START ▶▶ NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

▶ COUNTY-LEVEL CORRELATES OF TERRORISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1990-2010 ◀

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PURPOSE

PRESENT descriptive information on the geographic clustering of terrorism

CONSTRUCT a list of likely predictors of terrorism based on variables found to be important in predicting crime

EXAMINE whether these var-iables predict terrorism at the county level

BACKGROUND

This study examines whether characteristics of U.S. counties can explain the geographic clustering of terrorist attacks in the United States from 1990-2010. It builds upon data from a previous study (LaFree and Bersani, 2012) that examined the connection between the distribution of terrorism and the distribution of ordinary crimes over nearly four decades.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Geographic Concentration of Terrorism

Attacks tended to cluster in specific areas, especially large metropolitan areas, from 1990-2010. Yet, they were also widely dispersed—each of the 48 continental U.S. states experienced at least one attack.

The 'Typical' U.S. County that Experienced a Terrorist Attack was characterized by higher rates/greater proportions of:
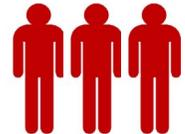
- *Residential instability*
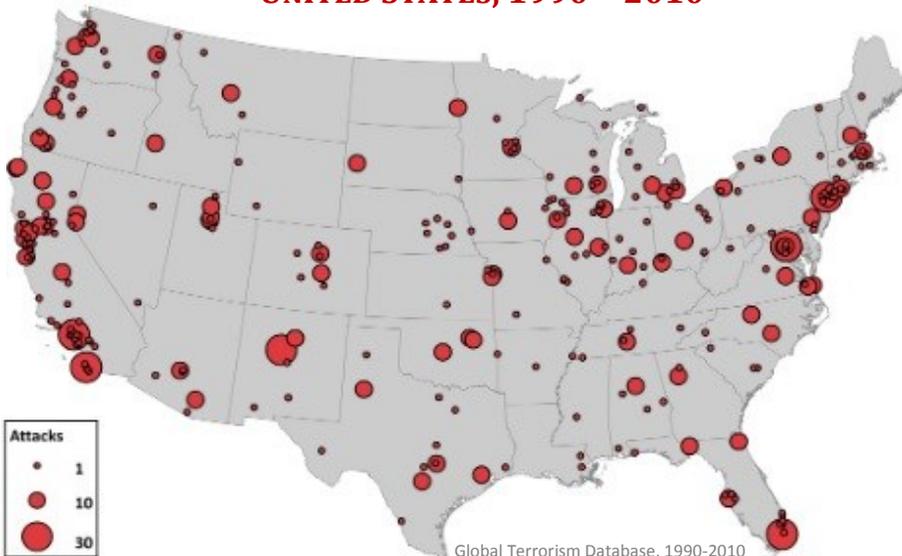- *Language diversity**
- *Foreign-born residents**
- *Men aged 15-24 yrs.*

Additionally, counties with higher levels of language diversity and residential instability were associated with a higher **frequency** of terrorist attacks.

These results do not suggest that terrorist attacks were more likely to be completed by individuals who were foreign-born or those who primarily speak a language other than English at home. Rather, they describe the **characteristics of counties that were more likely to be the **targets** of terrorist attacks.*

GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1990—2010

Attacks
- 1
- 10
- 30

Global Terrorism Database, 1990-2010

Of 581 attacks that took place from 1990 –2010, 25% occurred in just 10 counties:
- New York County, NY (Manhattan) (30)
- Los Angeles County, CA (19)
- San Diego County, CA (16)
- Washington, D.C. (15)
- Miami-Dade County, FL (14)
- Bernalillo County, NM (13)
- Maricopa County, AZ (12)
- King County, WA (9)
- Lane County, OR (8)
- Tulsa County, OK (8)

Frequency and Lethality of Terrorist Attacks in the United States, 1990—2010

The number of terrorist attacks in the United States generally decreased from 1990-2010. However, the rate of decrease was not equal among counties:

- From 2001-2010, those counties with higher levels of concentrated disadvantage and residential insta-bility saw the greatest decrease in terrorism rates.

- Those with higher levels of foreign-born population and language diversity saw lesser reductions.

Further, these numbers don't take into account foiled plots or the rise in the likelihood of fatalities among more recent terrorist attacks (LaFree and Bersani, 2012).

DO GEOGRAPHIC PREDICTORS OF CRIME ALSO PREDICT TERRORISM FROM 1990-2010?

	ORDINARY CRIME	TERRORISM
CONCENTRATED DISADVANTAGE— *level of poverty, joblessness, employment in menial jobs, etc.*	Higher crime rates **linked** to higher rates of concentrated disadvantage	Lower terrorism rates **linked** to higher rates of concentrated disadvantage in the 1990s, but the two rates **not linked** in the 2000s
RESIDENTIAL INSTABILITY— *level of mobility within neighborhoods*	Higher crime rates **linked** to higher rates of residential instability	Higher terrorism rates **linked** to higher rates of residential instability
ETHNIC HETEROGENEITY— *percentage of population that is foreign-born*	Lower crime rates **linked** to higher rates of ethnic heterogeneity	Higher terrorism rates **linked** to higher rates of ethnic heterogeneity
DEMOGRAPHICS— *population size and racial, ethnic, and gender composition*	Higher crime rates **linked** to larger populations	Higher terrorism rates **linked** to larger populations

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Terrorism, like ordinary crime, is not randomly distributed but rather concentrated in time and space.
- The same types of statistical data that are now routinely used by police departments to help forecast crime hot spots and deploy police officers can also be a helpful tool for those countering terrorism.
- While the rate of terrorist attacks has declined in the past several decades, a rise in the likelihood of fatalities among recent attacks deserves continued attention.

TERRORISM & EXTREMIST VIOLENCE IN THE U.S. DATABASE

This research is part of a larger effort to develop a comprehensive database on Terrorism and Extremist Violence in the U.S. (TEVUS) that integrates data from the Global Terrorism Database, the American Terrorism Study, Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the U.S., and the U.S. Extremist Crime Database. Led by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the research team is creating a resource that will allow operational and academic end-users to conduct unprecedented analyses that incorporate incident, perpetrator, and geospatial information.

TEVUS
Terrorism & Extremist Violence in the U.S.

START ▶▶▶

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The full report is available at: http://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/START_IUSSD_CountylevelCorrelatesofTerrorismintheUS_March2013.pdf