

# The Effects of Partisan Elites' Violent Rhetoric on Support for Political Violence

Abstract word count: 149

Manuscript word count: 11,876

August 3, 2022

## Abstract

Violent partisan hostility is undermining American democracy. How does partisan elites' violent rhetoric shape support for political violence? Focused on social media communication where individuals are exposed to elite messages from both sides of the partisan divide, I conduct an online experiment to examine the impact of co-party and opposing party elites' violent rhetoric on support for political violence and the mediating role of emotions in the process. Drawing insights from theories of opinion leadership and inter-group conflict, I demonstrate that co-party (but not opposing party) elites' violent rhetoric increases support for violence and that partisans fail to counteract against elites' violent rhetoric. Further, I show that fear mediates the inflaming effect whereas anger, disgust, and sadness suppress it. This paper is among the first to make sense of the effects of elite rhetoric on violent partisan hostility, advancing knowledge in political violence, political communication, and political psychology

**Keywords:** *Partisanship, Political Violence, Political Communication, Social Media and Politics, Political Psychology, Emotion and Politics, U.S. Politics*

## 1 Introduction

While partisanship in the U.S. has been traditionally viewed as benign, providing citizens with guidance for policy stance and vote choice (Campbell et al. 1980), such a positive view is increasingly overshadowed by concerns about its destructive potential (Kalmoe and Mason 2019, 2022; Kleinfeld 2021; Westwood et al. 2022). Many American partisans not only dislike and distrust opposing partisans (Iyengar et al. 2019; Iyengar, Sood and

Lelkes 2012), but also support the use of violence against them. While survey estimates show that a vast majority of Americans reject acts of political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2019, 2022; Westwood et al. 2022), even the most conservative median estimate (2.4%) implies that the number of American partisans who endorse violence against partisan opponents amounts to several millions (Westwood et al. 2022).<sup>1</sup>

Support for political violence among American partisans is concerning in itself as partisan hostility is associated with a host of negative political (and non-political) consequences such as anti-deliberative attitudes, social avoidance, or social discrimination (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Broockman, Kalla and Westwood 2020; Druckman et al. 2020; Huber and Malhotra 2017; Hutchens, Hmielowski and Beam 2019; MacKuen et al. 2010). In addition, it functions as a risk factor for acts of violent extremism as the more popular support there is the more likely partisan extremists are emboldened to commit political violence (Diamond et al. 2020; Kalmoe and Mason 2022). Given the importance of the peaceful resolution of inter-partisan disagreements as a key building block of democracy, violent partisan hostility and its potential for acts of physical violence are posing a fundamental threat to American democracy.

What is noteworthy about the contemporary violent partisan hostility is that partisan elites' public rhetoric is growing violent as well. Rather than uniformly denouncing political violence, many partisan elites routinely use violent rhetoric, a pattern that is particularly prominent on social media (Zeitzoff 2020). While violent political rhetoric varies in style and intensity (Kalmoe 2014; Zeitzoff 2020), the last several years surrounding the Donald Trump presidency have seen the most severe forms of violent rhetoric by prominent partisan elites, including explicit calls for violence. Not only is political competition fraught with violent metaphors (Kalmoe 2014; Sanchez 2022),<sup>2</sup> but partisan elites – Republicans and Democrats alike – also use threatening rhetoric against their opposing party

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<sup>1</sup>For an ongoing debate on different survey approaches to measuring support for political violence, see Kalmoe and Mason (2019, 2022) and Westwood et al. (2022).

<sup>2</sup>Kalmoe and his coauthors (Kalmoe 2014; Kalmoe, Gubler and Wood 2018; Kalmoe 2019) define violent metaphors as “figures of speech that cast nonviolent politics of campaigning and governing in violent terms, that portray leaders or groups as combatants, that depict political objects as weapons, or that describe political environments as sites of non-literal violence.” In this paper, I focus on political rhetoric expressing the intention of

peers (Diaz, Robertson and Duster 2021; Easley 2021; Korecki 2022; Walsh 2021), endorse past acts of political violence (News and Record 2022; Steck and Kaczynski 2021), and even employ language that directly incites violence against partisan opponents (Korecki 2022; Mauger 2022; Quarshie 2021).

Former President Donald Trump's incitement of violence on Twitter – during Black Lives Matter movements and prior to the Capitol Riot – is the most exemplifying but by no means is unique. For instance, Representative Paul Gosar posted a tweet including an animated video depicting him killing Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (O'Sullivan 2021). More explicitly threatening violence, Blake Masters, a candidate for the Senate, wrote an Instagram post showing his gun with the caption "I will remind everyone in Congress what 'shall not be infringed' means" (Coolican 2022). Similarly, Texas State Representative Briscoe Cain tweeted "[m]y AR is ready for you Robert Francis" in his response to Representative Robert Francis O'Rourke's gun control plan (Cobler 2020). More recently, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot invoked mass violence in her response to the Supreme Court's draft opinion to reverse Roe vs. Wade by tweeting "[t]o my friends in the LGBTQ+ community – the Supreme Court is coming for us next. This moment has to be a call to arms" (Korecki 2022). While other violent remarks abound, these examples well demonstrate that partisan elites' rhetoric threatening violence is highly visible and concerning (see Table A.1 for the actual social media posts in these examples).

How does partisan elites' violent rhetoric affect support for violence against opposing partisans? In this paper, I draw insights from theories of opinion leadership and inter-group conflict to test the following competing hypotheses on the impact of co-party and opposing party elites' violent rhetoric, focused on social media communication. First, if individuals blindly follow partisan leaders, co-party elites' rhetoric threatening the opposing party can exacerbate support for political violence among their supporters (H1). Similarly, individuals exposed to opposing party elites' threatening rhetoric can also reciprocate the threat by taking more violent attitudes toward partisan opponents, generating a vicious cycle of co-radicalization (H2). Yet, partisans might also countervail threatening rhetoric by partisan elites. As a vast majority of American partisans still reject political violence, individuals believing in the norm of non-violence in politics can countervail against violence against political opponents (e.g., threats/incitement/endorsement of violence).

threatening rhetoric, either from co-party elites (H3) or from opposing party elites (H4). Finally, I also predict that the effect of partisan elites' threatening rhetoric is stronger among individuals who are more closely identified with their own party, have more aggressive personality, and are less normatively concerned about political violence (H5a–c).

In doing so, I also explore the role of emotions in the relationships between exposure to partisan elites' violent rhetoric and support for political violence. Existing research shows that group-based emotions play a significant role in inter-group conflict (Berkowitz 1990; MacKuen et al. 2010) and that individuals' appraisal of external stimuli gives rise to specific emotions and, in turn, to attitudinal and behavioral tendencies (Lerner and Tiedens 2006). Although the literature on inter-group conflict and terrorism highlight fear and anger as emotions that play a key role in shaping hostile attitudes/behavior toward opposing groups, I comprehensively examine a variety of discrete emotions to examine the causal process through which partisan elites' violent rhetoric shape support for political violence.

To test my hypotheses and investigate emotional mechanisms, I conduct a pre-registered online experiment on a sample of 2,312 U.S. partisans reflecting the demographic makeup of the general population. The participants are randomly assigned to four treatment groups where they see fabricated Facebook posts reflecting the two dimensions under investigation (violent vs. non-violent and co-party vs. opposing party) and one control group where they see non-political content (healthy recipes). I find that violent partisan rhetoric increases support for violence when it comes from co-party elites while there is no such effect when the same rhetoric comes from opposing party elites (supporting H1 but against H2). Boding ill for American democracy, no evidence is found for countervailing behavior against partisan elites' violent rhetoric (against H3–4). Further, the inflaming effect of co-party elites' violent rhetoric is stronger among partisans who are more closely identified with their own party, have more aggressive personality, and are less normatively concerned about political violence (supporting H5a–c). Finally, fear (likely generated by co-party elites' fearmongering framing of the opposing party) is found to mediate the inflaming effect whereas anger, disgust, and sadness (likely a negative response to co-party elites' violation of the norm of non-violence) suppress such effect.

