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Nasty Politics: The Causes and Consequences of Violent Rhetoric

Surveys consistently find that that the public reacts negatively to violent rhetoric and incivility in politics. So why do politicians use it? Which politicians choose to 'get nasty,' and when is the public receptive to these appeals? What is the effect of nasty politics on democracy? I study these questions looking at the behavior of voters and politicians in the U.S., Ukraine, and Israel. The central argument of my book is that politicians use violent rhetoric because it draws outsized media and voter attention, and it signals to voters their toughness on policy positions. People with more aggressive personalities, and who like tough leaders, may actually be attracted to this kind of violent rhetoric. As a result certain politicians are willing to pay the reputational cost for using violent rhetoric in exchange for greater attention and coverage, as well as coalescing core supporters. And what about its effect on democracy? Violent rhetoric can be a cynical ploy for politicians to grab headlines, breeding contempt for democracy in the process. Or it can be a legitimate way for politicians to draw attention to injustices. The difficulty for the public, and for democracy, is how to distinguish between the two.

It's important to understand the strategies and consequences of violent rhetoric for two reasons. First, there has been a worldwide resurgence of right-wing populist politicians and parties, many of which have embraced violent political rhetoric.[1] The struggle between populist-nationalist parties with their accompanying violent rhetoric, and more mainstream parties has become one of the key fault lines of current global politics. In a speech in 2018, former President Obama criticized the style of President Trump and other leaders of his ilk, calling it "the politics of fear and resentment" and arguing that it paves the way towards authoritarianism.[2] Second, the advent of social media has upended traditional norms of political communication. Some fear that the political discourse is coarser because the cesspools of the Internet have seeped into the halls of legislatures. Fights are nastier, conspiracy theories gain traction more quickly, and democracy is in peril.

The conventional wisdom about politicians' use of violent language is that it's a distasteful but effective strategy: unsavory politicians prey upon existing partisan divisions, and use nasty appeals to polarize the population in order to consolidate their power. Yet this conventional wisdom is misleading. First, violent rhetoric happens even in the absence of strong partisan polarization. So the story of violent rhetoric politics can't simply be about stoking partisan division. Second, some politicians embrace violent rhetoric as a fundamental aspect of their persona, others use it selectively, and some politicians eschew it all together. What explains this

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[1] An incomplete list of such leaders includes Viktor Orban in Hungary, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and Narendra Modi in India.
[2] See https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/07/barack-obama-trump-illinois-dangerous-times

variation? Third, violent rhetoric tends to increase during periods of violent conflict or intense polarization, thus it is hard to know if violent rhetoric is a side effect of the violence and instability, or a direct contributor to it. Finally, media pundits and campaign strategists assume that violent rhetoric 'works'—yet survey and polling show that the public negatively responds to it.

This is the main puzzle of my book—why do politicians employ violent rhetoric if the public dislikes it so much? I develop a theory of what I dub "nasty politics" that answers this question. While the public may state their aversion to it, violent rhetoric still captivates and receives outsized attention. It also allows politicians to signal their steadfastness to voters on policy positions and that they will not 'sell out' the ingroup. Therefore politicians may be willing to pay some penalty for being nasty and using violent rhetoric in exchange for greater attention and coverage, as well as coalescing their status as a fighter for their constituents. And it's ambiguous as to how this dynamic affects the quality of democracy. It can lead politicians to engage in cheap theatrics and name-calling for attention, and breed cynicism among voters. Yet the nasty style also can serve as a weapon of the weak. Opposition lawmakers and marginalized groups can use incivility strategically to draw attention to underrepresented causes and injustice.

