

The Return of 'Law and Order'

On Tuesday, Brooklyn Borough President and former police captain Eric Adams took the lead in the New York mayoral race with 32 percent of the Democratic primary vote, 10 points more than progressive Maya Wiley, who had the endorsement of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. How did Adams beat the elite? Said *The New York Times*: Adams built “an old-school political coalition that united Black and Latino voters,” and was “able to persuade working-class people, largely outside Manhattan, that he was the best candidate to make the city safe from crime.”

Adams' anti-crime and pro-cop campaign carried four of New York City's five boroughs, including Ocasio-Cortez's congressional district in Queens. He lost only Manhattan, though, under the ranked-voting system New York uses, his victory may not be confirmed for a week.

Wednesday, President Joe Biden went before a White House podium to outline his program for dealing with the plague of shootings, killings, and murders that have marked and marred the five months of his presidency. What does all this tell us?

“Law and order,” the issue that arose in the '60s to tear apart President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal Coalition, is back. And the emotional anti-cop wave after the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis a year ago, manifest in the “Defund the Police!” demand of Black Lives Matter, has receded. America is saying: We don't want rogue cops, but we do want more cops in our neighborhoods and our communities to stop the shootings that are terrorizing, wounding, maiming, and killing us.

Driven by the publicized surge in shootings and killings in America's cities, the issue is gaining the ascendancy it had

in the mid-1960s. A “mass shooting” is a term used for a crime where four or more people are shot, excluding the shooter. By that definition, mass shootings have become a common occurrence in America, with a count of some 300 thus far in 2021.

Before the 1960s, perhaps the most notorious mass shooting was still the 1929 St. Valentine’s Day Massacre, where seven enemies of Al Capone were lined up against a wall in a Chicago garage and executed in cold blood. Last weekend, 52 people were shot in Chicago, seven fatally. Monday produced seven more shooting deaths.

Biden recognizes the political danger. He is old enough to recall what the law-and-order issue did to his party in 1968. That year, George Wallace, running as a third-party candidate, took 13 percent of the presidential vote. Four years later, in 1972, the year Biden was elected senator, the Alabama governor was the front-runner for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination when he was shot by a would-be assassin in a Laurel, Maryland, shopping center. The Democratic nominee that year, Sen. George McGovern, a man of the progressive left, lost 49 states to President Richard Nixon.

Sen. Joe Biden helped to write the crime bill of 1994, which many liberals now fault for contributing to a massive increase in incarcerations. But, today, as president, Biden is facing a similar and serious crime crisis and cannot be unaware of its political potency.

The Democratic Party’s dilemma: Its progressive wing believes defunding and re-imagining police work to protect people of color from abuse by rogue cops is the first priority. Eric Adams’ vote in liberal New York, however, suggests that a higher priority for blacks and Hispanics is public safety and the disarming and removal of the armed thugs and the street gangs who imperil it. In the shooting galleries that some inner-city neighborhoods have become, “Defunding the Police!”

amounts to social insanity.

“Nowhere,” says Bill Bratton, former New York police commissioner, “do you see recognition that there are some people who cause incredible harm to the community and who unfortunately need to be in jail.” To secure the safety of poor communities, several elements have always been needed: police to prevent crimes and arrest the criminals who commit them, prosecutors who will put them away, and prison cells to house them. This was the formula that broke the back of the long crime wave that began in the 1960s—and ended in the anti-crime movement that produced Mayor Rudy Giuliani in New York.

In the early 1960s, like today, the elite and our major media declared “law and order” to be a “code word” for racism. But the departure of millions of working-class voters from the Democratic Party of Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John F. Kennedy, and its move to the party of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, testified that Middle Americans believed in safe streets and would reward leaders who would keep them safe—with more cops.

Biden spoke Wednesday as though the inner-city menace was the guns with which people are being shot, not the criminals using them. But some of the folks helping to produce record gun sales today are black folks who know who and what the threats to their families really are. Gun control is not crime control, and it is crime that is the enemy.

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