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# **Political Risk Landscape:** United States Report 2025

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# Part 1: Domestic Arena



**Moderate Risk Level**

## Executive Summary

The risk environment within the United States in the post-electoral period remains **moderate**. Contributing to this rating are current trends within the framework of US political violence that favor domestic violent extremists (DVEs). The persistent heightened rhetorical atmosphere within the US is conducive to the radicalization of violently inclined individuals. Furthermore, the high likelihood of civil unrest intensifying, and the ensuing risk of clashes with law enforcement or counter demonstrators, will continue to produce an elevated threat level over the coming months.



## Key Takeaways

- Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and hostile foreign state-backed actors, via influence and disinformation campaigns, may stoke civil unrest or incite violence in response to controversial US foreign policy.
- Partisan DVEs across the spectrum may execute specific targeted attacks on government assets and personnel – in addition to non-governmental partisan targets such as conferences or rallies – at the behest of domestic or foreign extremist groups, or in response to existential political rhetoric from politicians or social media figures.
- Protests remain potential targets for attacks from DVEs and, conversely, serve as sources of threat against government buildings, counter-protesters, and law enforcement.
- Protestors are likely to target events in response to both geo-political developments, particularly those related to the conflicts in the Palestinian Territories and Ukraine, as well as controversial domestic developments regarding immigration and matters related to DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency).



## Foreign Threat Actors



**Low Risk Level**

Despite the current respite in the conflict within the Palestinian Territories, middle eastern based FTOs (most prominently Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic State (IS), and Al-Qaeda), have continued to call for violent action from sympathizers abroad who are disillusioned and have been radicalized. In the aftermath of phase one of the ceasefire, which was implemented between Hamas and Israel on 19 January, the peace remains extremely fragile. Phase two of the ceasefire faces significant challenges with negotiations and any implementation.

Additionally, recent controversial comments from President Trump regarding the conflict have been co-opted by FTOs and disseminated as evidence that the US should be targeted as an enemy of Islam. FTOs capacity for a direct physical attack by an official group member on US soil remains **low**. This is because of the high degree of difficulty involved in getting an asset into the US and carrying out a premediated attack undetected. FTOs are more likely to focus on inciting a HVE (homegrown violent extremist) to act on their behalf.

Following the designation of several Mexican Drug Cartels as FTOs by President Trump, the potential for an escalation in violence has increased along the southern US border. However, the likelihood of cartels targeting federal agents, military personnel, or US border towns by executing a terrorist style attack – such as a bombing or other mass casualty event – is assessed as **low**. This reflects their desire to continue to carry out illicit activities and not provoke intensified confrontations with US law enforcement. Notably, the US Customs and Border Protection Bureau has broadly observed a dramatic dip in attempted illegal crossings and cartel

smuggling operations since January 2025. This can be attributed to the Trump Administration's hardline deterrence stance and the regular seasonal dip in migration during the winter months. However, the possibility for sudden escalation along the border cannot be ruled out and should be monitored closely.



# Domestic Terrorism



## Moderate Risk Level

Since 2016, there has been a shift in the nature of political violence in the US. Acts of political violence are no longer carried out by organized groups who espouse their opposition to federal government overreach, but instead, by individuals without material ties to a formal group who are motivated by partisan ideology. The US intelligence community has stated that the greatest terrorist threat posed today is by lone actors, often radicalized online, with access to soft targets and easily acquired weapons. Domestic extremist groups have become increasingly decentralized, encouraging individuals to act without direct orders from leadership. The risk of far-right related violence against government targets has decreased in response to the election outcome and is now assessed as **low**. The potential of far-left extremist violence against government targets is now assessed as **moderate** in response to controversial legislation announced by the Trump Administration and intensifying political rhetoric from both parties that acts as an accelerant for radicalization. There is an overall elevated risk to those working within the Trump Administration or associated with it through the Republican Party. Historically, politically motivated attacks have a low level of lethality because of strong security measures surrounding government targets, the tendency to choose specific targets (as opposed to indiscriminately targeting bystanders), and the low skill level of perpetrators.

