

Book Guide

God, Guns, and Sedition: Far-Right Terrorism in America

Shocking acts of terrorism have erupted from violent American far-right extremists in recent years, including the 2015 mass murder at a historic Black church in Charleston and the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. These incidents, however, are neither novel nor unprecedented. They are the latest flashpoints in a process that has been unfolding for decades, in which vast conspiracy theories and radical ideologies such as white supremacy, racism, antisemitism, xenophobia, and hostility to government converge into a deadly threat to democracy.

Summary

God, Guns, and Sedition offers the definitive account of the rise of far-right terrorism in the United States—and how to counter it. Leading experts Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware trace the historical trajectory and assess the present-day dangers of this violent extremist movement, along with the harm it poses to U.S. national security. They combine authoritative, nuanced analysis with gripping storytelling and portraits of the leaders behind this violence and their followers. Hoffman and Ware highlight key terrorist tactics, such as the use of cutting-edge communications technology; the embrace of leaderless resistance or lone-wolf strategies; infiltration and recruitment in the military and law enforcement; and the movement's intricate relationship with mainstream politics. An unparalleled examination of one of today's great perils, *God, Guns, and Sedition* ends with an array of essential practical recommendations to halt the growth of violent far-right extremism and address this global terrorist threat.

This book is suitable for the following disciplines in undergraduate, graduate courses:

- American Studies
- Extremism Studies
- Hate Studies
- History
- International Affairs
- International Relations
- Public Policy
- Race and Gender Studies
- Security Studies
- Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies

Further Projects, Supplementary Materials, and Discussion and Essay Questions

Discussion and Essay Questions

Courses on security studies, terrorism and counterterrorism, hate studies, and extremism studies:

1. How has the far right typically engaged in radicalization and recruitment? What has been effective? What has been less effective?
2. Describe Hoffman and Ware’s research methodology. What sources did they use? Why?
3. What are the ideological nuances between antisemitic, anti-immigrant, racist, and anti-government extremism?
4. What is leaderless resistance, and why have violent far-right groups and networks opted for this strategy?
5. Write a memo for the director of a national security agency on trends in far-right terrorism, using findings from God, Guns, and Sedition.
6. Design a strategy for countering far-right terrorism in the United States. Include multiple policies and describe specifically how they might counter future violence.
7. How significant is the increasing prevalence of active duty and veteran military and law enforcement in domestic extremism and terrorism? Why? How should the government respond?
8. How has social media affected terrorist radicalization? How does the violent far right’s approach to radicalization on social media differ from that of other extremists?
9. "Fighting misogynist extremism should be a major priority for the United States' counterterrorism strategy." Defend or refute.
10. “The January 6 riot should be classified as an act of terrorism.” Discuss, using theories and definitions of terrorism.
11. Ideological convergence—and “fringe fluidity” radicalization—appears to have played a growing role on the far-right terrorism stage in recent years. But is it new? And does it intensify or limit dangers ahead? Justify using examples.

Courses on international relations and international affairs:

1. What is terrorism? What is extremism? What is the far right? What are some ideologies that fit into each of these buckets?
2. How does far-right terrorism in the United States compare with the same threat abroad? How do US countermeasures compare?
3. How does domestic terrorism undermine U.S. foreign policy and soft power?

Courses on American studies, history, race and gender, and public policy:

1. How does far-right terrorism build on longstanding inequalities of race and gender in American history?
2. What public policy measures can support counterterrorism efforts?

Presentations

Ask students to conduct research and compile a presentation on a specific organization in the violent far-right extremist space. Students should explain their structure, ideology, tactics, and targeting, and offer specific counterterrorism recommendations for their assigned organization.

Counterterrorism Simulation

You are an FBI special agent in the Washington, DC, field office. Recent political turmoil has increased threats against the Bureau and the broader community you serve. You are contacted by a senior extremism analyst at the Anti-Defamation League, who reports that they have found a social media account claiming to be from your area issuing several threats against federal agents. “All feds deserve to die,” one post declares, while another foreshadows, “The Big Show approaches. I hope I can make you all proud.” Your office identifies a suspect—an older man in Virginia who suffers from mental health issues and recently buried a son. The suspect is a military veteran and drug user and entered the U.S. Capitol on January 6. On a different social media platform, you find the suspect has just posted a picture of an arsenal of weapons, with an ominous warning: “Ready. Five-day countdown.”

Discussion questions:

- Is this a terrorist threat?
- How seriously should the threat be taken?
- Which legal or societal factors affect or limit your options?

- What information are you missing? Where can state and local authorities be of help?
- What options do you have? Is this covered by First Amendment protections?
- What steps can legally be taken and what predicate/legal justification(s) is/are there?
- What other counterterrorism or countering violent extremism (CVE) measures do you wish you could use in this case?

Supplementary Materials

Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Daniel Byman, *Spreading Hate: The Global Rise of White Supremacist Terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

Robert Futrell and Pete Simi, *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

Dan Herbeck and Lou Michel, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & The Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York: ReganBooks, 2001).

Daryl Johnson, *Hateland: A Long, Hard Look at America's Extremist Heart* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2019).

Rita Katz, *Saints and Soldiers: Inside Internet-Age Terrorism, from Syria to the Capitol Siege* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and The Radical Right* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2002).

Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

David Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump* (New York: Verso, 2017).

Elizabeth Neumann, *Kingdom of Rage: The Rise of Christian Extremism and the Path Back to Peace* (New York: Worthy Books, 2024).

Christian Picciolini, *White American Youth: My Descent into America's Most Violent Hate Movement – And How I Got Out* (New York: Hachette Books, 2017).

Åsne Seierstad, *One of Us: The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway* (New York: FSG, 2015).

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