
United States: Culture of Intolerance and Radical Right Extremism

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27/01/2024



No interested party, scholar or connoisseur of the past or present realities of the United States would overlook the recurring presence of a defined and notorious component of institutionalized violence, which reappears intermittently throughout its historical development as a nation. On a regular basis, the exercise of this violence is incubated in breeding grounds so saturated with intolerance that it operates as an ideological justification for certain actions, promoted by diverse actors. Sometimes, the State, through government agencies, on other occasions, political parties or interest and pressure groups. Or even domestic terrorist organizations or individuals with trauma caused by their war experiences, as well as alienated young people, victims of drugs and exposure to direct violence in the environment in which they live or the one recreated by the entertainment industry, video games, cinema, internet, digital networks. Beyond the roots, it's interesting for now to touch the problem. In subsequent writings we will return and elaborate on this matter.

According to the periodic records of a specialized institution, Gun Violence Archive, the number of deaths in incidents of armed violence in the United States between 2014-2022 was more than 150 thousand people, and at the end of last year, 2023, it was estimated at about 25 000 for that reason, thus averaging more than a hundred daily. So, statistically but at the same time historically, the practice of domestic terrorism is one of the frequent manifestations of violent behavior and sources of murders carried out with firearms. Violence, in short, is intrinsic to North American society. Metaphorically, it can be said that it's in their DNA, that genetically, it's innate. It was born with capitalism as a system, since it emerged and in the specific case of the United States, since it was born as a nation, expressed with cruelty and barbarity against the native Indian peoples and African slaves. The intolerance that sustains this violence does not have a political imprint, but rather a cultural one, but it acquires it, and in what way it makes it its own, until today.

A closer reference is the one that has been reflected in recent weeks in many press media and academic studies, which with concern warn of a growing fear of an increase in political violence, as the electoral campaign that will lead to the elections in November 2024 progresses. In this framework, attention is drawn to the activism of the conspiracy movement called QAnon, whose access to the main digital platforms has been banned. Born in 2017 and made up of fanatical supporters of Donald Trump, they denounced the existence of an alleged elite, made up

of pedophiles belonging to a satanic sect, which attacked the traditional North American identity, conservative and Protestant religiosity.

The movement is named after its leader, who calls himself Q, and that letter is followed by the first letters of the word anonymous. This character established an extremist, radical right-wing preaching, aimed at overthrowing what he described as a "deep state", that is, an elitist structure, made up of high government officials involved in pedophile networks, who seek to articulate a "new order world" that only a strong charismatic president, like Trump, would be able to defeat and thwart its evil plans. Since 2019, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) considers QAnon a true potential terrorist threat in the United States. Some of its followers, even from other parts of the country, traveled to the capital on January 6, 2021, attended Trump's rally where he legitimized, incited and mobilized the assault on the Capitol that day and participated in it. For analysts, the irruption and seizure of the headquarters of Congress, as a legislative branch, would be the greatest attack on the well-known American democracy, which is increasingly mythical, exclusive and far from reality. The essence of so-called "Trumpism" lies in superlative intolerance.

The assault, as a political event, must be understood in light of the background. North American history, based on certain milestones and stages has been a repertoire of excesses, through which basic constitutional rights of citizens have been violated over and over, at the domestic level. It's not a sum of individual, isolated or sporadic acts, but rather a reaction that persists over time, that is repeated. It would be enough to remember the deadly mass shootings in schools and other educational centers, or the police abuses with violence that overflowed into racist and anti-immigrant episodes. Hence we can speak of a culture of intolerance. It's characterized by the appeal to violence. It's based on rejection and hatred, on the legitimacy of contempt and marginalization of what's considered different from what's understood as typically North American. To everything that deviates from the standard with which the authentic spirit of the white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant is measured, from the so-called wasp, a conventionally accepted term, taken from English, which summarizes the three attributes: white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant. Before its identity, an otherness arose, understood and symbolized since then as a negative stereotype. The "other" was not only different, but inferior. That was the basis of white supremacy, which resonates so strongly today.

The terrorist acts in 2001 occupy first place in the 21st century, as a mandatory point of reference, reproducing a similar pattern. The threats, the enemies, those responsible for terrorism, come from outside. Latin Americans, Arabs, Asians, depending on the case, are demonized and become objects of media manipulation, with segregationist and xenophobic criteria. They want to ignore and distort the fact that there's an old and long record of unlimited violence, which far from being foreign to the national culture, is embedded in the very social and ideological fabric of the country.

A simple look back leads precisely to an incident that seems forgotten, despite the trauma it entailed. On April 19th, 1995, a truck bomb loaded with approximately half a ton of explosives destroyed a state facility in Oklahoma. The Alfred Murrah Building contained numerous federal offices there, as well as a day care center, and under normal conditions, about 500 employees, not counting visitors, gathered there daily. The attack caused the death of 168 people, including children. That same day, 17 other North American government buildings, in different cities and states, received dynamite threats.

Several years before, on February 29, 1993, another terrorist action damaged, with explosives, no less than five floors of the twin towers of the World Trade Center, an installation that from that date and even long before, already had the same symbolism as eight years later, when they would be destroyed: they represented the heart of financial capital on Wall Street. That attack, in addition to causing numerous injuries, cost the lives of five people.

The prejudices, fears and hatred against Muslim Americans and Latin American immigrants, under the banner of the fight against everything that meant anti-Americanism, were neither born in 2001 nor were they the heritage, as is sometimes believed, of the Republican Party, but rather they expand through an echo chambers in civic and political culture, also within the Democrats. Since the middle of the last century there have been tendencies and entities expressive of right-wing extremism, related to fascism, with revival of old collective behaviors, including hate groups, such as Neo-Nazis, skinheads, the Vigilante Movement, the Militias, the Aryan Nations, the Christian Identity Movement. With another connotation, the record that promotes violence could be mentioned, among others, the National Rifle Association, the Tea Party, the alternative right or Alt-Right.

As an eloquent illustration, it's worth mentioning that, according to a report issued by a relevant think tank with a conservative tendency the Center for Strategic and International Studies, based in Washington, right-wing

extremists perpetrated two thirds of attacks and conspiracies in the United States in 2019, and more than 90% between January-May 2020. These worrying figures led the country's Department of Homeland Security to conclude, in a report published in October last year, that "racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists (particularly white supremacists) would continue to be the most persistent and deadliest threat homeland." Beware, it's an acknowledgement made from the ideological apparatus of the system itself, which idealizes the country as the perfect society, which gives greater gravity to the matter. It had no choice but to recognize the truth.

The importance of the topic requires returning to its analysis and continuing to reflect upon it.

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