In this book I investigate the strategy and public reaction to nasty politics in Ukraine, the U.S., and Israel—three very different contexts. Ukraine emerged from a political revolution in 2014, has an ongoing war with Russian separatists in the east, and its political environment reflects this tumult. Frequent fights in the Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada, or Rada for short) between politicians that represent personality-driven political parties with vague platforms are the norm in Ukraine. Ukrainian politics recently entered a new era with the election of comedian and novice politician Volodymyr Zelensky as president in 2019. In contrast the U.S. is an established democracy, with high levels of partisan polarization that have gotten worse since the 2016 election of Donald Trump as president. The U.S. has also been badly rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's toll coincided with massive protests over police violence against Black Americans and the contentious 2020 presidential election, marking a perilous and deeply polarized time for U.S. politics. Finally, Israel is a consolidated democracy as well, but its politics increasingly revolve around where voters and other politicians stand on the longest serving Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. In less than a year (April 2019-March 2020) Israel underwent three elections to break a stalemate between pro- and anti-Netanyahu forces. The final election in March 2020 took place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the indictment of Netanyahu for corruption charges.

The choice of these different contexts is intentional. The main comparison in the book is between Ukraine—weak, to little partisanship—and the U.S., with its strong partisanship. Israel serves as an intermediary case, with Israeli voters self-identifying with right and left, but more likely to switch between parties than the U.S. Previous research in the U.S. identifies partisan polarization as the main culprit behind the nasty turn in U.S. politics. But Ukrainian politics are nastier than the U.S. Regular fights and disruptions are a regular occurrence in Ukrainian politics, even though voters have far weaker attachments to the parties than their American counterparts. The partisan polarization explanation for nasty politics is incomplete. I show that politicians across radically different contexts use nasty politics for similar goals—to attract attention and show

voters they are tough and willing to fight for their side. And in doing so, I provide a strong test for idea that nasty politics in different countries operates in similar ways.

I take a multi-method approach to test my theory. I use a series of surveys and survey experiments in the U.S., Ukraine, and Israel to show that the public in general reacts negatively to politicians who use violent rhetoric. Yet certain types of voters—those higher in trait aggression and in favor of tough leaders—are more receptive to politicians that use violent rhetoric. I also show that voters are more likely to pay attention to politicians who engage in nasty politics, more likely to consider ingroup partisan politicians who use it more trustworthy and tougher, and also recognize that certain politicians may be using it for cynical reasons. Using elite surveys in Ukraine and the U.S., I further show that politicians and elites are aware of the trade-offs involved in using violent rhetoric. To see which politicians engage in nasty politics, I collected multiple data sources. In both the U.S. and Ukraine I constructed datasets from media sources of Ukrainian politicians' (339 unique events) and U.S. politicians' (1,185 unique events) use of different types of violent rhetoric (name-calling, threats) from January 1, 2016-October 1, 2019. For Ukraine I also created a dataset of more than 300 disruptions—blockades, throwing of eggs, and fights— in the Rada from January 1, 2001-October 1, 2019. In the U.S., I use automated text analysis to classify more than 155,000 tweets as uncivil (or not) from all members of the 115th Congress with an active Twitter feed. Across all of these different datasets I find that opposition parties and newcomers are more likely to engage in disruptions and use violent rhetoric. And that violent rhetoric attracts more attention from both the media, and engagement on social media (likes, retweets, and comments). To better understand how elites think about the strategies behind violent rhetoric, I include 59 in-depth interviews from campaign strategists in both the U.S. and Ukraine, and two case studies of politicians who are known to employ the nasty style—Oleh Lyashko in Ukraine and President Trump in the U.S. I also collect and analyze more than 25,000 tweets from key Israeli and U.S. politicians during the COVID-19 pandemic (February 1, 2020-August 31, 2020) to explore how politicians in each country employ the nasty style during democratic crises impacted by the pandemic. Finally, I conclude with case study and survey evidence from Ukraine, the U.S., and Israel to trace the effects of nasty politics on the quality of democracy.

Related Books

Nasty Politics touches on a variety of topics in political science including political psychology, political violence, campaigning, democratic erosion, social media, as well as American, Ukrainian, and Israeli politics. It has broad appeal for both academics and a general audience.

