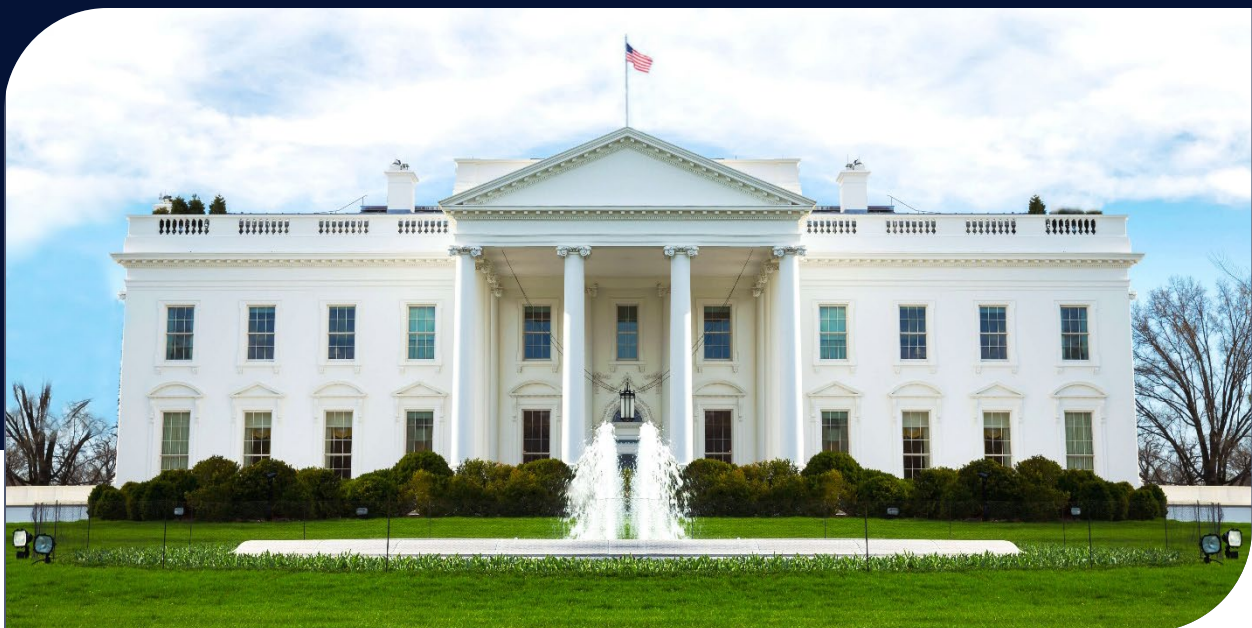




Risk and Resilience: Preparing for Uncertainty in the 100 Days to the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election

Teneo Insights | Election 2024

July 2024



July 27 will mark the beginning of the 100-day countdown to the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election. President Biden's decision on July 21 to end his reelection campaign capped off a series of significant events over the last two months, including the July 13 assassination attempt on former President Trump while he was speaking at a campaign rally in Butler, PA.

Both developments have taken place amid an already elevated domestic security environment, stemming from threats related to the Israel-Hamas conflict, election-related disinformation, ongoing activity from a myriad of movements with a variety of grievances, and the desire by a range of extremist and terrorist groups to sow further civil unrest and political violence. As such, the final countdown leading up to election day, as well as the immediate aftermath, has the potential to repeatedly and impactfully disrupt normal business operations. To effectively navigate this uncertainty, organizations and their leaders would be remiss not to develop multifaceted preparations that include robust intelligence analysis and scenario planning, as well as reinforce their crisis preparedness, business continuity and security plans.

What the Next 100 Days Will Look Like

The political landscape will be highly dynamic over the next 100 days, particularly the next several weeks, which in turn will impact the various vectors at play that influence the domestic security environment. In the lead up to and during the Republican National Committee (RNC) Convention, held in Milwaukee, WI from July 15-18, the Republican Party was focused on solidifying its base and appealing to independent voters. In addition to formally cementing the Party's candidate for president, the focus of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) Convention, scheduled to take place in Chicago, IL from August 19 to 22, will be attempting to unify the party and rallying both democrats and undecided voters. A range of actors – including activist movements, extremist groups and foreign adversaries and their influence operations – have already demonstrated their intent to capitalize on this uncertainty and will likely continue to seek to do so in the following ways:

- **Election-related mis- and disinformation will surge:** The final stretch leading up to the election will likely see a notable surge in election-related mis- and disinformation campaigns, targeting both parties, individual candidates up and down the ballot, as well as the integrity of the elections themselves. A variety of actors – including foreign adversaries, domestic political and extremist groups and individual threat actors – are likely to contribute to this trend. Their motivations range from undermining public trust in the electoral process, influencing voter behavior and hence attempting to influence election outcomes, and creating as much disruption and disarray as possible to undermine social order and cohesion. These campaigns will, unsurprisingly, play out online on mainstream and fringe social media platforms, with commercial and public generative AI tools facilitating these efforts.