My findings advance our knowledge in several fields of political science. First, I extend

the micro-level study of political violence to the context of advanced democracy. While much research has taken a bottom-up approach to studying individuals who engage in group violence in undemocratic/conflict-prone settings (Horowitz 1985; Scacco 2010; Fujii 2011; Tausch et al. 2011), little research investigates individuals' support for and engagement in political violence in advanced democracy. By illustrating the pernicious effect of co-party elites' violent rhetoric in the U.S., I shed further light on the micro-level dynamics of political violence. Second, I contribute to the literature on political communication by showing that co-party (but not opposing party) elites' violent rhetoric increases support for political violence. By doing so, I highlight the destructive potential of partisan elites' use of social media – a modern communication technology that connects elites from the both sides of the partisan divide with ordinary citizens. Finally, I advance our understanding of the role of emotions in politics (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Marcus 2000; Valentino et al. 2011). By uncovering discrete emotions that can either mediate or suppress the effects of partisan elites' violent rhetoric on support for political violence, I deepen our understanding of emotional mechanisms underlying the opinion-shaping power of partisan elites.

## 2 Explaining Individuals' Support for Political Violence

Grassroots support and/or participation is a necessary condition for all forms of political violence. Accordingly, there is an extensive body of literature that examines individuals' participation in political violence in various contexts (Levi 2013). For instance, an interdisciplinary stream of studies seeks to identify a host of risk factors associated with a tendency to engage in violent extremism (Borum 2011a,b; Gill, Horgan and Deckert 2014; LaFree and Ackerman 2009; McGilloway, Ghosh and Bhui 2015). Lack of stable employment, history of mental illness, low self-control, perceived injustice, and exposure to violent extremism are among the factors highlighted in the literature (LaFree et al. 2018; Pauwels and Heylen 2017; Schils and Pauwels 2016). In the context of more conflict-ridden areas, studies also seek to explain why individuals participate in inter-group violence (e.g., ethnic, religious). Here, major explanations include selective incentives that alleviate the problem of free-riding (DiPasquale and Glaeser 1998; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008), social pressure (Fujii 2011; Scacco 2010), and perceived distributive inequality (Claassen 2016).

In addition, another line of research investigates what drives support for political violence from a wider group of people, as opposed to a small minority of individuals who directly engage in political violence. In particular, cutting-edge works on the violent partisan hostility in contemporary U.S. politics examine the determinants of support for violence against opposing partisans. One group of works focuses on dispositional factors, such as aggressive personalities, anti-establishment sentiments, cognitive rigidity (Kalmoe 2013, 2014; Kalmoe and Mason 2018; Uscinski et al. 2021; Zmigrod and Goldenberg 2021). For instance, Kalmoe (2014) finds that violent metaphors increase support for political violence among aggressive individuals. Also, another group of works highlights perceptual factors such as the perceived burden of the COVID-19 pandemic and perceptions of opposing partisans' support for violence (Bartusevičius et al. 2021; Mernyk et al. 2021). Focused on meta-perceptions, Mernyk et al. (2021) shows that support for political violence is based in part on greatly exaggerated perceptions of rival partisans' support for violence and that correcting these inaccurate perceptions reduces partisans' own support for political violence.

While these works make a valuable contribution to our understanding of political violence in the U.S., we know very little about a potentially crucial determinant of support for political violence: the influence of partisan elites. Although Kalmoe and Mason (2022) examines elite messages containing relatively mild forms of inter-personal aggression (e.g., fistfight), they are quite different from extreme forms of rhetoric threatening violence against opposing partisans.<sup>3</sup> Also, Clayton et al. (2021) investigates whether elite messages questioning the integrity of elections undermine confidence in elections and whether the effects of such messages spill over to other domains – including support

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<sup>3</sup>Kalmoe and Mason (2022) finds little inflaming effect of elite rhetoric containing inter-personal aggression on support for political violence. Suggesting the need to examine the effect of rhetoric threatening extreme forms of political violence, the authors note that “the candidates talk about physically fighting each other, which is a far cry from indirectly or directly advocating for wide-spread partisan violence. That probably weakens the impact of our messages by comparison. We cannot say from this evidence how people would react if one or both candidates called for lethal attacks against opponents, especially if the messages were repeated and joined by a chorus of fellow partisans.”

for political violence – but their treatment is distinct from violent political rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> Given the power of partisan elites to shape political views (Cohen 2003; Druckman 2001; Zaller et al. 1992) and concerns about the rise of extreme forms of violent rhetoric by high-profile partisan elites, I fill the gap in the literature by explicitly evaluating the extent to which partisan elites’ rhetoric threatening violence shapes support for political violence.

### 3 Theory and Hypothesis

Although violent hostility between opposing parties in the U.S. can be traced back to times as old as the Civil War era (Kalmoe 2020; Kristian 2021), the violent partisan hostility in contemporary U.S. politics is shaped in the context of shifting media environments, particularly the rapid rise of social media in political communication. While social media was traditionally seen as reinforcing echo chambers where individuals seek out pro-attitudinal information without exposure to opposing views (Pariser 2011; Sunstein 2007), cutting-edge works on social media and politics document that social media platforms enable individuals to observe opposing political content, including hostile and violent partisan expressions (Bail 2021; Kim et al. 2021; Kim 2022; Rathje, Van Bavel and van der Linden 2021). Given the modern communication technology’s power to expose citizens to content from both sides of the contentious partisan divide, I theorize how violent political rhetoric both from co-party and from opposing party elites shape support for violence against the partisan opposition (Table 1).

Theory	Source partisanship	Predictions	Hypothesis
Partisan opinion leadership	Co-partisan		H1
Co-radicalization	Opposing partisan	More violent attitudes	H2
Countervailing	Co-partisan		H3
	Opposing partisan	Less violent attitudes	H4

Table 1: Theory, Source Partisanship, and Predictions

<sup>4</sup>Clayton et al. (2021) finds that, while exposure to messages de-legitimizing elections decreases confidence in elections, it does not affect support for political violence.

### 3.1 Partisan opinion leadership

Partisan opinion leadership is a powerful force that shapes individuals' political views (Bolsen, Druckman and Cook 2014; Broockman and Butler 2017; Cohen 2003; Karpowitz, Monson and Preece 2017; Zaller et al. 1992). Individuals' political views heavily affected by their party in general (Lupia 1994; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1993) and prominent partisan elites – in addition to a general party label – are particularly influential (Barber and Pope 2019; Nicholson 2012; Lenz 2013). While partisan elites can shape political views on a wide range issue areas – including the perception of economic performance (Bartels 2002), group relations (Karpowitz, Monson and Preece 2017), and responses to policy debates (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013; Leeper and Slothuus 2014), of particular relevance to the current study is that partisan elites can also be influential in shaping public opinion on the use of violence, both domestic and foreign (e.g., the Civil War, World War II, the Iraq War, etc.) (Berinsky 2009; Kalmoe 2020; Lenz 2013; Zaller et al. 1992).

The key mechanism through which partisan elites' threatening rhetoric can exacerbate support for political violence is motivated reasoning. In evaluating a political message, partisan motivated reasoning induces individuals to reason in defense of their partisan identity (Lodge and Taber 2013), encouraging uncritical acceptance and promotion of identity-consistent views (messages from co-party elites) and unconditional opposition to identity-inconsistent views (messages from opposing party elites). When it comes to the effects of partisans elites' violent rhetoric, one implication of the theory is that partisans can fail to reject co-party elites' messages threatening political violence, even if they do not support it in principle. Together with recent evidence that partisans update their political views to match their co-party elites' even when the elite messages are at odds with their previous views (Agadjanian 2021; Barber and Pope 2019; Broockman and Butler 2017), this leads us to believe that extreme forms of violent political rhetoric from co-party elites can have an inflaming effect, increasing support for violence against opposing partisans.

**Hypothesis 1:** Exposure to violent rhetoric by co-party elites increases support for the use of violence against the opposing party.

