Position: Research Assistant, Political Violence and Election Monitoring (Internship)

About the Organization: The Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) is a non-partisan research initiative that tracks and mitigates political violence in the United States. BDI supports efforts to grow and build local community resilience through elections and other periods of heightened risk, laying the groundwork for longer-term to bridge the divides we face as a nation.

We do this by 1) producing action oriented and responsive research to fill existing gaps and empower local leaders; 2) enabling cross sector collaboration, so individuals and organizations are better prepared to mitigate risk and response to crisis when it does arise; and 3) helping to drive the policy and community response. Over the last two years, BDI played an essential role in supporting a wide range of actors preparing for and responding to political violence and democratic crisis. Our data, analysis and tools continue to help a diverse coalition of national and local decision makers better target their interventions. BDI is based at the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), co-hosted by the Empirical Studies of Conflict. Please visit https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/ for more information.

Position Overview: Princeton’s Bridging Divides Initiative is seeking to bring on several intern research assistants (RA) to conduct data and news analysis about ongoing trends in political violence in the United States. This position will support the production of its Situation Reports (SitReps) distributed to trusted partners on a regular basis to help inform planning around upcoming sites of potential conflict (e.g., elections, protests). Research assistants will focus on issues of political violence, extremism, and election-related conflict. The RA will develop skills in data analysis, open-source intelligence methods, live event monitoring, and distilling complex socio-political events to diverse audiences. The RA will practice skills in team-based research, project management, and investigating trends on a community, state, regional, and national level. RAs are expected to work remotely with the BDI team, which will support them as they lead and manage the following efforts:

Responsibilities:

Monitoring at the state level

- Monitor news sources and secondary reporting for relevant events in a particular geographic area, and watch for the need for rapid alerts.
- Identify useful resources, analysis, and information of relevance.
- Review and summarize incidents and provide sources for further exploration.
- Understand and communicate the social, political, economic and other impacts of a given conflict as well as the wider conflict context.
- As appropriate, produce and contextualize trends over time by including quantitative analysis of longitudinal data.

Reviewing Relevant Data Repositories

- Consult with frequently-used resources such as the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and Crowd Counting Consortium.
● Engage with online monitoring resources provided by key partners, including reports on emerging online trends and other actor-based monitoring.
● Identify and explore trends, new contexts, integrating events and relevant information as appropriate.

Additional Engagements
● The RA may also be asked to provide support for ongoing BDI initiatives such as collaborative monitoring of threats and harassment against local officials in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League and other national organizations working to monitor hate incidents.
● Advanced students may also be asked to engage with authoring qualitative case studies and working with specific state-leads on the BDI team on local conflict analysis and community impact measures, based on length of commitment and availability.

Qualifications: The RA should have demonstrated experience in many or all of the following core competencies required to successfully complete the project:
● Interpersonal and communication skills
● Reliably able to meet project deadlines
● Collaborative and consensus-building decision making
● Ability to work independently to locate and interpret information from multiple sources
● Familiarity with a variety of social media platforms
● Ability to evaluate source credibility
● Analytical and critical thinking skills that aim to contextualize ongoing events
● Familiarity with Microsoft Office suite (Word, Excel)
● Familiarity with Google Drive (Docs, Sheets, and Forms)
● Familiarity with common research tools (NexusUni, ProQuest, Google News Alerts)

Timeline: Start date for the position is asap, to begin ideally no later than the second week in September 2022. Approximate hours: 10-20. The role is envisioned as a 6-month minimum engagement over the fall semester and winter break. Shorter term engagements are possible for the right candidate, and those seeking longer-term partnership are strongly encouraged to note this in their application materials.

How to apply: Send a resume and email expressing 1) your interest in the project and 2) availability to Dr. Michael Loadenthal (ml2283@princeton.edu).

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Posted: August 2022 - No matter who you are, BDI is a place you can call home. We know that our unique perspectives make us stronger, smarter, and well-positioned for success. We value and rely on the collective voices of our team to help guide our work on challenging issues. That’s why we’re proud Princeton is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.