During the campaign period leading up to the election, President Trump survived two attempted assassinations, underlining his status as a polarizing figure. The assailant in the attempted assassination at the Mar-a-Lago Golf Course in Florida in September 2024 is being investigated by the FBI as having been

motivated by strong pro-Ukrainian ideology. This suggests that President Trump's comments and policy initiatives regarding contentious foreign policy have the potential to incite a radicalized individual to take violent action. The recent decisions enacted by President Trump regarding the US' role in the



Ukraine-Russia War should be monitored for the resulting elevated risk of radicalizing bad actors. The risk of politically motivated violence is currently rated as **moderate** – although this rating is especially fluid and liable to change in response to the tenor of the domestic political atmosphere which could intensify rapidly. Publicly visible federal employees working within the executive branch or within the controversial DOGE are at a heightened risk of being targeted by far-left DVEs, due to the highly politicized nature of their work and lack of continuous security. Federal buildings or landmarks are also prominent potential targets. Highly visible non-governmental Republican Party employees such as spokespeople, media personalities, or social media influencers – and associated events – are all additional politically salient targets that a radicalized far-left DVE might choose to focus on.

# Protests, Demonstrations, and Rallies



## High Risk Level

The likelihood of politically motivated protests is assessed as **high** across the United States, with both right- and left-wing activists likely to mobilize in response to both domestic policy decisions and broader geopolitical events – particularly regarding the Israel-Hamas War, US immigration policy, and the Ukraine-Russia War. The broader political climate – shaped by increasingly existential rhetoric from political leaders – has the potential to inflame public sentiment.



Additionally, hostile foreign state actors, such as China and Russia, have been documented by the FBI as attempting to stoke civil unrest through disinformation campaigns. These combined factors drive heightened protest activity, particularly among groups opposed to the current administration's stances, increasing the likelihood of unruly demonstrations, counter-protester confrontations, and law enforcement intervention. In particular, anti-Israel activists are expected to continue targeting events associated with both political parties, for which counter-protesters remain a key risk factor in any potential violent escalation.

While most of these interactions typically result in harassment, minor assaults, or property damage, the potential for more severe confrontations cannot be ruled out.

Protests can be separated into two groups for the purposes of risk assessment: Large-scale pre-planned protests and smaller flash-protests that congregate rapidly in response to sudden developments or announcements. Transportation disruption – mitigated by prepared responses from local authorities – is the most predictable outcome of large-scale demonstrations. The organized structure of pre-planned large protests makes them easier for law enforcement to manage and to mitigate possible risks of escalation with counterdemonstrators.

Flash-protests pose heightened risks due to their unpredictability, making it difficult for law enforcement to respond effectively, which can lead to rapid escalation. They often cause significant disruptions to transportation and public infrastructure, particularly in high-traffic areas. Additionally, the lack of clear leadership increases the potential for clashes with counter-protesters and spontaneous violence. Washington D.C. remains the most likely site for significant political protests. Nonetheless, major urban centers nationwide, as well as politically contested regions within swing states, are also at high risk for protest activity. Protests in recent years have set a precedent for heightened tensions with law enforcement and counterdemonstrators, which often leads to clashes, arrests, and can pose incidental risks to bystanders.



## Part 2: International Impact



### Moderate Risk Level

#### Executive Summary

The global risk environment in the post-US electoral period is **moderate**. The Trump administration's controversial foreign policy and contentious rhetorical tone – on topics such as tariffs, drug trafficking, immigration, and international conflicts – are liable to contribute to the radicalization of violently inclined individuals, aggravate terrorist groups, and incense hostile foreign states. Current trends within global political violence favor lone actors operating outside the strict hierarchy of organized groups. However, specific criminal organizations – spanning terrorist groups and drug cartels – will continue to produce an

elevated threat level, in their respective regions of operations, which may worsen the risk landscape for US citizens, multi-national businesses, and embassies in response to perceived antagonization from the Trump Administration. Furthermore, there is an increased likelihood of civil unrest abroad intensifying – producing an elevated risk to counterdemonstrators, law enforcement, as well as US citizens, businesses, and embassies – in response to the current administration's announcements and actions on various foreign and domestic policy issues