### 3.2 Co-radicalization

How do partisans respond to opposing party elites' rhetoric threatening violence against their own party? I expect that elites' rhetoric threatening violence against partisan opponents can inflame violent partisan hostility, generating cyclical dynamics of co-radicalization. According to social identity theory, in-group identification is such an essential part of self that provides individuals with acceptance and belonging as well as guides their social behavior to the extent that the mere presence of inter-group antagonism is its natural corollary (Tajfel et al. 1979). Not only so, across various settings, individuals generally deal with (threats of) violence from an opposing group by adopting hostile attitudes. For instance, individuals exposed to terrorism are more likely to support hostile foreign policies (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014), exhibit reduced political tolerance (Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006), and exclusionist attitudes toward ethnic minorities (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2009). When it comes to attitudes toward violence against opposing partisans, such reasoning leads us to believe that partisans will take more violent attitudes in response to opposing party elites' threatening rhetoric.

**Hypothesis 2:** Exposure to violent rhetoric by opposing party elites increases support for the use of violence against the opposing party.

### 3.3 Countervailing

While the theories of partisan motivated reasoning and co-radicalization depict a grim picture in which partisan elites can mobilize constituents into cyclical and self-reinforcing dynamics of violence (H1 and H2), we should note that a vast majority of American partisans oppose the use of political violence in any form (Kalmoe and Mason 2019; Westwood et al. 2022), which I refer to as the norm of non-violence hereafter. Considering that partisan elites' rhetoric threatening the opposing party is an obvious violation of the norm of non-violence, I expect that partisans – instead of being provoked to take violent views – might move away from partisan reasoning and even countervail their elites' threatening rhetoric in an effort to comply with the norm of non-violence.

While partisan opinion leadership is a strong factor shaping individuals' political views

– particularly in the context of partisan polarization (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013), the opinion-shaping power of political elites is often exaggerated and depends on a host of factors related to the nature of elite messages, individual characteristics, and political contexts. (Agadjanian and Horiuchi 2020; Agadjanian 2021; Boudreau and MacKenzie 2014; Bullock 2011; Ciuk and Yost 2016; Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017). Undoubtedly, the use of violence to resolve policy/political differences is such an extreme strategy that contradicts the norm of non-violence held by an overwhelming majority of the population. Furthermore, according to theories on norm-violation, norm-violation undermines leadership (Stamkou et al. 2016, 2019), which further implies that the opinion-shaping power of partisan elites who employ violent rhetoric can be compromised and so can the inflaming effects of their violent rhetoric.

Furthermore, similar findings related to norm-violating political content are reported in the field of political communication. For instance, uncivil co-partisan media is found to cause partisan ambivalence and emotional detachment from one's own party, leading to affective de-polarization (Druckman et al. 2019). Similarly, political elites' use of uncivil rhetoric is found to harm their reputation (Frimer and Skitka 2018) and they are held to a higher normative standard for incivility than ordinary partisans (Frimer and Skitka 2020). Therefore, I expect that partisans might countervail co-party elites' violent messages by taking stricter attitudes toward the use of political violence.

**Hypothesis 3:** Exposure to violent rhetoric by co-party elites decreases support for the use of violence against the opposing party.

**Hypothesis 4:** Exposure to violent rhetoric by opposing party elites decreases support for the use of violence against the opposing party.

### 3.4 Individual-level heterogeneities

Although the hypotheses described above predict the direction of the treatment effects, they tell little about potentially heterogeneous treatment effects across individuals. In extreme cases, not only the magnitude of the effects, but also their causal directions might depend on individual-level attributes, providing evidence for both of the competing hy-

potheses (H1 vs. H3 and H2 vs. H4). First, partisan social identity can be a moderating factor as the more strongly individuals self-identify with their own party, the more likely they engage in partisan motivated reasoning and thus are heavily affected by partisan elites' violent rhetoric (H5a). Second, as explored in previous research (Dill et al. 1997; Kalmoe 2014; Kalmoe and Mason 2022), individuals with aggressive personality can be more receptive to violent rhetoric and thus more likely to support political violence. Thus, I expect that aggressive individuals will be more heavily inflamed by partisan elites' violent rhetoric (H5b). Finally, as individuals vary in their baseline support for political violence, they might differently perceive the degree to which violent rhetoric by partisan elites violates the norm of non-violence. Therefore, I hypothesize that the less individuals are normatively concerned with political violence (thus perceive less norm violation), the more they are receptive to violent political rhetoric (H5c).

**Hypothesis 5a, 5b, 5c:** The inflaming effect of partisan elites' violent rhetoric is stronger among individuals who are strongly identified with the own party (H5a), are more aggressive (H5b), and are less concerned about violence in politics (H5c).

## 4 Emotions and Support for Political Violence

One of the most fundamental aspects of politics is that it can be highly emotional (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Marcus 2000; Valentino et al. 2011). While a long tradition of research examines group-based emotions in general (Goldenberg et al. 2016; Iyer and Leach 2008) and focused on confrontational settings (Mackie, Devos and Smith 2000; Stephan, Renfro and Davis 2008; Renfro et al. 2006), little attention has been paid to how emotions shape support for violence against partisan opponents.<sup>5</sup> To shed light on the role of emotions in violent partisan hostility, I measure a host of discrete emotions (anger, disgust, shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, sadness, and happiness) and examine whether/how they mediate the impact of partisan elites' violent rhetoric on individuals' attitudes toward political violence. Here, I do not intend to hypothesize *a priori* about the specific type of emotions evoked by partisan elites' violent rhetoric. Rather, I take a comprehensive ap-

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<sup>5</sup>See Zmigrod and Goldenberg (2021) for how individual-level affective dispositions – such as sensation seeking and impulsivity – are associated with political violence.

proach by asking individuals about their emotional experiences upon exposure to violent political rhetoric.

**RQ:** (How) do discrete emotions shape the relationships between partisan elites' violent rhetoric and support for the use of violence against the opposing party?

## 5 Experimental Design

To conduct an online experiment, I recruited 2,312 U.S. partisans through Lucid from 16 May and 1 June, 2022. The sample is intended to match the demographic profile of the general population (see Appendix A.2 and Table A.3 in Appendix A.8 for details). Participants were randomly assigned into four treatment groups and a control group (see Appendix A.6 and A.7 for balance check and randomization check, respectively). The assignment primarily reflects variation along the two key theoretical dimensions under study: rhetoric threatening violence (threatening or not) and source partisanship (co-partisan or opposing partisan). The control group serves as a baseline against which the treatment effects are evaluated and is exposed to non-political content (healthy recipes).

After informed consent, participants answer a series of basic questions. Then, they are instructed to read four real (but actually fabricated) Facebook posts reflecting the two dimensions under study and posts related to healthy recipes (see Table 2 for the breakdown). Next, they were asked questions related to a) discrete emotions experienced after reading the posts, b) the perceived level of violation of the norm of non-violence, and c) support for violence against opposing partisans. The questions about discrete emotions are asked right after the posts as emotions might quickly dissipate over time. Before they exit the survey, they were debriefed on the general purpose of the experiment and the fabrication of the Facebook posts and allowed to withdraw their data if they desire (see Appendix A.3 for discussion about ethical considerations).

