

Late Fourth Turnings and Political Violence



By Steven Yates

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Fourth Turnings are periods of Crisis which, in the three examples available from U.S. / Western history, eventually turn violent. The country emerges changed.

The *first*, on what had just become U.S. soil, included the War for Independence from the British Empire. America became a federation of states. The *second* proceeded through the nasty mood the country fell into during the 1850s and culminated in the War Between the States. The U.S. emerged from that a nation state, its superstructure not fundamentally different from the nation states of Europe. The *third* began with an economic crash and ended at the end of the Second World War, the deadliest such conflict in human history with an unprecedented act of mass destruction: the nuking of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We emerged from that a dominating world power with the strongest economy in human history, our currency the world's reserve currency.

We're in the *fourth*, in our own nasty and divided mood. And as with previous Fourth Turnings, as I argued last week, it will resolve itself just as the others did.

Whether we can avoid mass violence, or like what will follow, depends on what we do now!

Our Fourth Turning differs from its predecessors in at least two respects.

The most obvious is the technology that brings graphic violence into our devices via social media feeds within seconds of the events themselves. This technology both amplifies and feeds off extreme voices and aggravates divisions, because Big Tech has these monetized. They're part of a business model.

The second, I'd describe as the nihilistic, burn-it-all-down mindset that has overtaken a segment of the population. A general sense of precarity, unease, and anticipation fills the air, in the face of the dysfunction and nonresponse of dominant institutions, public or private.

These do not make for a good combination.

The *first*: a compelling case can be made that repeated viewings of graphic videos desensitize us to the point where we see victims of brutality as if they were mere statistics, or cardboard characters in a slasher movie, instead of living, breathing human beings who had lives and families. Come to think of it, are slasher movies really all that good for the minds and spirits of those who view them?

We are desensitized in a different way by constant clashes of narratives where we weren't there and can't compellingly determine for ourselves what to believe. "Do your own research" *does* have limits, especially with AI slop now everywhere. There's a temptation to stop caring and just withdraw into our private lives where we find certainty and limited control.

Social media is not something we can control. Big Tech controls it, via algorithms, in our techno-feudal economy. Algorithms determine who is seen and who is invisible, amidst a ludicrous overproduction of online "content." Some argue that the best thing you can do for your peace of mind is

delete your accounts and *shut the social media machine off*.

But is withdrawal into epistemic isolation really a solution? Events affect us. It's helpful to know something of major trends and national conversations, even if the latter are disturbing and outside our control. *Should* mass violence break out, it could blindside you – especially if you live in a big city (something I began recommending against long ago).

The salient fact: past Fourth Turnings have all involved, or led to, wars which reconfigured nations and the world broadly. So here's the question of the hour: could *our* late Fourth Turning explode into violence?

Charlie Kirk and Political Violence.

Charlie Kirk, founder of Turning Point USA, was one of America's leading conservative activists and at 31, the youngest. He began building his organization at age 18, showed tremendous leadership and personal charisma, and was able to obtain millions from mega-donors and amass a substantial following on campuses. His public appearances promoted peaceful dialogue through open questions-and-answers. He fearlessly waded into the lion's den, one might say, given academia's well-known hostility to conservatism. It's clear: he bent the conversation in a direction it needed to go in. Eventually Turning Point USA had thousands of chapters on campuses and a watchdog list of hard-left professors who, members alleged, used their classrooms as bully pulpits for their ideology.

Then, on Sept. 10, he was shot and killed.

Tyler Robinson, 22, was taken into custody early Friday morning, having been recognized on videos the FBI made public and turned in by his own father and a family friend. On Tuesday he was formally charged with aggravated murder and several other felonies. The first is considered a capital offense in Utah. Prosecutors have said they intend to pursue

the death penalty.

What else do we know? What questions do we have?

(1) If he's the guy, he was able to get off a lethal shot from a distance of 200 yards. While there are plenty of sharpshooters who could do that, how many of them are 22 years old? Did Robinson have sniper training? Has anyone asked?

The act was clearly premeditated. The shooter arrived prepared. After the act, he got out. Robinson was taken into custody over 200 miles away. I'd been quietly speculating that this was a professional hit, not the work of some college kid with lefty beliefs. I haven't come across connections to a larger organization that I've been able to independently verify. I can only hope and pray that there is a serious investigation to find out if Robinson was working for someone, and if so, who.

(2) A dropped rifle was found in the woods. Here is where things get a bit weird. The rifle was four feet long. In the images I saw, depicting a figure who looks like Robinson running across the roof and dropping to the ground, he doesn't appear to be carrying a rifle. Maybe he disassembled it, then reassembled it. And then dropped it in the woods? This sequence of events provides some question marks, to say the least. Investigators found scrawls on bullet casings. Most make no sense outside online gamer lingo. One, though, says, "Hey fascist! CATCH!" There's an up-arrow symbol, a right-arrow symbol, and three down-arrow symbols, possibly a reference to moves in a video game called Helldivers 2.

(3) Robinson was living with a transgender roommate – they were romantically involved as the person was "transitioning from male to female." (Reports of transgender ideology found on one of the bullet casings turned out to be false.) Charlie Kirk was critical of transgenderism, obviously. According to those who knew him, Robinson had worked himself into an

obsession with Kirk.

Both Democrats and Republicans have called Charlie Kirk's death a political assassination.

Who had reason to want Charlie Kirk dead?

Possibly a *long line* of leftists, on or off campuses.

He was a staunch ally of Trump and did a great deal to win votes for the president among university students. Turning Point USA gave Generation Z conservatives, especially men, a voice they hadn't previously had.

