Vice President Mike Pence and others to prevent them from certifying the election for then president-elect Joe Biden, which they were about to do imminently without their intervention.

Given all three elements, it is hardly a surprise that thousands acted within minutes along the exact detailed nature that Trump’s elaborate calls for violence inspired.

To see the degree to which Trump’s rhetoric calling for violence on January 6th would be expected to dramatically increase the chances of violence actually occurring, it is helpful to compare the case of Trump to a case commonly cited as the most aggressive call by a Democratic politician to incite violence during the George Floyd protests, the statements by Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

On April 17, 2021, Rep. Maxine Waters called for protesters to “stay on the street” and “get more confrontational” if former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin were to be acquitted in the killing of George Floyd.

To be clear, this statement could have been interpreted by protesters as a call for violence and to that extent – but only to that extent – there are vague parallels to a few of the statements by Trump on January 6th.

However, that is where the parallel ends, and it would be a serious mistake to draw an equivalence between the statements of Trump and Waters. Most importantly, far from going further to clarify the nature of the intended violent action as did Trump, Waters almost immediately explained that she did not mean to call for violent action, but rather was “talking about speaking up...talking about legislation. I’m talking about elected officials doing what needs to be done to control their budgets and to pass legislation.” (CNN report April 19, 2021). Indeed, unlike the violent results of Trump’s political statements over time, Waters statements when taken together did not result in violence.

Question 2: Do you agree that rhetoric from Democratic politicians and the political left on abortion likely influence [the would-be assassin’s attempted murder of Justice Kavanaugh]?

The question about the relationship between rhetoric by Democratic politicians and potential violence by the left on abortion is like the first question. Hence, my general views about the relationship between rhetoric by political leaders and violence and the framework for understanding the relationship also apply. I will not repeat those points here, but they **are** above.

It is also important to know that the case of the attempted murder of Justice Kavanaugh is too recent for a serious analysis of the alleged perpetrator’s motives. Indeed, our researchers at the University of Chicago Project on Security and Threats have only recently begun to assess the motives of those charged with offenses related to assaulting the Capitol on January 6th – because it typically takes many months before evidence on motive from media interviews with friends and family and the multitude of court documents that are

produced through the process from criminal complaint to sentencing documents are available. Hence, my remarks focus on the general issue, and not the specific case.

As in response to the first question, to the extent that Democratic leaders called for violence against the US Supreme Court in the name of pro-abortion causes, those calls would encourage political violence.

Let's consider the political rhetoric by a Democratic leader related to potential pro-abortion violence that is the most comparable to the rhetoric by then President Trump before and on January 6th, 2021, the statement by President Joe Biden after the US Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade. In both cases, the rhetoric was by a sitting president and issued when masses of protesters were assembling in an area within a few hundred yards of the political focal point. Hence, comparing the two cases is probably as close to an "apples to apples" assessment as possible at this point in time.

Indeed, Biden's response to the threat of violence after SCOTUS overturned Roe is a model for how leaders can use their power to mitigate that threat. The statement by President Joe Biden was made within hours of the US Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade and as masses of protesters were assembling in front of the Supreme Court building and in cities around the country. Far from even vague rhetoric that could be interpreted as a call for violence against the Court, President Biden has responded powerfully to the Supreme Court's decision, and in ways that strongly condemn and vigorously discourage the many millions of angry Americans from acting out violently. On June 24, 2022, President Biden said:

"I call on everyone, no matter how deeply they care about this decision, to keep all protests peaceful. Peaceful, peaceful, peaceful. No intimidation. Violence is never acceptable. Threats and intimidation are not speech. We must stand against violence in any form regardless of your rationale."

Although no political speech can prevent all violence, President Biden took exactly the right approach to keep America on a non-violent track going forward: he vigorously condemned future violence, while laying out a peaceful political strategy ("abortion rights are on the ballot this November") to channel the rising mass anger into energy that supports our democratic processes for political change.

In this way, President Biden took the exact opposite approach of then President Trump to the news that he lost the 2020 presidential election. Whereas Trump refused to accept defeat and labeled the election as "stolen" from him and his supporters, called to Washington DC vast numbers of his supporters to gather in protest on January 6th, directed them to show "strength" to the weak Republicans and others in Congress who would certify a peaceful transfer of power, and then took no action for hours as his thusly directed supporters used violence to smash into the US Capitol to obstruct the peaceful transfer of power – President Biden did nothing of the sort to encourage violence.

The Supreme Court's decision may well touch off revolutionary fervor among the left, but it is crucial for leaders among the left to avoid the mistakes of former President Trump that only weaken our democracy. President Biden has led the way and other leaders should follow his lead.

Question 3: Would you argue [based on instances of political violence in the wake of the George Floyd riots and instances of liberals killing police and attacking a Congressional baseball game] that political violence is becoming 'mainstream' across the political left?