Since July 13, mainstream and fringe social media have been saturated with commentary, conspiracy theories and charged rhetoric related to the assassination attempt, blending with other election-related misinformation that targets both parties, individual candidates and the integrity of the elections themselves. Similarly, since President Biden's announcement that he is stepping aside and endorsing Vice President Harris, online commentary featuring the latter has seen a notable uptick across mainstream and fringe social media.

- **Political groups and activist movements will likely increase the scale and intensity of protests:** These next 100 days will take place amid the backdrop of the continued Israel-Hamas war, which currently faces heightened potential of spilling over to an Israel-Hezbollah war. This will further pull in the U.S., Iran and other global players. The reverberations of the war have already been felt across the U.S., with pro-Palestinian and anti-war protests persisting since October 2023. Over the next 100 days, these protests will not only continue, but likely escalate in terms of scale and intensity as groups attempt to keep their calls for a ceasefire and associated demands front and center for both parties and their candidates. A range of other political groups and activist movements, including those advocating for climate action, social justice and reproductive health issues, will follow similar suit. The intensity and frequency of these protests may increase as election day approaches, including in the form of joint protest activity between various groups and movements, as witnessed by [collaboration between pro-Palestinian and climate activist groups](#) in recent months.

- **Continued targeting of election officials and judges:** Over the past four years, there has been a [notable trend of targeting election officials](#) physically, digitally and reputationally. Over the next 100 days, election officials and judges are likely to continue to be targeted, including in the form of threats and harassments. The motivations behind these actions are likely to stem from differing political ideologies and discouraging voter turnout in certain locations, as well as seeking to disrupt or challenge the legitimacy of the electoral process. Consistent with trends to date, threats and disruptions will likely take place primarily at the local level, though factors like election-related mis- and disinformation and campaign-related developments could expand the disruption surface.
- **Heightened terrorist threat environment stemming from the war in Gaza:** Since the October 7 Hamas attacks in Israel and the Israeli military's subsequent operations in Gaza, U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies have noted the consistent dissemination of extremist propaganda focused on attacking U.S. targets across the world given the Biden administration's support of Israeli military operations. While developments related to Israeli-Palestinian relations have long been a rallying cry for a variety of foreign terrorist organizations and violent extremist actors, the current war in Gaza has provided renewed fervor to these calls. Much of the world's attention is focused on the Paris Olympics, with intelligence agencies focused on preventing or disrupting potential terrorist threats targeting the games. As such, foreign terrorist organizations, their supporters and lone actors motivated by a range of ideologies may view this time as an opportunity to attack targets in the U.S. In addition, following the assassination attempt of former President Trump, various groups may attempt to exploit the current tense and uncertain domestic situation to create further disruption.



Election Day Vulnerabilities

As voters head to the polls on November 5, the primary threat of disruption comes from organized groups attempting to engage in voter intimidation, continued protests, as well as violent clashes stemming from either of these scenarios, as further detailed below:

- **Potential for voter intimidation by organized groups:** A variety of actors, including armed militias, may engage in voter intimidation efforts at polling places, [as witnessed during the 2022 mid-term elections](#). More recently, law enforcement in Milwaukee, WI [removed individuals from polling stations](#) for being disruptive. These groups may attempt to intimidate certain members of the electorate or specific demographics from voting or create a hostile environment to deter people from voting.
- **Key polling places may serve as hotspots for protests:** Polling places, particularly in districts with key electoral races or urban centers that have been the focal point of prior

large-scale protests, may become hotspots for demonstrations led by a variety of protest movements. While many of these demonstrations may be pre-planned and include groups that have protested in the lead-up to election day, spontaneous protests may also erupt, potentially driven by accusations of voter suppression, electoral fraud or general political grievances.

- **Risk of violence is high for election night:** Finally, the potential for violence looms over election night/until final votes are counted, either from voter intimidation or protests escalating into clashes, or if the election results prove to be contentious. As election results trickle in and winners are announced, there is an increased risk of confrontations between various groups at polling stations or prominent locations, especially if results are close or disputed, or if there are delays in counting votes. In such scenarios, there is also the potential for spontaneous demonstrations and confrontations, as well as incitements to violence on election night by certain candidates or extremist actors, which could result in organized demonstrations immediately thereafter. As noted in a recent article in *Wired* magazine, militia leaders – including those who prominently participated in the January 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol in 2021 – are already [organizing and preparing for potential civil unrest](#) related to the elections.
- **Amplification of mis- and disinformation and calls for violence:** Any of the above scenarios will involve, and be further exacerbated by, online discourse and the amplification of election-outcome-related mis- and disinformation and incitements to violence. Social media and online communications platforms will not only serve as the mediums for the spread of such commentary and incitement, but they will also serve as virtual organizing spaces. This, in turn, can lead to groups mobilizing rapidly and further escalating volatile situations. A scenario similar to the January 6 riots or

smaller riots at State Capitols or other government buildings and city landmarks across the country is plausible.