#### Key Takeaways

- Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and hostile foreign state-backed actors, via influence and disinformation campaigns, may stoke civil unrest or incite violence abroad in response to controversial US foreign policies or stances on foreign conflicts.
- Lone actors across the ideological spectrum may become motivated by a range of issues to execute specific targeted attacks on government assets, public events, businesses, civil society organizations, or religious institutions – and perpetrate attacks that arbitrarily target those around them.
- Political violence could occur at the behest of domestic or foreign extremist groups but increasingly result from online self-radicalization in response to existential political rhetoric from politicians or prominent social media figures.
- Protests remain potential targets for attacks from lone actor extremists and organized criminal groups but, conversely, serve as sources of threat against government buildings, businesses, counter-protesters, and law enforcement.
- Demonstrations are likely to erupt in response to geo-political events and fueled by anti-US sentiment, particularly those related to the conflict in the Palestinian Territories, the Ukraine-Russia War, the war on drugs in Mexico, as well as controversial statements and actions regarding the growing global far-right movement, immigration, and trade.

## Global Trade



### High Risk Level

President Donald Trump's unpredictable trade policies, marked by significant tariff increases and retaliatory measures from foreign nations, pose a **high** risk to global trade by disrupting supply chains and increasing market volatility. Trump's renewed tariff strategy in 2025 signals a continuation of his economic nationalist approach to global trade from his first administration. As he tests economic ties with key partners such as Canada, Mexico, China, and the European Union (EU), uncertainty within the global markets is exacerbated. The pattern of abrupt pauses, threats, and reinstatements of tariffs has already led to heightened investor anxiety as markets react negatively to the lack of predictability. This was recently demonstrated by US stock market's worst documented day since 2021 on 10 March, with the Dow and S&P 500 declining 1.5 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively – in response to President Trump's indecision regarding tariffs. Numerous financial service companies, such as Morgan Stanley, which cut its US GDP growth projection from 1.9 percent to 1.5 percent, have downgraded their economic projections to reflect the instability. Furthermore, US consumers and businesses will have to navigate increased inflation resulting from tariffs; the rate of US inflation in February was recorded at 2.8 percent. Businesses are straining under the challenge of reacting to unpredictable policy shifts, forcing them to delay investments and reconsider supply chain strategies. The current, and potential, retaliatory measures from Mexico, Canada, China, and the EU can be expected to further disrupt the world economy, exacerbate trade tensions, lead to increased prices for consumers, and disrupt various sectors – specifically agriculture and manufacturing.

Trump's protectionist trade policies will likely

continue to drive US allies and competitors alike to seek alternative economic partnerships and take more combative trade stances. The EU, Canadian, and Asian economies have already begun to pursue trade agreements that reduce their dependence on the US. The preexistent competition between



the US and China, as they vie for dominance in key technological and strategic industries, including semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and green energy technologies, means that a renewed trade war in 2025 could further accelerate China's appetite for global trade dominance, presenting a serious challenge to the preservation of US trade power and influence.

Because interconnectedness is a key facet of the modern globalized economy, a superpower like the US plays a crucial role in shaping global markets. Sudden changes in US trade policy will ripple through supply chains, unsettle investor confidence, and may ultimately compel allied economies to reduce or sever their economic ties with the US. The consequences of the current policies will likely extend beyond US borders, potentially reshaping international trade relations and economic alliances over the long term.

# International Criminal



## Moderate Risk Level

The potential for an escalation in cartel violence, fueled by the actions of the Trump Administration, is now assessed as **moderate**. Combatting Mexican drug cartels is a proven focus of President Trump. His unprecedented Executive Order on 20 January 2025 designated eight Latin and South American cartels and gangs as FTOs. This action aims to enhance legal enforcement tools against these groups, allowing for criminal prosecution under anti-terrorism laws, including penalties for individuals and entities providing them with material support.

While the executive order does not limit its scope to Mexican cartels, it has been implied that they are the primary target. The list of organizations includes the Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel (JNGC), United Cartels, Northeast Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Michoacan Family, Tren de Aragua, and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). The order has created heightened compliance risks for businesses operating within areas controlled or contested by cartels, as transactions linked to designated groups – directly or through third parties – could be prosecuted under US law as providing material support to a terrorist organization. Financial institutions, logistics companies, and supply chains operating in Mexico and Latin America will likely face heightened compliance burdens, requiring enhanced diligence to avoid unintentional violations of counterterrorism financing laws.

Businesses operating in, or dealing with regions affected by cartel activity, should monitor the ongoing implementation of these measures and take cues on how to strengthen their compliance measures to avoid inadvertent violations of US law. Furthermore, the FTO designation risks complicating

US-Mexico cooperation in anti-drug trafficking and immigration as Mexico has historically resisted labelling cartels as terrorist groups to avoid external interference in domestic security matters.