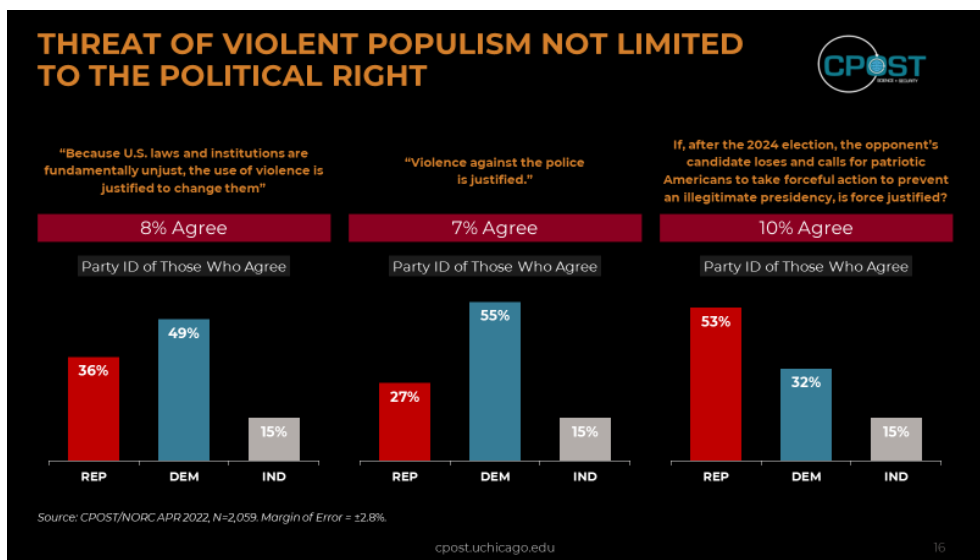
There is potential for political violence in the mainstream of our country across the left. However, this is not best measured by raw counts of the ideology of perpetrators of political violence, although such analyses are useful precursors to better studies. Rather, the best measure of the potential for political violence in the

mainstream – for the left or the right – are nationally representative surveys of sentiments in support of political violence in the general adult population. Indeed, scholars of political violence (myself and many, many others) and even our US military field manuals (FM 3-24) have long treated measures of the degree of community support for violence as an important indicator of future potential violence in a country.

My April 2022 CPOST/NORC survey has findings particularly important in the aftermath of the US Supreme Court’s decision to strike down Roe vs. Wade. My colleagues and I asked a variety of questions about support for political violence to over 2000 adults randomly selected from a panel of 40,000 Americans matched to the general population of 258 million adults on a host of demographic characteristics so that their answers could be extrapolated to the general population, with a margin of error of 2.8 percent.

We found that the potential for political violence is not limited to the political right. Indeed, on a series of questions, Democrats expressed either more support for political violence than Republicans or a significant degree of support in absolute terms. To be sure, Democrats and Republicans disagree about which political causes justify the use of violence, but that should not cause us to overlook that there is significant potential for political violence on the left as well as the right.

For example, Democrats comprise nearly half (49%) of the eight percent of American adults who agree that “because US laws and institutions are fundamentally unjust, the use of violence is justified to change them.” Democrats comprise over half (55%) of the seven percent of American adults who agree that “violence against the police is justified.” And Democrats comprise about a third (32%) of the ten percent of American adults who agree, “If, after the 2024 election, the losing candidate calls for patriotic Americans to take forceful action to prevent an illegitimate presidency, force is justified.”



The good news – as I indicated in my answer to question 2 -- is that President Biden has responded powerfully to the Supreme Court’s decision, and in ways that strongly condemn and vigorously discourage the many millions of angry Americans from acting out violently.

Question 4: Are you studying the 100-night siege of the Portland Courthouse, other riots on the left and ideology that undergirds them?

Yes, I have led a research team that has collected extensive data on political violence in protests in the top 50 cities in America during 2020, which includes the riots in Portland, OR associated with the George Floyd protests. Indeed, I (and a co-author) are now developing an academic analysis focusing on the Portland case, seeking to estimate as precisely as possible whether the deployment of Department of Homeland Security agents reduced, escalated, or had no effect on the trajectory of violence against the Portland Courthouse during the summer of 2020. Our preliminary assessment is that the deployment of DHS did in fact cause violence to escalate in Portland, and we are now going further to identify whether that escalation was due to specific tactical and operational issues related to the case.

In general, America has experienced profoundly explosive political violence since 2020 – riots during the George Floyd protests in 2020, the storming of the US Capitol on January 6th, 2021, and rising of politically motivated terrorism against minority civilian populations (as in the case of the Buffalo shooter who was motivated by the “great replacement” conspiracy theory).

In our detailed analyses of political violence during the George Floyd protests, January 6th assault on the US Capitol, and nationally representative surveys assessing political violent sentiments across the political spectrum, there is ample evidence that political violence is spreading into the mainstream of America.

That is why I believe it is crucial to create a process that thoroughly investigates this profound evolution of political violence into the mainstream in a manner that is fully transparent to the American public and reported widely in the media. A series of Senate hearings on the impact of rhetoric by political leaders and media figures on violent outcomes would be an excellent place to start.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Dubbs, Kara (Judiciary)** <Kara_Dubbs@judiciary-dem.senate.gov>

Date: Tue, Jun 14, 2022 at 4:47 PM

Subject: 06-07-22 - Written Questions for the Record from the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

To: rpape@uchicago.edu <rpape@uchicago.edu>

Hello, Dr. Pape,

Attached is a formal request from the Senate Committee on the Judiciary for answers to attached questions for the record of the hearing, “Examining the ‘Metastasizing’ Domestic Terrorism Threat After the Buffalo Attack,” on Tuesday, June 7, 2022.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of this email.

Please feel free to respond with any questions, concerns, or comments. Once complete, please reply to this email with your responses attached no later than **5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 28, 2022**.

Thank you, and wishing you well,

Kara Dubbs

Assistant Clerk

Senate Committee on the Judiciary

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