		Co-party treatment			
		Co-party	Opposing party	Non-political	Sum
Violence treatment	Violent	492	445	0	937
	Non-violent	476	444	0	920
	Non-political	0	0	455	455
	Sum	968	889	455	2,312

Table 2: Distribution of treatment assignment

### 5.1 Treatments

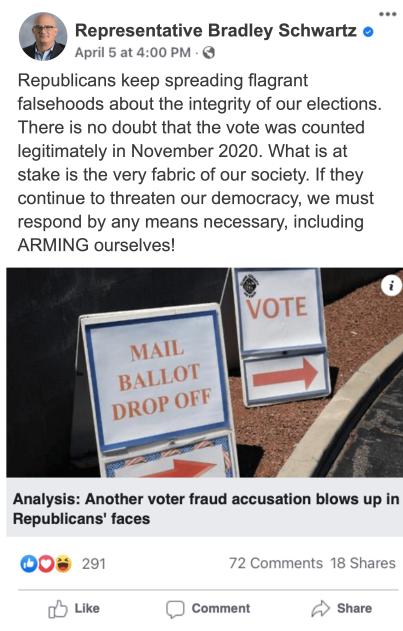
To simulate real-world exposure to partisan elites’ rhetoric threatening violence, I fabricated Facebook posts for the four treated groups, ostensibly written by prominent partisan elites. For the non-political control group, I picked actual Facebook posts on healthy recipes. Figure 1 shows a set of posts focused on election integrity. Note that each of the posts in the figure is the first of the four posts shown to each group (see Figure A.2 – A.6 in Appendix A.5 for the other three posts arranged by group). The participants are told that the Facebook posts are real. This is intended to fully immerse them in the experiment as the recognition of the fabrication might compromise the internal validity of the experiment. For the same reason, I decided not to use actual elected officials’ profiles as participants who notice that the posts are inauthentic might behave differently than they would otherwise. As this is a form of deception, the participants are debriefed about the purpose of the experiment and the fabrication of the posts.



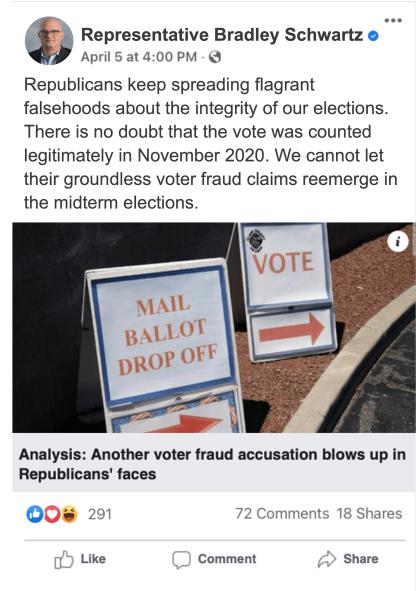
(a) Violent & Republican: first post



(b) Non-violent & Republican: first post



(c) Violent & Democratic: first post



(d) Non-violent & Democratic: first post

Figure 1: Treatment posts (election integrity)

I choose Facebook as it is a platform that is most frequently used both in general and for news consumption, constituting an integral part of political communication in the U.S. To approximate the real-world media environment where co-party elite messages tend to be unified (Zaller et al. 1992) and individuals are exposed to similar content repeatedly, I

present four different posts by four different co-party elites as if it is seen on one's news feed (again, each post in Figure 1 is the first of the four posts for each group). This is in line with recent work suggesting the importance of designing experimental stimuli that mimic repeated exposure from multiple sources in the real world (Arceneaux and Johnson 2013; Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Searles et al. 2022).

Participants are assigned to one of the four treatments (each consisting of four posts). Since treatment effects can be conditional on factors other than the two dimensions under study, I vary the partisan elite's race/ethnicity and gender as well as the post's topic (across posts, not across groups). For the topic, I focus on two contentious issues that have drawn significant public attention: the integrity of the 2020 Presidential Election and COVID-19 vaccine mandates. This choice ensures that the messages in the posts are recognizable and reflect the current partisan opinion divide. In particular, the two parties' positions contrast with each other on the same topic (compare Panel (a) with Panel (c) and Panel (b) with Panel (d) in Figure 1). At the bottom of the post, I include a set of engagement indicators (emoji types, emoji count, comment count, share count). Further, I include a link to a news article relevant to each post to provide the context of the message in the post. To prevent the news source (e.g., CNN, Fox) from affecting participants' experience, I remove it from all posts.

The text of the posts is written in a way that advocates the typical partisan position on the respective issue. The text is manipulated to make it as symmetrical as possible a) between the posts in the violent group and the posts in the non-violent group, on one hand, and b) between the posts written by Republican elites and the posts written by Democratic elites, on the other hand. For the symmetry between the violent group and the non-violent group, the text is held constant except for the use of violent rhetoric. For the symmetry between the Republican group and the Democratic group, the partisan elites advocate their own party's stance on the same topic but their rhetorical style is a mirror image of one another. The texts are vetted multiple times by multiple native English speakers.

The profile of the partisan elite is carefully manipulated. a) To reflect the variety of elected officials' race/ethnicity and gender, I included one white man, one white woman, one Hispanic/Latino man, and one black woman (e.g., Figure 1 features a white man). Such identities are visually signaled in the profile picture showing the face and the name

(Bradley Schwartz, Carly Smith, Carlos Perez, and Ebony Mosley, respectively). Again, note that the race/ethnicity and gender vary only within the group and the makeup is held constant across groups. b) As they are fabricated figures, I also take measures to indicate that they are prominent public officials: I add a title (e.g., Rep., Representative, or Senator) before the name and a blue badge after the name - an indicator signaling that the account is of public interest.

## 5.2 Measures

To measure support for violence against opposing partisans, I ask four items about attitudes toward a set of violent actions described in broadly general terms (Table 3). The questions are taken from Kalmoe and Mason (2022). Similar approaches are widely used in other works on support for political violence in the U.S. (Baum et al. 2022; Mernyk et al. 2021; Uscinski et al. 2021). Note that, instead of multiple-choice options on a 5-point Likert scale, I provide slide bars on a scale of 0–100 at a 10-point interval, with greater numbers corresponding to greater support. This is intended to avoid any potential bias from the wording in the multiple-choice options. By using questions in general terms, I encourage participants to abstract away from the idiosyncrasies of particular acts or events of violence, either hypothetical or real (e.g., the Capitol Riot). See Westwood et al. (2022) for the opposite approach where participants are asked about highly specific events of political violence. For subsequent statistical analyses, I take the average of the four items, in line with previous works (Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Mernyk et al. 2021) (see Figure 4 for the distribution of the averaged score). Finally, note that the purpose of the current study is not to estimate the level of support for political violence. Rather, I estimate the treatment effect of exposure to violent political rhetoric on support for political violence.

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- (a) When, if ever, is it okay for [own party] to send threatening and intimidating messages to [opposing partisan] leaders?
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- (b) When, if ever, is it okay for an ordinary [own partisan] in the public to harass an ordinary [opposing partisan] on the internet, in a way that makes the target feel frightened?
- 
- (c) How much do you feel it is justified for [own partisans] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?
- 
- (d) What if [Opposing party] wins the 2022 Congress Election?  
How much do you feel violence would be justified then?
- 

Table 3: Measuring support for violence against opposing partisans

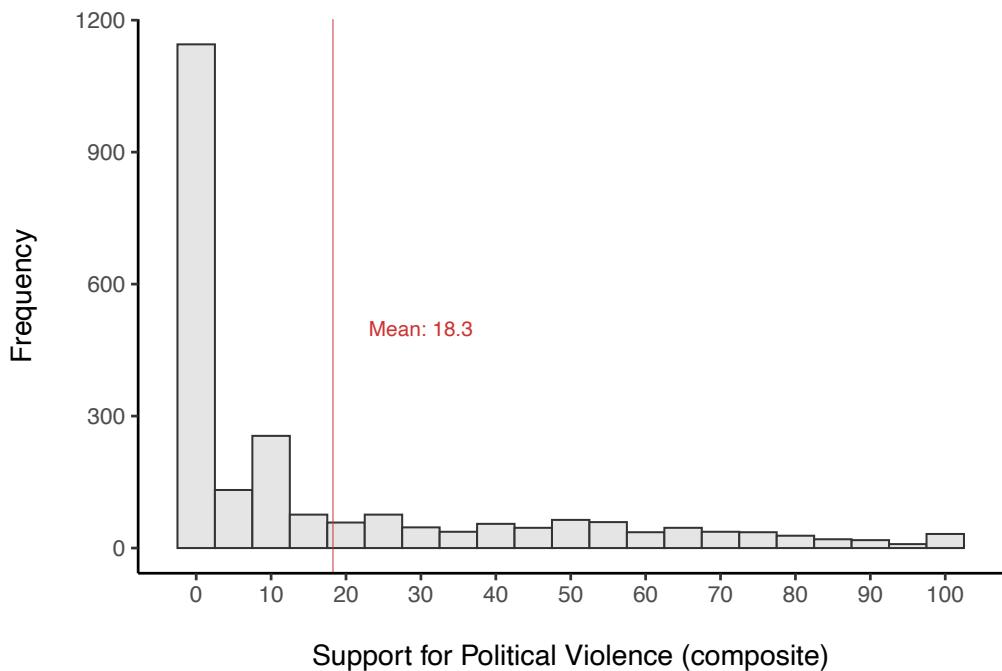


Figure 2: Support for violence: averaged score

For moderating variables (concerning H5a–c), I first measure the strength of partisan identity, using a set of questions tailored to gauge partisanship as a social identity (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015) as well as a traditional ANES question.<sup>6</sup> I measure aggressive