However, on 27 February Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum exhibited her willingness to break long-held norms and extradited 29 top cartel members in an unprecedented move intended to stave off President Trump's threat of tariffs. Extraditions of cartel members from Mexico have historically been rare, and in the past, cartels have lashed out and perpetrated extreme violence against the Mexican government; US citizens, businesses, and embassies could now be targeted for similar retribution. As the US and Mexico continue to employ harsher measures to dismantle and punish the cartels, it is likely that the cartels will adopt mal-adaptions in organizational structure to weather the repression. This will be accompanied by a simultaneous increase in violence endangering law enforcement, travelers, and businesses operating in areas with significant cartel presence and along the US-Mexico border. If President Trump follows through on rhetoric to unilaterally deploy the US military to combat the cartels, it would mark an historic escalation with the potential to significantly increase the risk landscape within Mexico.



# Terrorism



## Moderate Risk Level

The potential of extremist violence occurring abroad in response to controversial directives and rhetoric used by the Trump Administration is now assessed as **moderate**. This reflects the wide media coverage US politics receives globally, which bolsters its salience as an accelerant for radicalization. Terrorism is a unique force because of its unpredictable nature and high psychological impact, which has increased with the rise of individual extremists radicalized in isolation online.

The greatest terrorist threat today is posed by lone actors motivated by political or religious grievances. These individuals are often radicalized online – without material ties to a formal group – and with access to various modus operandi for an attack including vehicles, knives, and guns. International extremist groups have become increasingly decentralized, encouraging individuals to act without direct orders from leadership. While globally the occurrence of terrorist attacks has continued to trend downward and the number of terror groups have decreased, the attacks that are carried out successfully, cause a larger number of fatalities.

The epicenter of terrorist activity has overwhelmingly shifted away from the Middle East to the central Sahel region of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the Islamic State (IS) has become increasingly active. While the Sahel presents a viable operational jumping point into Europe, regional terrorism has continued to impact the areas within sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia more than other regions. US citizens, embassies, and consulates located within these zones are at a heightened risk of being targeted for violent attacks or kidnapping by terrorist groups in response to

provocative actions by the Trump Administration. Furthermore, hostile military junta governments in the Sahel, as well as globally, are a risk to US citizens and businesses who may be arbitrarily targeted for detention or financial penalties in retaliation for perceived US geopolitical slights.

Despite this, special attention should be given to the European theater due to its shift toward the far right and existing societal tensions over immigration, diversity, Islam, and global conflicts. These combined factors heighten the risk of radicalization across the ideological spectrum. This social unease continues to drive violent attacks by far-right anti-immigrant extremists, far-left extremists, anti-Russia actors, and radicalized migrants frustrated by the immigration system and lack of assimilation, making them vulnerable to extreme Islamist ideology.

Tensions over migrants in Europe mirror anxieties in the US, which the Trump administration frequently comments on. This suggests that President Trump's remarks and policies on contentious foreign or domestic issues could incite radicalized individuals to attack government buildings, public events, businesses, civil society groups, or religious institutions abroad. The pervasive risk of online radicalization, combined with the administration's unpredictable statements, raises the threat to US citizens, businesses, and embassies, and complicates law enforcement's predictive and preventative efforts. Even when not directly targeted, institutions, businesses, or individuals may face collateral damage in arbitrary attacks depending on the context.

## Civil Unrest



### Moderate Risk Level

The potential for civil unrest fueled by contentious policies and rhetoric used by the Trump Administration is now assessed as **moderate**. President Trump's election has fueled excitement within the global far-right and mainstream conservative movement abroad. Various divisive far-right lawmakers, social media influencers, and extremist organizations across the globe see President Trump's actions on topics, ranging from immigration and foreign policy to domestic social issues, as a blueprint they should imitate. This suggests that international leaders, taking their cues from President Trump's playbook, are likely to see an emboldened contingent of those who share his opinions – and outrage from those who are opposed – emerge within their own populace. These factors set the stage for street-level clashes and the subsequent further erosion of their respective national societal fabrics. Large pro- and anti-far-right protests in 2025, in countries throughout Europe, have already been observed; these are liable to grow in size and occurrence as Trump continues to strengthen the far-right global movement.