My book is related to several recent books in American politics that explore the roots of recent and historical partisan polarization including: Steven Webster's *American Rage: How Anger Shapes Our Politics* (2020, Cambridge University Press); Nathan Kalmoe's *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War* (2020, Cambridge University Press); Lilian Mason's *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (2018, University of Chicago Press); and John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck's *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* (2018, Princeton University Press). Many of these books show that partisan polarization in the U.S. is reaching

depths not seen since the Civil War, and increasingly tied to identity. Perhaps most important, it is seen as the driving force behind many of the increasingly bitter and nasty politics. These books serve as an important foil for my case selection of Ukraine—why do we see nasty politics in countries like Ukraine that lack strong partisanship?

My book is also related to books that have looked at Ukrainian politics including Paul D'Anieri's *Understanding Ukrainian Politics: Power, Politics, and Institutional Design* (2006, Routledge), and Tara Kuzio's *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (2015, Praeger International Security), as well as post-Communist politics in Grigore Pop-Eleches and Joshua Tucker's *Communism's Shadow: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes* (2017, Princeton University Press). These books have argued that legacies of communism and corruption have led to voter distrust and dysfunctional party politics. My book is also related to recent books on Israeli politics and the rightward shift in Israeli politics: Ami Pedahzur's *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right*. (2012, Oxford University Press); Colin Shindler's. *The Rise of the Israeli Right: from Odessa to Hebron* (2015, Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Michael Brenner's *In Search of Israel: The History of an Idea* (2018, Princeton University Press). By documenting and showing how similar strategies of nasty politics are used across different contexts, my book will be of interest to both scholars and students of American politics, post-Soviet politics, and Israeli politics.

This book also speaks to several important and recent books on democratic erosion and political violence. Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser's *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (2016, Oxford University Press) and Jan-Werner Müller's *What is Populism?* (2016, University of Pennsylvania Press) both discuss the ways in which populist politicians' and rhetoric are distinct in separating the "good people" from the "corrupt elite." Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die* (2018, Crown) further argues that one of key indicators of democratic erosion is when politicians no longer respect the other side as a legitimate opposition, but view them as a dangerous enemy. In terms of political violence, books such as Steven Wilkinson's *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (2006, Cambridge University Press); Richard Nielsen's *Deadly Clerics: Blocked Ambition and the Paths to Jihad* (2017, Cambridge University Press); and Stuart J Kaufman's *Nationalist Passions* (2015, Cornell University Press) all examine the incentives for various political or religious leaders to foment violence against outgroups. My book builds upon this previous work by showing when nasty appeals are listened to, and when they fall on deaf ears, which politicians are most likely to try and stoke outrage, and the effect of violent rhetoric on the quality of democracy.

Finally, my book is related to several books in political psychology. Books such as Roderick P. Hart's *Trump and Us: What he Says and Why People Listen* (2020, Cambridge University Press); Ashley Jardina's *White Identity Politics* (2019, Cambridge University Press); Diana C. Mutz's *In-Your-Face Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media* (2015, Princeton University Press); Tali Mendelberg's *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (2001, Princeton University Press); Karen Stenner's *The Authoritarian Dynamic* (2005, Cambridge University Press); Marc J. Hetherington and Jonathan D. Weiler's *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics* (2009, Cambridge University Press); and Joshua D. Kertzer's *Resolve in International Politics* (2016, Princeton University Press). All these books

show how certain individuals are more susceptible to political appeals that emphasize threats, racial appeals, protect their ingroup, or express resolve. Bethany Albertson and Shana Kushner Gadarian's *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World* (2015, Cambridge University Press) show how perceptions of threat and anxiety influence policy, and in particular how politicians may stoke them. Finally, a recent book by Gwyneth H McClendon, *Envy in Politics* (2018, Princeton University Press) uses a similar comparative set-up to mine (South Africa and the U.S.) to show how concerns over status lead to envy and spite and can drive suboptimal political policies.

Two key factors differentiate *Nasty Politics* from the aforementioned titles. It doesn't focus on one specific country, but offers a more general theory of violent rhetoric and nasty politics across different contexts. And my book examines both the reaction of the mass public and the strategies of elites and politicians.