<sup>6</sup>The ANES questions are asked sequentially. I first ask “Generally speaking do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent?” and then “Would you call yourself a strong Democrat/Republican or a not very strong Democrat/Republican?”

personality based on four trait-aggression items introduced by Bryant and Smith (2001), which is commonly used in political science (Kalmoe 2014; Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Zeitzoff 2020) (hereafter, I use aggressive personality and trait aggression interchangeably). For the norm of non-violence, I ask participants about the extent to which they think the language in the Facebook posts is concerning (the perceived violation of the norm of non-violence). It is important to note that I do not ask directly about their support for violence because it can prime them into violence, which is highly likely to complicate the treatment effect. In addition to these variables, I also include measures related to conservatism (self-reported ideology), gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and income. See Appendix A.4 and A.8 for the details of the questions, response scales, and related descriptive statistics.

Finally, I rely on the PANAS-M (the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule - Modified) from Rhodes-Purdy, Navarre and Utych (2021) to measure discrete emotions. While the original PANAS is designed to measure generalized positive and negative affect, the PANAS-M is a two-step process tailored to measure discrete emotions. It sequentially measures the presence and the intensity of discrete emotions to prevent generalized affect from contaminating the measurement of discrete emotions. Here, participants first select any discrete emotions that they experience following exposure to the treatments (emotions not selected are coded at 0) and are asked to indicate the intensity of all the selected emotions on a 5-point Likert scale. The list of emotions is taken from Harmon-Jones, Bastian  

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Those who do not identify with either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party are excluded from the study. However, Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015) aptly points out that existing measures of partisanship, like the ANES question, do not effectively capture partisanship as a social identity. They introduce four items that capture partisanship as a social identity and show that the items are closely related to tendencies to “react most strongly to collective threat, feel the strongest emotions, and are most likely to take action in defense of their political party.” This is complementary to and distinct from another approach to partisanship where it is perceived as “a running tally of party performance, ideological beliefs, and proximity to the party in terms of one’s preferred policies.” Indeed, existing research on violent partisan hostility (Kalmoe and Mason 2022) documents close relationships between support for political violence and the measures from Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015).

and Harmon-Jones (2016) and I added shame and guilt. The first and second steps of the process are described in Figure 3.

Select any of the following emotions you feel after seeing the Facebook posts (you can choose multiple options).

- Anger
- Shame
- Guilt
- Disgust
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Happiness
- None of the categories offered

(a) Step 1

Indicate to what extent you feel fear.

- Very lightly or not at all
- A little
- Moderately
- Quite a bit
- Extremely

Indicate to what extent you feel anxiety.

- Very lightly or not at all
- A little
- Moderately
- Quite a bit
- Extremely

(b) Step 2

Figure 3: PANAS-M questionnaire. Step 1 is about the type of emotions and Step 2 is about the intensity of emotions. For Step II, the figure describes a situation where fear and anxiety are selected.

## 6 Findings

In this section, I present the findings from a series of statistical analyses on H1–5 and RQ. First, I find that violent partisan rhetoric in general exacerbates support for violence (supporting both H1 and H2) and that there is no evidence for countervailing behavior against elites' violent rhetoric (against H3 and H4). At the same time, the effect of increasing support for violence is only present when violent rhetoric comes from co-party elites (supporting H1 but contradicting H2). Further, the effect of violent rhetoric from co-party elites is stronger among individuals who are more closely identified with their own party, have more aggressive personality, and are less normatively concerned about political violence (supporting, H5a–c). Finally, fear is found to mediate the inflaming effect, implying the violent effect of co-party elites' fearmongering, whereas anger, disgust, and sadness (likely negative emotional reactions to co-party elites' violent rhetoric) are found to suppress the

inflaming effect.<sup>7</sup>

## 6.1 The general effect of partisan elites' violent rhetoric

To examine how violent political rhetoric in general – regardless of whether it comes from co-party elites or from opposing party elites – affects support for violence against partisan opponents, I first test if the mean scores of support for violence in the violent (political) group and the non-violent (political) group are different. As the distribution of the outcome variable is right-skewed and cannot be reasonably assumed normal, I use a Monte-Carlo permutation t-test ( $N = 10,000$ ). The mean scores are 19.6 and 16.9, respectively (Figure 4). The C.I. for the difference is (-5.1, -0.3) with a p-value of 0.03. Therefore, the result supports both H1 and H2. In substantive terms, the mean support for violence is around 16% higher when partisans are exposed to violent political content than when they are exposed to non-violent political content.

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<sup>7</sup>Consistent with my pre-registered analysis plan, I combine t-test, ANOVA, and OLS regression models to test the five hypotheses (H1–4, H5a–c). The results from ANOVA are included in Table A.4 and in line with the findings reported in the main text. Observations assigned to the non-political baseline are excluded from the regression analyses because the only noticeable difference in the outcome variable is between the observations in the violent political treatment group and the non-violent political treatment group, as demonstrated in the results of t-test. In addition to what is included in the pre-registered analysis plan, I conduct a split-sample regression analysis to test H1 against H2 and H3 against H4 (reported in Table A.7), to supplement the interaction models (reported in Figure 6). For RQ (the mediating role of discrete emotions), mediation analysis is conducted relying on Imai et al. (2011).

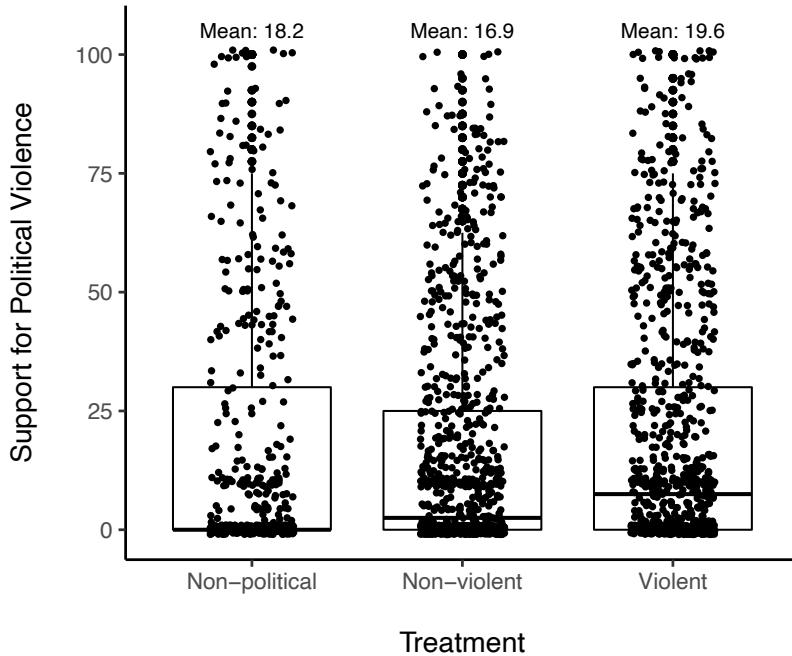


Figure 4: Support for violence: non-political vs. non-violent (political) vs. violent (political). The box plots depict the distribution of support for violence across three groups. The non-violent and violent groups include participants assigned to both the co-partisan group and the opposing partisan group. The non-political group includes participants who see posts on healthy recipes.

