

Violent Political Rhetoric on Twitter

Coding Rules

1. Definition

- 1) Class 1 (violent political rhetoric): The author expresses an intention of physical harm against a political opponent.
- 2) Class 2 (violent political metaphor): The author's opinion /prediction / argument about essentially non-violent politics is expressed using a violent metaphor but still lacks a violent intention.
- 3) Class 3 (neither): Tweets belonging to neither Class 1 nor Class 2. This is a garbage can class.

2. Decision Rules

Q1. Does the author express an intention of physical harm that can be interpreted literally?

- Yes: Class 1 -> An intention of physical harm is expressed directly (e.g., I will kill you)
- No: go to Q2

Q2. Does the author use a violent phrase AND do you think that the phrase is used to express an intention of physical harm?

- Yes: Class 1 -> An intention of physical harm is expressed metaphorically
- No: go to Q3

Q3. Is there a violent phrase AND do you think that the phrase is used to refer to essentially non-violent political events / phenomena?

- Yes: Class 2 -> It is a 'violent metaphor' (a violent metaphor is when a violent phrase is used to refer to essentially non-violent political events / phenomena: e.g., 'Trump will get his ass kicked in November 2020')
- No: Class 3 -> There is a violent phrase but the phrase does not express any intention (threat, support, condonation, call) of violence nor is it used to metaphorically refer to essentially non-violent political events / phenomena

3. Specific Guidelines

- 1) The phrase used to express an intention of physical harm is metaphorical.
 - a) Violent phrases can be used to metaphorically (indirectly) express an intention of physical harm. It means that the metaphorical use of a violent phrase should not automatically lead to coding a tweet as Class 2. For a tweet with a violent phrase to be coded as Class 1, there should be an intention of physical harm directed at a political target revealed by the author.

b) It might be controversial whether the phrase can be seen as a violent act or not. Above all, consider the context. Tweet 449 is referencing Trump's defeat in the 2020 Presidential Election, using a violent phrase (ass being kicked). Here, Trump is not threatened with an act of kicking. Thus, this tweet makes sense as Class 2. That is, 'kick' is used to describe electoral defeat, which is essentially non-violent. In Tweet 1006, 'murder' is used metaphorically to accuse Trump of his responses to the pandemic. Here, no one is getting a death threat. Also, in Tweet 256, 'kick ass' is used in the context of legislative politics. The rule of thumb here is whether the violent phrase has an identifiable referent that is essentially non-violent. For instance, 'kick' in Tweet 449 is used to mean 'electoral defeat', 'murdered' in Tweet 1006 means 'his pandemic policies failed, and 'kick' in Tweet 1274 means 'loss of status or power.'

- *Trump you are desperate Clown because you are going to get your ass fucking kicked in November 2020 (tweet_number 449)*
- *@YoungJyoung6350 @Joe_Burrow10 Trump has murdered 103,669 Americans the same as if he shot them on 5th Avenue. Bothered by that loss of life? (tweet_number 1006)*
- *I will do whatever is necessary to have a true conservative kick your ass out of the Senate (tweet_number 256)*
- *@realDonaldTrump You don't give a shit! You only think of yourself and your money. I will be so happy in November when we kick your ass out of the White House (tweet_number 1274)*

c) In contrast, the violent phrase in the following tweets can be interpreted as implying an actual act of violence. Again, the same rule as above applies: see if the violent phrase can be interpreted as referring to something essentially non-violent. If not, then it should not be coded as Class 2. Then, if we think the tweet is using such a phrase to reveal an intention of physical harm, we should code it as Class 1.

- *@realDonaldTrump REMOVE EVERY DEMOCRAT!!!! <https://t.co/rS4ZgmnWIC> (tweet_number 1294)*
- *@Neuralspaztici1 @keatrbl 1 out of 10 on how close they were to getting into the Whitehouse. 10 being Trump's head on a pike, 1.001 (tweet_number 24)*
- *white journalism in this country needs to burn (tweet_number 1522)*
- *@PhillyMayor @RepDwightEvans @StreetForPA @SenatorHughes @Darrell_Clarke @DrAlynEWaller @PPDCommish @bgabernathy You're asking them to call for peace aren't we beyond that grow some balls Jim and destroy these rioters (tweet_number 1468)*
- *@MarshaBlackburn We Americans will destroy them*
- *Crush em.. enough.. (tweet_number 1344)*
- *It's Up To Us To Take This Son Of A Bitch Down, Prosecuted, & Sentenced For Mass Killing Of Americans, Crimes Against Humanity & Traitor To Our Country!! (tweet_number 1305)*

2) To distinguish between Class 2 and Class 3, think about whether the violent phrase is used to refer to non-violent political events / phenomena. When the violent phrase is not quite literal but used to refer to violent political events / phenomena, the tweet belongs to Class 3. Also, the violent phrase being just non-literal is only a necessary condition (that does not automatically lead to Class 2).

a) Sometimes, it is hard to tell whether what is metaphorically referred to by the violent phrase is non-violent or not. Here, my recommendation is to think about whether the referent is unambiguously non-violent in nature (e.g., national economy, election). The referents in the following Tweets are somewhat actually violent. Although they are not literal (e.g., Trump himself did not gas and shoot in tweet_number 335), it does not necessarily mean they belong to Class 2.