Outline of the Book

Overview
Nasty Politics: *The Causes and Consequences of Violent Rhetoric* examines the use of violent and nasty rhetoric by national-level politicians in Ukraine, the U.S., and Israel. I argue that the public dislikes nasty politics and the politicians who use it. But nasty politics attracts more attention, and ingroup politicians who use it are perceived as tougher and more credible. To test my theory, I marshal evidence from surveys and survey experiments, media databases of violent rhetoric, disruptions in the Ukrainian parliament, text analysis of politicians' social media posts, elite surveys, and in-depth surveys of campaign strategists. Across these very different contexts—Ukraine, the U.S., and Israel—I show that the public dislikes politicians who use violent rhetoric, but believe that ingroup politicians who use it are tougher and more trustworthy. Nasty politics also attracts more attention than its well-mannered counterpart. And the attention-grabbing nature of nasty rhetoric makes it particularly attractive to opposition politicians in times of crisis. Finally, the effects of violent rhetoric on democracy are ambiguous. Mudslinging and name-calling can turn the public cynical on politics, and crowd out quality politicians from running. But nasty politics also plays an important role as a weapon for marginalized groups and opposition politicians to call-out wrongdoing by those in power.

Target Audience
Given recent concerns in the U.S. and abroad about a resurgence of nationalism, violent rhetoric, and incivility, this book will be of interest to both academic and general audiences. This book will appeal to scholars and students of political campaign tactics, political violence, political psychology, as well as those who study U.S., Ukrainian, or Israeli politics. Campaign strategists and policymakers will be particularly interested in the case studies, in-depth interviews with campaign strategists, and detailed data on how politicians use violent rhetoric, and how the public responds to it. The methods used in my book include surveys, survey experiment, text analysis of social media data, case studies and in-depth interviews—all of which will be written at an accessible level, making the book of interest to a wider audience.

Chapter 1 The Nasty Style of Politics
This chapter begins with several vivid examples of violent and nasty political rhetoric in Ukraine, the U.S., and Israel. It then introduces the main puzzle of violent rhetoric: why do politicians use nasty and violent rhetoric if the public reduces support for those who employ it? What explains the strategic logic of nasty politics? I take a broad view of violent, nasty rhetoric. I define it as any type of language that defames, dehumanizes, is derogatory, or threatens domestic political opponents. Violent political rhetoric is a spectrum: with name-calling and incivility at the lower end and are more common, while threats or calls for violence at the upper end, and are comparatively rarer. Politicians often employ implicit or coded language via dehumanizing metaphors to describe certain individuals or groups, comparing them to animals, cockroaches, rats, or a cancer. These frames allow politicians to denigrate and threaten targeted groups all while keeping the facade that they weren't saying anything truly violent. I also justify the main focus on Ukraine and the U.S.—two very different contexts, with Ukraine having weak partisan attachments and U.S. highly levels of partisan polarization. Israel represents an intermediate case and test of external validity of the theory. Israelis tend to identify as right wing or left wing, but attachment to individual parties is weaker. My choice of contexts allows me to test a more general theory of politicians employing nasty politics, and the response of voters to it.

Chapter 2 A History of Insults and Threats
This chapter explores the historical origins and recent developments of nasty politics in U.S., Ukrainian and Israeli politics. First, I show that violent rhetoric is not constant across time. Rather it tends to peak around key moments of crisis. Using historical media coverage from the *The New York Times* (January 1, 1851-October 1, 2019) I show that the salience of nasty politics as measured by news stories about violent rhetoric is at its highest point since the U.S. Civil War. Using more fine-grain data from January 1, 2011-October 1, 2019, and media sources from other major U.S. newspapers,[3] I show that this trend has accelerated since the 2016 presidential election. I then compare the U.S. analysis to the salience of nasty politics in Ukraine from January 1, 2001-October 1, 2019 across three different Ukrainian news sources.[4] Violent rhetoric also peaks around key events including the imprisonment and trials of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. Finally, I include data from Israel (January 1, 2001- July 31, 2020) drawn from the most popular Israeli news website *Ynet*. The findings mirror those from Israel and Ukraine, with the salience of violent increasing significantly following Benjamin Netanyahu becoming prime minister in 2009.