During Trump's first term, his actions and rhetoric often sparked protests abroad across all continents – a precedent which is likely to hold true in his second term given the political salience of his signature domestic policy objectives, the heightened international tension over prominent foreign conflicts, and his combative posture toward traditional allies. Trump's iconoclastic speech and actions regarding entrenched conflicts like the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Hamas war have the potential to inflame sentiment abroad and stoke civil unrest. While protests have historically remained peaceful, the risk of clashes between demonstrators

and counter-protesters or security forces persists, particularly in politically polarized areas. Public transportation and major roadways are likely to experience protest-related disruptions. Instances of targeted violence against protesters, such as vehicle ramming attacks, shootings, or stabbings, are a



prominent risk. Conversely, US citizens are at risk of being identified and targeted for harassment, or more serious violent action, due to their nationality while abroad by protesters themselves. US Embassies and businesses are also all susceptible to incidental or targeted violence stemming from demonstrations. Heightened vigilance should be exercised in particular in the global south where anti-US sentiment remains latent in many countries, law enforcement consistently employs harsh crowd control measures, and the character of protests are historically more intense

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The risk landscape in America at the start of 2025 forms a web of interconnected myriad factors that produce heightened tensions, which can lead to radicalization and civil strife. The international arena continues to be deeply entwined with and reactive to the political climate and actions of the US, which in turn produces heightened tensions, impacts the global economy, and fuels civil strife. Please reference the below sections on recommendations for further steps to take for mitigation purposes:

**Personnel Education** – Organizations are encouraged to provide enhanced situational and safety awareness training for security staff as well as general employee populations. Training should focus on identifying potential risks, de-escalation, and reporting. In particular, security personnel should be especially observant of possible surveillance by threat actors and potential dry runs, as these tactics continue to occur prior to significant incidents.



**Enhanced Protection Levels** – Companies should evaluate their exposure, as it pertains to their operational footprint, within this heightened risk landscape. Domestic and international travel should be analyzed to ensure security mitigation plans are in place for higher-risk areas to include protective security escorts and/or trusted transportation with security oversight. For corporate facilities, security teams should review protection layers, refresh training on procedures, and review recordings of incidents to analyze threat trends. Special attention should be apportioned to areas affected by endemic gang violence and cartel activities, or particularly politically salient areas.

**Exercising Tact Abroad** – Organizations are encouraged to educate employees and about exercising increased situational awareness in reference to anti-American sentiment. It is advised to refrain from exhibiting excessively nationalistic or patriotic paraphernalia as this could attract unwanted attention that could easily escalate into violent confrontation. International travel should be analyzed to ensure that relevant intelligence about destinations is factored into the creation of risk mitigation plans and that active monitoring by intelligence analysts is leveraged to mitigate risk. Avoid anti-American or anti-Trump rallies and protests and never confront participants exhibiting open hostility. Although this advisory is relevant globally, extra care should be taken when traveling to regions with documented historical anti-American sentiment.

**Digital Hygiene** – Organizations are advised to provide guidance for their employees on how to ensure sensitive information about personnel or the company are not exposed online for potential



bad actors to misuse. Guidance should focus on actionable instructions that employees can implement to mitigate vulnerabilities in regard to their online presence. These include keeping accounts private, limiting the use of one's real name or address, refraining from posting publicly on any sensitive political topics, and being cautious about publicizing routinely frequented locations. The digital exhaust of employees can be co-opted by domestic and foreign bad actors to violently target personnel, company infrastructure, and corporate reputation.

**Risk Evaluation** – Companies should seek external evaluation of their exposure to politically motivated violent targeting. Evaluations should look at leadership's public expression of support toward any political ideology and each leader's Personal Identifiable Information (PII), to determine if violent

extremists could easily target them. Completed evaluations can be conducted by reputable risk services companies and are deductible under IRS 132-5.

**Monitoring Economic Headwinds** – Organizations are advised to remain abreast of shifting norms within the global economy and the subsequent effects on supply chains and operational capabilities. US politics often produces outsized effects on the global economy and Trump's economic policy is forecasted to remain fluid. This will create difficulties for companies as they craft their long-term strategies and attempt to navigate immediate challenges. Monitor current events as they arise, while also reinforcing the resiliency of long-term business plans, supply chains, and relationships with third party suppliers.