- *@GOP @realDonaldTrump @LaraLeaTrump We will never forget seeing Trump gas and shoot his own people for a photo op. NEVER. #VoteBlueToEndThisNightmare2020 <https://t.co/WnK5fN2x75> (tweet_number 335)*

- *WHY TF IS TRUMP SENDING OUT NATIONAL GUARDS TO KILL THESE PROTESTORS???*
STOP TAKING LIVES YOU FAT CUNT (tweet_number 227)
 - *OH GREAT!!! NOW..... @GavinNewsom has imposed a stupid curfew for LA residents!!!*
#laprotestbtw this is really #socialdistancing? I'M FUCKIN OVER IT!!! Why burn our OWN
city! Lame-ass Morons!!! (tweet_number 2525)
 - *@ErrolWebber @realDonaldTrump White liberals will use people of color for their own political*
gain, point taken. But white fascists will kill us and maim us-and call it "patriotic." (tweet_number
 - 1198)
 - *@dougmillsnyt @realDonaldTrump So people burned the church across from the White House. The*
next day Trump stands in front of it. Guess who the pastor charged with sacrilege?
<https://t.co/tGCylZPhuu> (tweet_number 1809)
- b) Some phrases are a normalized non-violent expression although they might be violent in origin. In such cases. We code them as Class 3 if it does not contain an intention of physical harm.
- *@Veteran4Trump @realDonaldTrump The mayor's are allowing this to go because it is the only*
way they can beat @TherealDonaldTrump (tweet_number 2042)
 - *@realDonaldTrump They should maybe ask @GovKemp for advice. He beat the Chinese virus*
and clamped down last night in Atlanta. At the request of a Dem mayor by the way. She's good.
(tweet_number 1570)
- 3) Tweets with a violent religious curse (e.g., burn in hell) can be aggressive but do not belong to Class 1 because it does not contain an intention of physical harm in itself but is just aggressive (harsh/hateful). Code them as Class 3. Also, we do not consider this a metaphor (so, do not confuse it with Class 2)
- *We already lose everything, now it's your turn!!! @realDonaldTrump you are a FKG psycho!! You will burn*
in hell because of the pain that you have made to our people!! #anonymous #anonymusisback
<https://t.co/r34uB2KgOh> (tweet_number 1849)
- 4) Class 1 includes a call for self-harm as shown in the tweets below.
- *@realDonaldTrump, do us a favor and just jump off a cliff* (tweet_number 2009)
 - *@realDonaldTrump @SenatorTimScott WTF?! Are you kidding me? You are a dickhead. You have done*
nothing but divide the country, create chaos, try and make yourself a "great, very great, person all the while
being a major dildo. Please stick your head a little bit farther up your ass, jump, and disappear
(tweet_number 535).
- 5) The act in the tweet is a legal punishment (e.g. "should go to jail" or "should be arrested right now"):
- a) The general rule is that we do not code them as Class 1 even though they might sound aggressive/harsh/hateful. According to the general guidelines above, the following tweets do not contain a violent metaphor (jailing and arrested are not a violent metaphor) nor do they express an intention of physical harm. Thus, Class 3.
- *Trump go to jail for treason that doesn't make sense ?? How about all you luciferian baby eating*
Satan worshipping new world order fuck heads ? You will be going to jail (24th)
 - *@Texasfreespirit He's the leader of antifa so if Trump deems antifa as a terrorist group Soros is*
the head terrorist so he should be arrested right along with them he's funding it! (29th)
- b) An exception to the general rule is when the referred legal punishment involves a call for some direct harm on the target. In this case, a given tweet can be Class 1.

- *@Nightmareobses1 @realDonaldTrump Those cops should be tried and executed. All the cops who are standing around while he bleeds should as well. Nothing but puss#es without their badge and gun (44th)*
- 6) The tweet quotes a text containing an intention of physical harm. Code quotes as Class 3. In general, this should not be coded as Class 1 because the quoted text itself does not tell anything about the author's intention. If the author reveals an intention of physical harm using a quote, this may be considered Class 1 (e.g., I love it: "the only good Democrat is a dead Democrat").
- 7) The tweet expresses an intention of physical harm but it is actually an irony (i.e., the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite). In the two tweets below, the author is actually against riots and killing sick people, respectively. Please, label it as Class 3.
- *Of course not bro. These fckin liberals and demonRATS are and have been ruining our country for centuries! But hey let's fckin burn the cities and maybe that will solve everything 🤡 #QAnon #WWGIWGA #ObamaGate #Trump2020 (tweet_number 365).*
 - *@DonaldJTrumpJr @SenAlexander Just shoot all the sick people. That way we don't have to deal with them. Huh. You white privileged prick (tweet_number 380).*