Chapter 3 Why Politicians Use Violent Rhetoric
Chapter 3 introduces the main argument of the book. Bridging the literatures of political violence, political psychology, and campaigning, I use four assumptions to build my argument about nasty politics. 1) Voters have a general aversion to violent rhetoric. 2) Violent and extreme political appeals receive more attention from voters, than their non-violent counterparts. 3) Ingroup partisans that use violent rhetoric will be seen as tougher than those that don't. 4) Not all voters have an equal aversion to the use of violent rhetoric by politicians. Those who score

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[3] *USA Today, The Washington Post, New York Post, Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, Houston Chronicle, and Chicago Tribune.*
[4] The pro-Russian website *Korrespondent*, the pro-Ukrainian website *Ukrayinska Pravda*, and the news aggregator *Ukr.net*.

higher on certain psychological traits, such as aggression or favor for tough leaders, are especially susceptible to or reward violent appeals.

Taken together these four assumptions show that there is a strategic logic to nasty politics. While voters may say that they do not like violent political rhetoric on principle, it does draw their attention. It also serves as a signal that a politician will be more willing to fight for their ingroup and not sell-out core supporters. Certain voters with aggressive predispositions and who favor strong leaders might actually be attracted to politicians who use it. Given the public's response to the nasty style, how do politicians strategically use it? During elections or periods of instability, political entrepreneurs use nasty and violent appeals to exploit partisan, ethnic, or religious grievances to bolster their own support. Finally, violent rhetoric and nasty behavior are a disruptive strategy. Outsiders, extremists, and marginalized groups all have more to gain by campaigning from the periphery, and polarizing the debate in exchange for media attention, as they lack the resources of more mainstream politicians. In this way nasty politics is a way to signal to the public that politics should not proceed as normal. The key dilemma for voters is how to tell the difference between opportunists, extremists, and the legitimately downtrodden who employ the nasty style.

Chapter 4 How Does the Public Respond to Nastiness?
This chapter tests the theory from Chapter 3 on how the public responds to violent rhetoric. Using a series of national surveys in the U.S. and Ukraine conducted in August and September of 2018, I construct a ranking in both countries of the perceived nastiness of different kinds of violent and non-violent political appeals. Even given the different contexts, the public in U.S. and Ukraine are remarkably similar in how they rank different nasty appeals. Dehumanizing appeals and threats are considered never acceptable in both countries, while calling opponents "traitors" or "sleazy" is more acceptable. I also find that those scoring higher on aggression and favor tough leaders are more receptive to these appeals. Follow-up survey experiments in Ukraine and the U.S. conducted in in 2019 and 2020 in both countries examine under what conditions nasty politics is acceptable. The findings from these survey experiments show three things. First the public in both countries are more likely to support and view politicians as strong leaders when nasty rhetoric is directed against the outgroup, or second, the rhetoric is justified because the outgroup is framed as an existential threat. Finally, people also are more tolerant of politicians using violent rhetoric when it's framed as politicians being honest with voters and fighting for their constituents.

Chapter 5 Which Politicians Choose to get Nasty and When?
This chapter examines how politicians use violent political rhetoric in a variety of new datasets. I constructed a dataset of incidents of violent rhetoric including threats and name-calling from Ukrainian and U.S. media sources for national-level politicians from January 1, 2016-October 1, 2019. This covers several elections in the U.S.: the 2016 and 2018 congressional elections, as well as parts of 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. In Ukraine this time period captures the 2019 presidential and 2019 parliamentary elections. This period also encompasses important events in the U.S. (election of Donald Trump in 2016) and Ukrainian politics (War in Donbass and election of Volodymyr Zelensky as president). The separate datasets for the U.S. and Ukraine contain the following information for each instance of violence rhetoric: 1) the name of politician, 2) the date, 3) the context (on social media, TV, speech, etc.), 4) what was said, 5)

