



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on October 25, 2019

Americans Fear “Civil War”

The “Battleground Poll,” run by Georgetown University’s Institute of Politics and Public Service, has found that 67 percent of respondents fear that the United States is on the verge of a “civil war.”



Indeed, the divisions in the country are probably at levels not seen since the actual Civil War and the ensuing Reconstruction period, a time when about 750,000 Americans died — killed by each other — and an American president (Andrew Johnson) was impeached by political opponents who did not like him or his policies.

Mo Elleithee, the executive director of the Institute, lamented the results of the poll. “The majority of Americans believe that we are two-thirds of the way to being on the edge of a civil war. That to me is a very pessimistic place.”

And, with a presidential election coming up next year, the political division is likely to get even worse. Elleithee said the poll “paints a scenario, a picture of a highly negative campaign that will continue to exacerbate the incivility in our public discourse. It will be a sort of race to the bottom, or has the potential to be a race to the bottom.”

Eighty-seven percent of respondents said that they were frustrated with the rudeness of today’s politics, but there are indications that they also believe the rudeness is more from the other side, not from their side. Elleithee said, “It seems to me what they’re saying is, ‘I believe in common ground, it’s just that common ground where I’m standing. As soon [as] you move over to where I am, we’ll be on common ground.’”

The Battleground Poll was conducted by Democratic and Republican pollsters. Ed Goeas of the Republican-leaning Tarrance Group said that he expected in the next election both candidates will be disliked by a majority of the country. This was pretty much the case in the 2016 election between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton, but it appears that such intensity might even be greater in 2020.

“There is going to be a large body of voters who dislike both of them, and that’s going to be the swing vote in the election,” Goeas said.

Celinda Lake, the Democratic partner in the Battleground Poll’s “Civility Poll,” agreed. “There is relative consensus that divisions in this country are getting worse.”

Although Goeas is not a fan of President Trump, he asserted that Trump did not originate today’s rudeness in politics, arguing that he is a “symptom” of the disease, rather than the “disease” itself. “One of the things that I have focused on as we have gone into this death spiral of incivility in the country, that we had to be at a certain point for Trump to become acceptable.”



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Then who is to blame? The two pollsters placed the blame on social media, the news media, and Trump. One of the reasons that Trump is charged with contributing to the decline in civility is that he is the first Republican president to seriously respond to often absurd left-wing attacks that have gone on largely unanswered for several years. In other words, so long as Republican presidents and candidates just “took it,” then there was little conflict. One might recall President George W. Bush saying little to nothing when ridiculous accusations were made after Hurricane Katrina that he had “blown up” the levees, causing the flooding in New Orleans. And, of course, mainstream liberal media did little to nothing to point out the absurdity of such allegations, choosing to just let it stand.

For several years, it has been standard practice for the Left to “play the race card” in their drive to reduce opposition to socialist policy proposals. When Republicans mostly accept the Democratic position, they are hailed for “reaching across the aisle,” but when Republicans stand up for more conservative policies, they are condemned. One might notice that Democrats almost never “reach across the aisle,” but they lambast Republicans who do not.

The media, which has long been in league with the Left, says little about physical assaults by Bernie Sanders-supporting left-wingers upon Republicans such as Congressman Steve Scalise of Louisiana, or Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky. When the Left says “let’s have a conversation,” what they mean is for those on the Right to shut up and be lectured to. After the Parkland shootings, for example, “having a conversation” about school shootings turned into an anti-gun-rights crowd shouting at and booing gun-rights supporter Dana Loesch, and Senator Marco Rubio.

The Left has gotten used to those such as President Bush and candidates such as Mitt Romney and John McCain who will just take the Left’s attacks and not respond. Then along came Donald Trump, who fights back and actually takes positions that threaten the establishment swamp in D.C., such as opposing the no-end wars that have been common since the first President Bush, and it now appears that incivility has increased. Actually, the incivility was already there.

The reality is that incivility has been going on for decades, but most of it has come from the Left. Now that President Trump is fighting back, the establishment suddenly expresses concern over incivility.

But why did the media not express this concern when Democrats said Ronald Reagan was “raping national parks,” or Barry Goldwater was accused of wanting nuclear war in the infamous 1964 “Daisy Girl” commercial?

Fortunately, the man in the White House has decided it is past time to fight back.

It is about time.

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Steve Byas is a university instructor in history and government, and author of History’s Greatest Libels, a challenge to the Left’s demonization of historical figures like Joe McCarthy or Christopher Columbus.



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