The mean score of the non-political group (healthy recipe) is 18.2, lower than the violent group but, interestingly, higher than the non-violent group. To see a) whether the mean score for the violent group is different from the non-political group and b) whether the mean score for the non-violent group is different from the non-political group, I also conduct a Monte-Carlo permutation t-test for the two pairs of comparison. For a), the C.I. for the difference is (4.4, -1.7) with the p-value of 0.39. For b), the C.I. for the difference is (-4.2, 1.6) with the p-value of 0.39. Thus, there are no noticeable differences. The key implication of the results is that although the topics (the legitimacy of the 2020 Presidential Election, COVID-19 vaccine mandates) are highly contentious, the contentious nature of partisan conflict itself does not provoke violent partisan hostility (no noticeable difference between the non-violent group and non-political group). Also, they together show that violent political rhetoric stokes support for violence only in the context of political discussion.

To further examine the effect of violent political rhetoric in general, I fit an OLS regression model where the outcome variable is regressed against two treatment variables along with various covariates. Here, I focus on the participants assigned to the political groups. Figure 5 depicts the estimated effects (see Table A.5 for the related regression table). The results are consistent with the permutation t-test: on average, those who are exposed to violent political rhetoric exhibit around 2–3 points higher support for violence against partisan opponents (on a scale of 0–100), consistent with H1 and H2. Here, we can also see that political rhetoric from co-party elites leads to approximately a 2.4-point increase in support for violence. In terms of covariates, Republicans exhibit stronger support for violence while conservatism is associated with less support. Men, younger generations, Blacks and Asians, and people with higher income report greater support for political violence than women, older generations, Whites, and people with lower income.<sup>8</sup>

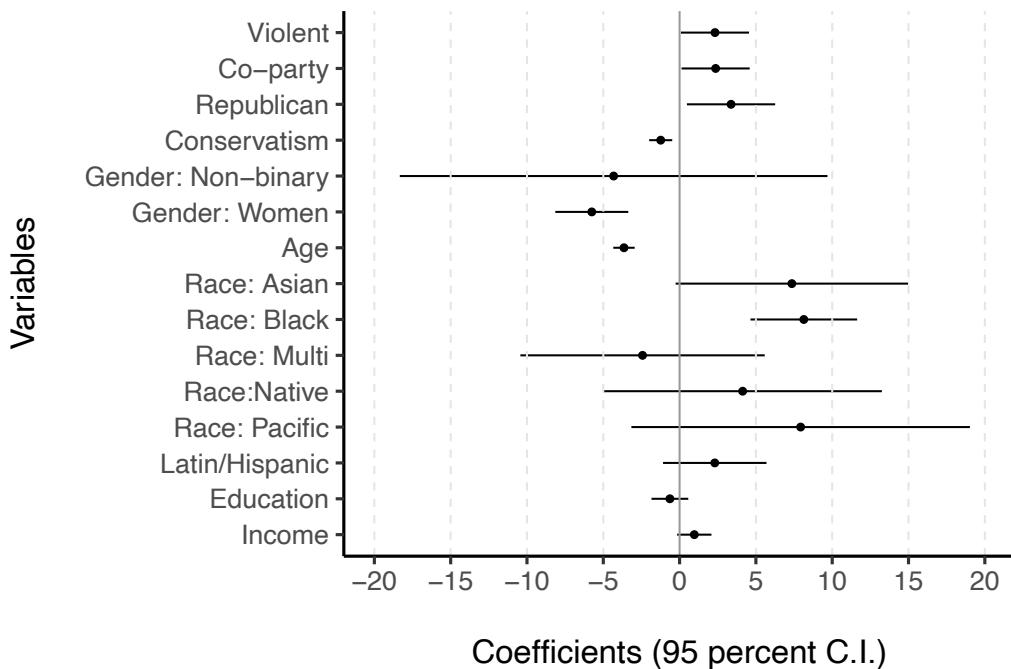


Figure 5: The marginal effect of violent political rhetoric. The  $x$ -axis depicts the coefficients in regression analysis. Each dot indicates the point estimate and the corresponding line around the dot denotes the 95% confidence interval. The  $y$ -axis shows the variables included in the regression analysis.

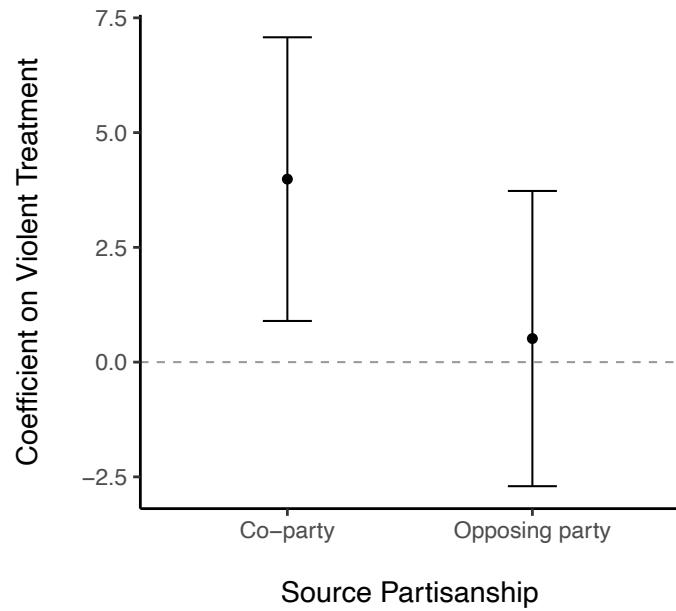
<sup>8</sup>For income, the positive association is driven by the high support of violence from the group whose reported income is between \$70,000 - \$99,999.

## 6.2 The role of source partisanship

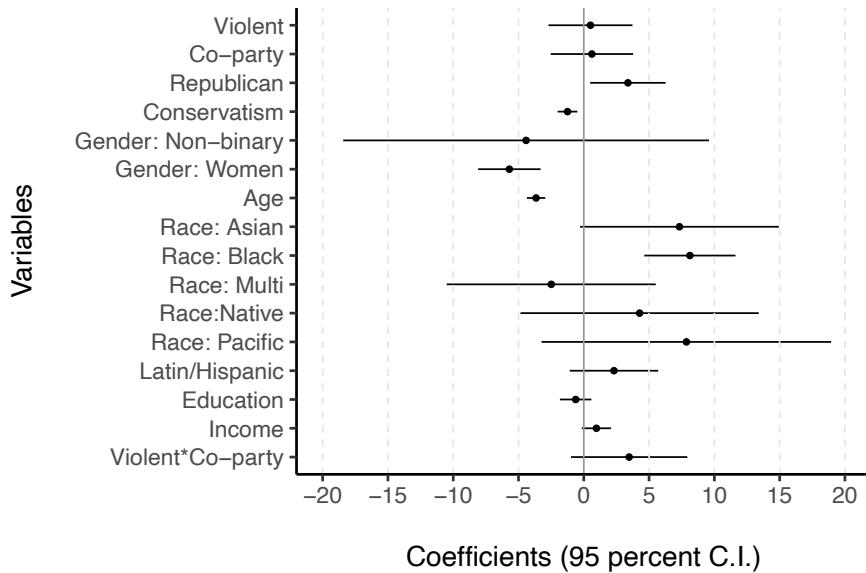
Now, given the inflaming effect of violent political rhetoric, I further test whether such effect is driven by exposure to co-party elites' rhetoric and/or by exposure to opposing party elites' rhetoric. To do so, I fit another OLS regression model where the outcome variable is regressed against the two treatment variables and the interaction term between them, along with other covariates. Figure 6 depicts the estimated coefficients in the model. The top panel in the figure clearly shows that the effect of violent political rhetoric is only present when it comes from co-party elites, providing additional support for H1. In contrast, the effect of violent rhetoric from opposing party elites is statistically indistinguishable from zero, contradicting H2. For covariates, the bottom panel reveals consistent patterns with Figure 5.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Although the interaction term itself is statistically insignificant as seen in the bottom panel of Figure 6 (see also Table A.6 for the related regression table), this only means that the coefficients on the violence treatment are not significantly different. We can see from the top panel that the effect of the violent treatment is statistically distinguishable from zero only when it comes from co-party elites. Further, split sample regression models (co-party observations vs. opposing party observations) also reveal consistent patterns (see Table A.7) for the related regression table.



