

The troubles in California are no local skirmish

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As the [Financial Times](#) notes in an email this morning:

In Los Angeles, clashes continue between anti-deportation protesters and law enforcement after Donald Trump deployed troops into the city over the weekend.

As background, they note:

Demonstrations against raids on suspected illegal immigrants attracted the ire of the US president, who on Saturday deployed the National Guard in the Californian city, using a rarely invoked law designed to repress invasions and rebellions.

As they add:

This is the first time in decades that guardsmen have been deployed against citizens on domestic soil against the express wishes of local law enforcement.

They also note that:

Trump has not ruled out sending in US marines, a threat first made by his defence secretary.

Let's break this down.

The issue is that people in California object to Trump's approach to enforcing the law on supposedly illegal migrants, on whom the economy of the USA depends, especially in states like California. Sentiment is high, for economic, social and political reasons.

This is fuelled by Trump's resentment of the massive economic power of California, which would have the fifth biggest economy in the world if ranked as an independent country. The state and its populace also have little love for Trump.

So, despite the supposed Republican love of devolving power to states, there is a standoff, and Trump wants to use the Federal force he supposedly loathes to impose his

will in a place that wants to handle matters in its own way.

The result is a second conflict that has grown out of the first, between protestors and the Federal forces, with the Governor finding it hard to stay out of the fray.

The question is, where does this go?

We know that on migrating policy, both social and economic crises are developing. Trump's plan to expel 11 million people cannot achieve any other outcome. The situation will get uglier.

As worrying is the use of Federal force. There is no crisis in California. There are some small disturbances. The state is more than able to manage the situation. That is the reality of what is happening, I have no doubt. It's also June, which is always a good month for riots: this will pass.

But Trump does not want that to happen. He wants to create a crisis. He wants to claim that the rule of law is under threat (even though he is the biggest threat to it), and he wants to impose his form of law enforcement regardless of constitutional and conventional conduct.

Most of all, he wants to make clear he can use force within the USA to suppress dissent. That's because he wants to have a reason to suspend elections in 2026, and the more he can claim he faces internal crisis and conflict, the more he will claim that his actions are justified.

For that reason, it would be best if those protesting did not riot. Let me be unambiguous about that. They are playing into Trump's hands. Who knows, he might be setting them up to do so.

But the point is that this is the USA on the cusp of martial law. That's the worry.

And then presume that the far-right in other countries will think they have the power to do the same thing. Protest against unreasonable laws is already hard enough in the UK. How long will it be before enhanced 'defence' forces are used to quell protests here, as well as elsewhere in Europe?

The problem occurring in California is not, I suggest, some little local skirmish. It is, I think, part of a far-right plan to end democracy. They said that was what they intended to do. I think we should take them at their word. That is the plan. And they will deliver it however they can, and with force if need be.