



Trump benefits from protesters at rallies, says expert

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It's not hard to notice that campaign events have become a magnet for protesters lately. Passions have run high, there've been acts of violence and the anger is pointed at candidates from both sides.

So is this just the beginning and what effect are they having on the race for the White House?

"We are seeing violence, violence at political rallies," noted a critical Hillary Clinton recently.

Sen. Ted Cruz even engaged a demonstrator this week.

"It began with one of the lead protestors cursing at me and yelling at me," he later told a crowd and blamed the candidate that particular demonstrator supports, Donald Trump.

It's an unrest that has the potential to get worse, suggested Cato Institute's vice president, John Samples.

"I mean the amount of violence has been limited. The problem is that it's somewhat novel and it's also not being tamped down by the elites."

Right or wrong, Samples says Donald Trump's positions have brought out a loud chorus of both critics and fans who are clashing at times physically.

"We don't want to slide down a slope where that kind of thing becomes normal, particularly at a time where people are highly polarized," added Samples.

Especially, he points out, still 6 months from election day.

At a rally in South Bend, Indiana on Monday, Trump commented on the wide range of controversial acts seen at and outside of campaign events.

"People were burning the American flag. I don't want them burning the American flag."

Compared to the massive Tea Party rallies of 2008 and 2009, these protests are more physical and Samples says, possibly more effective benefiting Trump above all. The clashes keep him in the headlines and further the narrative of his outsider, populist message.

"Essentially by saying things that aren't supposed to be said," said Samples. "If he continues to do that, we'll probably see more protests."

He adds that we could see much larger protests at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland this July unless the rhetoric from candidates recedes a bit in the coming months.