(a) Interaction term



(b) All variables

Figure 6: The effect of violent political rhetoric conditional on source partisanship. For (a), the  $x$ -axis depicts the co-party treatment and the  $y$ -axis depicts the size of the coefficient for the violence treatment. Each dot and the corresponding line indicate the point estimate and the 95% confidence interval. For (b), the  $x$ -axis depicts the coefficients in regression analysis. Each dot indicates the point estimate and the corresponding line around the dot denotes the 95% confidence interval. The  $y$ -axis shows the variables included in the regression analysis.

### 6.3 Heterogeneous treatment effects: partisan identity, trait aggression, and the norm of non-violence

Considering that the treatment effect of violent political rhetoric is driven by co-party elites' messages, I focus on participants assigned to the co-party groups to examine the heterogeneous treatment effects (HTE, see Table A.8 for the related regression table). First, Figure 7 illustrates that the effect of violent rhetoric by co-party elites is particularly prominent for those who strongly identify with their party. This is true regardless of the measure used for partisan identity strength (the four-item measure from Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015) on the left panel vs. the ANES measure on the right panel). Note that, for the four-item measure from Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015), I standardized each of the four items and use the averaged score. Here, we can see that the estimated effect of co-party elites' violent rhetoric can easily exceed 5 points (on a scale of 0–100) for strong partisans. Together, these results provide strong evidence for H5a.

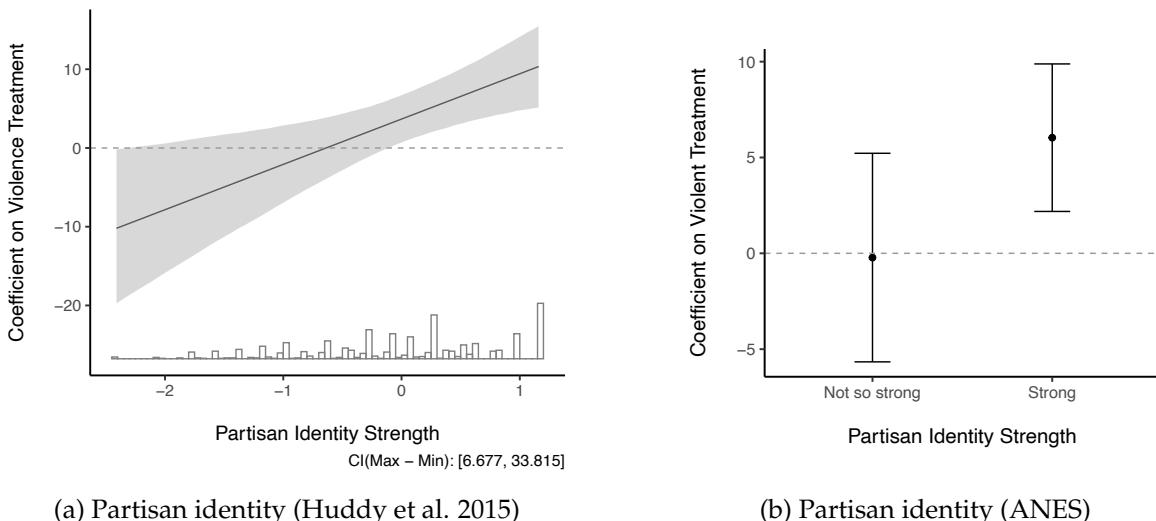


Figure 7: The HTE of co-partisan violent rhetoric: partisan identity strength. For (a), the  $x$ -axis depicts the conditioning variable (partisan social identity by Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015)) with the histogram at the bottom illustrating the distribution of the averaged score. The  $y$ -axis is for the coefficient of the violence treatment with gray area indicating the 95% confidence interval. For (b), the conditioning variable (the partisanship strength item in the ANES) is depicted on the  $x$ -axis. The  $y$ -axis depicts the size of the coefficient for the violence treatment. Each dot and the corresponding line indicate the point estimate and the 95% confidence interval.

Next, Figure 8 depicts the effect of violent rhetoric by co-party elites depending on the level of aggressive personality (or trait aggression). To measure aggressive personality, a four-item measure from Bryant and Smith (2001) is adopted and the averaged score of the four items is used for the analysis. The figure reveals that the inflaming effect of co-party elites' violent rhetoric is particularly prominent among those who have aggressive personality, supporting H5b. Finally, Figure 9 reveals that the effect of co-party elites' violent rhetoric decreases as the perceived violation of the norm of non-violence increases (supporting H5c). The results make intuitive sense as individuals varying in the pre-treatment support for political violence would be affected by elites' rhetoric threatening violence to varying degrees. Again, as noted in the previous section, I do not ask directly about their support for violence because it can prime participants into violence, complicating the causal process.

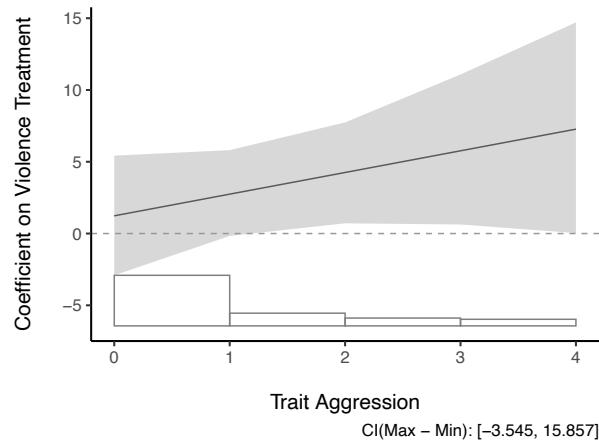


Figure 8: The HTE of co-partisan violent rhetoric: aggressive personality. The  $x$ -axis depicts the conditioning variable (the mean aggressive personality) with the histogram at the bottom illustrating its distribution. The  $y$ -axis is for the coefficient of the violence treatment with gray area indicating the 95% confidence interval.

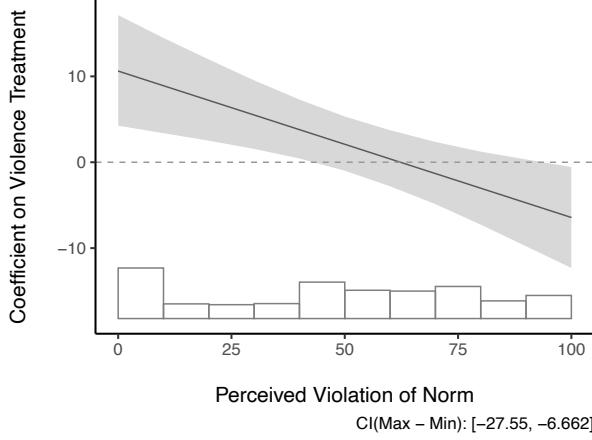


Figure 9: The HTE of co-partisan violent rhetoric: norm of non-violence. The  $x$ -axis depicts the conditioning variable (perceived norm of non-violence) with the histogram at the bottom illustrating its distribution. The  $y$ -axis is for the coefficient of the violence treatment with gray area indicating the 95% confidence interval.