Post-November 5 Domestic Security Landscape

The post-election security landscape will heavily depend on the outcome of the elections, including outcomes in key senate and congressional races in addition to the presidential contest, as well as any related potential calls for violence. While a detailed post-election threat analysis is premature, one of the below scenarios and immediate implications are likely. This assessment assumes that Kamala Harris is the Democratic Party's nominee for president.

- **Harris wins, Trump concedes:** In this scenario, the transition of power is likely to be relatively smooth, with efforts from both parties to ensure stability and continuity. Protests and disinformation may persist online and certain groups may mobilize to cause disruptions, but they are less likely if former President Trump concedes and encourages his supporters to accept the election outcome.
- **Harris wins, Trump does not concede:** If Vice President Harris wins the presidential election, but former President Trump refuses to concede, the country could face a prolonged period of not just political uncertainty, but one of immense insecurity and volatility. In this scenario, widespread protests and civil unrest may ensue.
- **Trump wins, Harris concedes:** Should former President Trump win and Vice President Harris concede, the country's collective focus will likely shift to the next administration's policies and the political dynamics in Congress. However, individuals and groups who are in opposition to former President Trump's platform and policies are likely to continue protesting, leading to the

possibility of confrontations between protesters and counter protesters.

- **Trump wins, Harris does not concede:** While we assess this scenario to be the least likely, should former President Trump win but Vice President Harris not concede, we expect a similar situation to the second scenario outlined above: political uncertainty, as well as mass demonstrations and calls to action by a variety of actors, including individuals and groups associated with either party. We further anticipate the possibility of some domestic extremist groups mobilizing to pressure Harris to concede; there may also be groups who seek to capitalize on the uncertainty to create chaos and disruption.

How Should Corporations Prepare?

Given the highly dynamic and potentially volatile political and security landscape leading up to the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election, we recommend organizations and executives contemplate a multi-faceted strategy aimed at proactively addressing the implications of the potential scenarios outlined above. In addition to considering whether to make internal or public statements in response to these scenarios, organizations should also consider implementing the below recommendations to actively prepare for potential related disruptions to business operations and/or election-related violence.

- **Monitor critical information and engage in robust anticipatory intelligence analysis:** Intelligence functions within organizations should ensure they are utilizing a robust toolkit to collect critical information related to political and security developments in key domestic markets. This information should then be rigorously analyzed to anticipate potential risks and identify potential signposts and indicators of escalation or new threats. Scenario planning that incorporates these signposts and effectively maps out implications and steps to mitigate resulting
- **Evaluate and update crisis management and incident response plans:** Organizations should consider updating emergency response plans to address scenarios such as civil unrest, violent protests and potential attacks on company property, as well as conduct simulation exercises to ensure that all key personnel are familiar with crisis and incident protocols and plans. As part of this, organizations should also consider establishing clear communication channels for disseminating information quickly and effectively to employees and all relevant stakeholders during an incident or prolonged period of crisis.
- **Enhance physical and cybersecurity measures:** Organizations should consider strengthening security protocols at company headquarters, branch offices and key facilities – and evaluate whether measures in support of protection of high-profile executives, board members or other key employees require enhancements. Organizations should also consider increasing cybersecurity efforts to protect against potential cyberattacks that could target company data and communications systems. This should include deployment of multi-factor authentication (MFA) on company-issued devices, ensuring that all systems are up to date with the latest security patches, and confirming that all employees are trained on recognizing phishing attempts and other cyber threats. Organizations should also coordinate with relevant law enforcement and government agencies at both the national and local levels to stay informed about potential risks and coordinate responses as required.
- **Prepare for business continuity challenges:** Organizations should evaluate and assess whether any alternative suppliers or logistical routes need to be identified to enable redundancies and mitigate the impact of potential disruptions, particularly in the



event of a contested election and a scenario where the losing candidate fails to concede. Similarly, organizations should take stock of any critical materials and supplies to maintain operations in case of prolonged domestic disruptions at the local or national level.

- **Support employee safety and well-being:** Finally, organizations should consider providing resources that support employees' mental health and well-being, recognizing the stress and anxiety that the election period, particularly given recent events, may cause. Members of groups that may feel isolated or targeted might need special accommodation or services during this time. Organizations should also consider being prepared to implement or extend remote working policies

to protect employees from potential disruptions or violence in the lead up to, during and in the immediate aftermath of November 5.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations and executives can better navigate the uncertainties of the election period, safeguard their operations and protect their employees and stakeholders from potential election-related disruptions and violence. Teneo's Risk Advisory team welcomes the opportunity to speak with organizations to discuss how our deep subject matter expertise, threat-focused approach rooted in structured analytical techniques and robust risk and crisis management experience can help them navigate potential election-related risks and challenges.





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Teneo Insights | Election 2024 *This article is part of Teneo's ongoing series of [conversations](#) around the business implications of the 2024 U.S. presidential election.*



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