Anyone else? I honestly didn't follow his activities all that closely, both because he wasn't aiming his message at my demographic and because I've been outside the American university system for well over a decade.

So I would have missed anything he said recently that might have annoyed people more powerful than campus lefties. He'd supported Israel, but maybe, in the face of an obvious genocide, he'd begun to visibly drag his feet. I've encountered [claims](#) that he'd rejected a large contribution from Benjamin Netanyahu, which might have meant that he was trying to extricate himself from the embrace of the Zionist octopus.

I haven't seen evidence of a connection between Robinson and Mossad! Just a random thought.... Moving on, moving on....

Political violence has become a feature of our late Fourth Turning. I've not said it was limited to the left. Last June, a Democratic Minnesota state representative and her husband were gunned down by a "righty" who had a list of other targets. Another legislator and his wife were wounded. A couple of months before that, an arsonist tried to burn down Pennsylvania's Democratic governor Josh Shapiro's house. Nancy Pelosi's husband was attacked by a guy with a few loose screws

clearly after her scalp.

Anonymous online threats are legion and span the ideological spectrum. Just scroll through online forums and comments sections, where keyboard warriors routinely vent spleen and sometimes threaten violence against the other side. I noted how Big Tech's business model amplifies this sort of thing.

What happens now? This depends on what the left does. Will they stop demonizing conservatives as racists and fascists and undertake something as breathtakingly rational as embracing the kind of free dialogue Charlie Kirk championed?

Or will they double down? A few visible commentators have been fired over risible comments about Kirk in the wake of his death. But this is just a fraction of the hostile sentiment out there. His wife Erika is clearly prepared to continue leading Turning Point USA. "You have no idea what you just have unleashed..." was what she said in her [first public appearance](#) following the assassination.

My experience all the way back in the 1990s when I was still in academia was that even then, leftists were totally unused to having anyone stand up to them. They saw themselves as holding the moral high ground, on the right side of history, etc.: an intellectual vanguard, building their radical feminist, gay-friendly, multicultural Utopia. It was almost impossible for an outspoken conservative intellectual to find a permanent job in academia. By the mid-2010s, with the older generation retired or deceased and the radicals in charge, the problem was much worse.

Among the things Trump 2.0 has been doing right is rolling this back. Is this how the left responds? From mere invective to open violence?

On Monday, Marjorie Taylor Greene called for a "national divorce." She [opined](#):

“There is nothing left to talk about with the left. They hate us. They assassinated our nice guy who actually talked to them peacefully debating ideas. Then millions on the left celebrated and made clear they want all of us dead. To be honest, I want a peaceful national divorce. Our country is too far gone and too far divided, and it’s no longer safe for any of us.”

The logistics of any actual separation would be a nightmare! We’re not looking at a North-South divide. Or even a “red state” “blue state” divide, since there are conservatives in the rural regions of “blue states” such as California and hard core leftists in “red state” cities such as Charlotte, N.C.

[There are good reasons for believing that if political divorce were somehow to happen, it would leave most Americans worse off than they were before.](#)

I don’t know how likely such a civil war is, therefore. I don’t know how chastised the more intelligent leftists are by the instinctive sense all human beings have that someone who had likely been radicalized and who therefore was one of their own (Jimmy Kimmel’s obnoxious remark notwithstanding), violently ending a human life devoted to peaceful exchanges and dialogue, is a moral offense.

Most of the dominant institutions outside the White House and the Supreme Court are still controlled by those who tilt left.

These people own and control dominant media. They control big city governments, sometimes with financial backing from leftist billionaires like George Soros. Their softness on crime got an innocent Ukrainian woman, Iryna Zarutsky, 23, killed by a guy with a rap sheet as long as your arm who had no business outside a padded cell. That was in leftist-controlled Charlotte.

Conservatives and those aligned with conservatism in a broad sense have most of the guns. They control much larger rural

portions of the country – what hasn't been bought up by Bill Gates or the Chinese, anyway. Most rural conservatives, I think, would prefer just to be left alone. Leftists won't leave them alone because in the leftist worldview, these people need to be "fixed." They're not on board with, e.g., "trans rights."

Leftists tend to be afraid of guns. But not all of them, obviously! Some, such as Antifa are inherently violent. Trump was wise to declare Antifa as a domestic terror group, "leaderless" or not.

I see us as in a very dangerous time and place, given where this late Fourth Turning is heading ... considered in light of the changes that came about with its predecessors. And considering [who is most likely to step in and pick up the pieces](#) following any large scale violent confrontation or civic breakdown. None of this, by the way, covers what the American (and Israeli) war machines are doing, how their actions are inviting conflagration on a much larger scale.

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Steven Yates is a (recovering) ex-academic with a PhD in Philosophy. He taught for more than 15 years total at several colleges and universities in the Southeastern U.S. He has authored three books, more than 20 articles, numerous book reviews, and review essays in academic journals and anthologies. Refused tenure and unable to obtain full-time academic employment (and with an increasing number of very

fundamental philosophical essays refused publication in journals), he turned to alternative platforms and heretical notions, including about academia itself.

In 2012, he moved to Chile. He married a Chilean national in 2014. Among his discoveries in South America: many of the problems in the U.S. are problems everywhere, because human nature is the same everywhere.

He has a Patreon.com page. Donate [here](#) and become a Patron if you benefit from his work and believe it merits being sustained financially.

Steven Yates's book *Four Cardinal Errors: Reasons for the Decline of the American Republic* (2011) can be ordered [here](#).

His philosophical work *What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory* (2021) can be obtained [here](#) or [here](#).

His cosmic horror novel *The Shadow Over Sarnath* (2023) (written for the sheer fun of it) can be gotten [here](#).

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