#### 6.4 Mediating effect of discrete emotions

To examine the role of discrete emotions connecting violent political rhetoric with support for violence, I conduct model-based causal mediation analysis (Imai et al. 2011; Tingley et al. 2014). Specifically, for each of the discrete emotions, I start with fitting the following two OLS models:

Mediator model

$$\begin{aligned}
 Emotion = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Violent + \beta_2 * Co-party + \beta_3 * Party + \beta_4 * Conservatism + \beta_5 * Gender_{non-binary} \\
 & + \beta_6 * Gender_{women} + \beta_7 * Age + \beta_8 * Race_{asian} + \beta_9 * Race_{black} + \beta_{10} * Race_{multi} + \beta_{11} * Race_{native} \\
 & + \beta_{12} * Race_{pacific} + \beta_{13} * Latin/Hispanic + \beta_{14} * Education + \beta_{15} * Income + \epsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

Outcome model

$$\begin{aligned}
 Support = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Emotion + \beta_2 * Violent + \beta_3 * Co-party + \beta_4 * Party + \beta_5 * Conservatism + \\
 & \beta_6 * Gender_{non-binary} + \beta_7 * Gender_{women} + \beta_8 * Age + \beta_9 * Race_{asian} + \beta_{10} * Race_{black} + \beta_{11} * Race_{multi} \\
 & + \beta_{12} * Race_{native} + \beta_{13} * Race_{pacific} + \beta_{14} * Latin/Hispanic + \beta_{15} * Education + \beta_{16} * Income + \epsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

In the mediator model, a given emotion is regressed against the treatment variables with other covariates. In the outcome model, the outcome variable (i.e., support for violence)

is regressed against both the treatment variables and the emotion, along with other covariates. Then, these two models are used to estimate Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME), Average Direct Effects (ADE), and combined indirect and direct effects (Total Effect) (Imai et al. 2011). The ACME here is the indirect effect of the emotion (total effect - direct effect) and thus tells us if the emotion mediates the inflaming effect of violent political rhetoric on support for political violence. To compute statistical uncertainty, I use quasi-Bayesian Monte Carlo simulation ( $N = 2,000$ ) (Imai et al. 2011).<sup>10</sup>

Table 4 reports the results of the causal mediation analysis. They show that, among the emotions included, fear statistically significantly mediates the inflaming effect of violent political rhetoric with the ACME of 0.169 (p-value: 0.086). This implies that the effect of violent political rhetoric on support for violence is partially driven by fear. This is consistent with a long tradition of work on why individuals in a conflict-ridden condition (e.g., terrorism) take violent attitudes toward the opposing group and the central role of fear shaping such attitudes (Albertson and Gadarian 2015; Huddy et al. 2003; Mueller and Stewart 2012; Sinclair and Antonius 2012). That is, those who feel threatened increase support for violent actions against the opposing group.

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<sup>10</sup>The results with the uncertainty estimates based on non-parametric bootstrap are consistent and are reported in Table A.9.

	ACME		ADE		Total Effect	
	Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value
Anger	-0.1318	0.081*	2.4291	0.034 **	2.2973	0.046 **
Digust	-0.48073	0.009 ***	2.77361	0.016 **	2.29288	0.049 **
Shame	-0.0858	0.401	2.3842	0.040 **	2.2984	0.048 **
Guilt	0.0321	0.885	2.2719	0.046 **	2.3039	0.038 **
Fear	0.1703	0.088 *	2.1311	0.065 *	2.3013	0.045 **
Anxiety	0.1572	0.183	2.1444	0.061 *	2.3016	0.043**
Sadness	-0.1886	0.022 **	2.4843	0.028 **	2.2957	0.046 **
Happiness	-0.0769	0.785	2.3866	0.030 **	2.3097	0.044 **

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.1$

Table 4: Causal mediation analysis: uncertainty estimation based on quasi-Bayesian Monte Carlo simulation

In the context of violent partisan hostility, a similar process can take place. That is, it is possible that partisan elites fearmonger among their followers by highlighting the partisan opposition as a threat and thus encourage them to support political violence as a defensive measure. Indeed, all of the treatment posts by co-party elites frame the opposing party as a threat (or an attack). Some of the sentences framed in such a way include “what is at stake is the very fabric of our society”, “If they continue to threaten our democracy”, “threatened by coerced medical decisions”, and “one of the most terrible attacks on personal freedom.” (see Appendix A.5 for the text of the treatment posts). Furthermore, recent research documents that such a rhetorical style of framing opposing partisans as evil and threatening is highly prevalent in contemporary U.S. politics and is closely related to support for political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Kim 2022).

On the other hand, the ACMEs for anger, disgust, and sadness are significant but are negatively signed. This is often referred to as inconsistent mediation where the mediator variable functions like a suppressor (MacKinnon, Krull and Lockwood 2000; MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz 2007). Here, the results indicate that, while co-party elites’ violent rhetoric leads to increased support for violence, anger, disgust, and sadness evoked by

such rhetoric suppress the inflaming effect. Importantly, these negative emotions are likely directed at co-party elites whose rhetoric violates the norm of non-violence. Note that this is consistent with rich literature documenting the negative emotional reactions triggered by norm violations (Van Kleef et al. 2015). In particular, anger and disgust – deeply moral emotions – are shown to be the key emotions that (co)occur in the context of norm violation in various contexts (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009; Graham et al. 2011; Horberg, Oveis and Keltner 2011; Russell and Giner-Sorolla 2011, 2013; Simpson et al. 2006).

While these results shed new light on the role of emotions in shaping partisan' violent attitudes, further research is necessary. First, note that the treatment posts are not designed to evoke particular emotions. Thus, one direction for future research is to examine whether and how partisan language designed to trigger particular emotions increases or decreases support for political violence to ascertain those emotions' individual causal (mediation) effects. Also, future research should pay special attention to whom emotions are directed at. As discussed above, emotions could be directed either toward partisan opponents (as in the case of fear) or toward co-party elites (as in the case of anger, disgust, and sadness). Therefore, rather than asking general emotional reactions, we can ask questions tailored to measure not only the type but also the target of emotions.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper is among the first to make sense of the impact of partisan elites' violent rhetoric on support for political violence. Focusing on social media communication where individuals are exposed to elites' rhetoric from both sides of the partisan divide, I have examined the impact of violent rhetoric from both co-party and opposing party elites and the mediating role of emotions. The results show that co-party elites' violent rhetoric substantially increases support for violence while no such effect exists when the same rhetoric comes from opposing party elites. Worryingly, there is no evidence for partisans' countervailing behavior against violent elite rhetoric, overshadowing the future of American democracy. The results also suggest that co-party elites' violent rhetoric framing the opposing party as threatening the values/status of the own party can be particularly influential by evoking fear. This is concerning given the contemporary political climate where the opposing party is considered an iniquitous other and political losses are perceived as existential

threats (Finkel et al. 2020). That is, partisan elites, intentionally or unintentionally, can fear-monger among their followers in policy/political discussion to justify the use of political violence.

My study has important implications for researchers and practitioners going forward. First, partisan elites' online rhetoric threatening political violence can spur violence between opposing parties. Although the results do not provide any evidence for the inflaming effect of opposing party elites' violent rhetoric, co-party elites' violent rhetoric substantially increases support for political violence, potentially generating a political climate that emboldens partisan extremists' acts of violence. Note that such effect is found even when the partisan elites' accounts in the experiment are fabricated. In reality, the violent rhetoric from established partisan elites with a huge and loyal following might exert far greater influence. Therefore, partisan elites' violent rhetoric online – along with the framing of the opposing party as an existential threat – should be given special attention, particularly in times of heightened partisan contention such as election periods.

Second, while it is crucial to discuss how to discourage partisan elites from using violent rhetoric, it is equally important to think about why American partisans can be easily agitated by co-party elites' incitement of violence – the demand side of the violent partisan communication. Unfortunately, the results provide little to no evidence for partisans' self-corrective behavior that countervails elites' violent rhetoric, even for those who are the least partisan, the least personally aggressive, and hold the strongest level of the norm of non-violence. As long as constituents identify with their own party in such a destructive way, partisan elites would always have incentives to mobilize the society based on such radical partisanship (Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Kleinfeld 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to pay continued attention to how to "de-polarize" the society (Baron et al. 2021; Voelkel et al. 2021).

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