who the target was, and 6) the kind of nasty rhetoric that was used. The U.S. dataset in the U.S. includes 1,185 unique events, and the Ukrainian dataset includes 339 events. I also construct a dataset of 301 disruptive events in the Ukrainian Rada which includes blockaeds of the speaker's podium, egg throwing, smoke bombs, and physical fights from January 1, 2001-October 1, 2019. Finally, I use 155,540 tweets sent by all Members of Congress with a Twitter account from October 17, 2016 until December 13, 2017, and use supervised machine learning algorithm to classify tweets as uncivil or not. Across these diverse datasets I show that while name-calling is quite common, threats are comparatively rare. The nasty style of politics tends to be carried out by more extreme politicians, and those in the opposition. And most crucially nasty rhetoric gets more attention than its non-nasty counterpart. This points to the strategic role of nasty politics as a way for opposition parties to gain attention when conventional political avenues may be blocked.

Chapter 6 *What do the Experts Think About Violent Rhetoric*
This chapter focuses on how elites—politicians, campaign strategists, activists, and journalists—view nasty politics. In March and April of 2019 I fielded surveys to gauge elite opinion on the acceptability of and strategies behind violent rhetoric in the U.S. and Ukraine. The U.S. data comes from an online survey conducted in March of 2019 by CivicPulse[5] of 520 state and local politicians and elected officials across the U.S. The Ukraine data stems from an online survey conducted in March and April of 2019 of 165 by the Kyiv International Institue of Sociology (KIIS)[6] of civic activists and politicians across Ukraine. On average, Ukrainian elites think voters are more tolerant of different violent appeals compared to U.S. elites. Yet when it comes to explaining the use of violent name-calling or threatening language and why politicians use it, the results are strikingly similar in the U.S. and Ukraine. Elites in both countries think violent rhetoric is driven by politicians trying to attract media attention and coalesce core supporters. I pair these surveys with in-depth interviews. Throughout 2018-2020 I conducted 59 in-depth interviews in both the U.S. and Ukraine with campaign strategists, journalists, and party operatives across the political spectrum. These interviews further reinforce the strategic logic of violent rhetoric. While the contexts are different—Ukraine has more personalized oligarchic politics, and the U.S. is beset by strong partisanship—the campaign strategists in both countries point to similarities in tactics and effectiveness. The two themes emphasized by strategists are attention and coalescing of the ingroup. Those interviewed in the U.S. and Ukraine have pointed out that while the public may bemoan nasty politics, they pay attention and have a tendency to even support it. As one Democratic strategist said in a March 2019 interview, "People decry all sorts of things they actually reward. They reward gutter politics, outrageous promises, etc. …Ultimately we are all political animals that respond to stimuli."

Chapter 7 Profiles in Nastiness: Oleh Lyashko and Donald Trump
This chapter focuses on two politicians who have frequently employed nasty politics in Ukraine and in the U.S. Oleh Lyashko is a Ukrainian nationalist politician who founded the Ukrainian Radical Party in 2011. Notable for his staunch nationalist views, Lyashko has been controversial in Ukrainian politics for his extreme anti-Russian rhetoric, calling to "shoot" or "hang" those

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[5] CivicPulse has a national online panel of local government officials across the U.S. that they conduct surveys with researchers to generate insight about governance. See https://www.civicpulse.org/

[6] KIIS is one of the largest and most well-known survey companies in Ukraine. See http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=about

who attended Russian separatist rallies, and accusing allies of the former President Viktor Yanukovych of being "Kremlin agents," "assholes," and "brutes" leading to several fistfights in the Rada. He later lost his seat in the Rada in the July 2019 parliamentary elections. Donald Trump's path from real estate mogul and reality television star to the presidency was built on the nasty style. He amplified racist conspiracy theories about whether President Obama was actually an American citizen, demonized immigrants, and regularly attacked his political opponents. Trump used this bombastic and violent rhetoric to drive media coverage. While Trump and Lyashko hold vastly different political positions in vastly different political systems, they both used nasty politics as a means to attract attention and coalesce their support from their ingroup, as well as provoke rivals. These case studies trace the strategic logic of their use of nasty rhetoric and how it played out politically by looking at their social media data. I scraped and analyzed more than 700 posts and measured audience engagement (likes, retweets, comments) with Lyashko's Facebook posts, and more than 3,500 tweets from Trump's Twitter feed over a 6-month period in 2019 (March-October 2019). Across these different contexts and different social media platforms I find the nasty style is more likely to draw attention and engagement. Nasty tweets and Facebook posts garner more likes, retweets, comments and shares than their non-nasty counterparts, and both Trump and Lyashko go nasty more around key salient events.

Chapter 8 Violent Rhetoric and the Pandemic Summer
Nasty politics peaks around crises. But why do different politicians choose to adopt or not adopt the nasty style during times of crisis? In this chapter I explore the effect of political crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. and Israel from February 1, 2020-July 31, 2020. Both countries experienced distinct but severe democratic crises exacerbated by the pandemic. In the U.S. the pandemic led to historic-levels of unemployment, school closures, economic recession and hundreds of thousands of deaths. It also fomented the nationwide protests against racism, increased violence between right-wing and left-wing activists. All of this was taking place against the backdrop of the contentious 2020 elections. Israel meanwhile has endured multiple inconclusive elections in 2019 and 2020, the indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, coupled with a raging pandemic and nationwide anti-Netanyahu protests. Much like in the U.S., Israeli democracy is under severe stress. To see how this stress affected nasty politics, I collected more than 25,000 tweets from key politicians in the U.S. (Trump, Biden, and several Members of Congress) and Israel (Netanyahu and his political rivals in the Knesset) from February 1, 2020-July 31, 2020. These tweets were then coded for whether they were violent or not, and whether were about the pandemic. This analysis shows how different politicians respond to crises, and whether they choose to adopt the nasty style or not in a crisis. It also explores why Ukraine, unlike the U.S. and Israel, was not hit by a political crisis during COVID.

Chapter 9 Violent Rhetoric and Its Implications for Democracy
The concluding chapter ends with an important question—what does the nasty style mean for democracy? Bringing together surveys in the U.S., Ukraine, and Israel, and case studies I show that the effects are not so straightforward. Voters dislike the nasty style and find it disgusting, but also are captivated by it and believe ingroup politicians who use it are tougher. Cynical politicians can play on the public's response, and garner attention. This degrades democracy, as the public becomes more distrustful of politicians and the political process. And in turn honest politicians become turned off from politics and are unwilling to run. This brings us to the

situation in Ukraine, where the majority of my in-depth interviews and the survey of elites all complained about the low quality and bad culture of Ukrainian politicians. Yet nasty politics is not all bad for democracy. It can be a legitimate weapon for the opposition and marginalized politicians to fight for what they believe in, and ring the alarm bell about injustice. The problem for voters and for democracy in the future is how to distinguish between the cynics and those fighting injustice.

<u>Timeline of the Book</u>

I am making good progress on the book. Seven of the nine chapters are finished in rough draft form. A rough draft of the manuscript will be finished by December 10, 2020 in time for a book conference. The virtual book conference will be held on January 22, 2021 with Erica Chenoweth (Harvard), Anna Grzymala-Busse (Stanford), Shana Gadarian (Syracuse), Joshua Kertzer (Harvard), and Joshua Tucker (NYU). I anticipate six weeks for further revisions. So the final manuscript should be ready by March 5, 2021.

- <u>Chapter 1</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 2</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 3</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 4</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 5</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 6</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 7</u> Rough Draft Done
- <u>Chapter 8</u> In Progress.
- <u>Chapter 9</u> In Progress.