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Far-Right and Jihadi Terrorism within the United States: From September 11th to January 6th

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Abstract

As tens of thousands swarmed the US Capitol Grounds on January 6th, 2021, to oppose the election of Joe Biden as President, thousands among them assaulted officers and breached the building to stop the certification of the election results, leading to nine deaths and hundreds of injuries. Despite being an act of terrorism and evidence that far-right extremists planned to take over the government, some dismiss January 6th as legitimate political discourse. This divisive response starkly contrasts with the unifying response to the jihadi attacks on September 11th two decades earlier, raising the question as to why the country has not also united against far-right extremism. This review argues that the Bush administration misused deterrence in response to the September 11th attacks. While unifying the country it also disproportionately punished innocent Muslims and legitimized anti-Muslim ideals, giving rise to anti-Muslim hate crimes and backlash by jihadi extremists and emboldening violence from far-right extremists. This review combines research on deterrence, counterterrorism, anti-Muslim ideals, and far-right organizations with data on terrorism and hate crimes within the United States to delineate this argument and assess its alignment with the empirical progression of violence between September 11th and January 6th.

INTRODUCTION

Planned and targeted violence for political gain is by any definition an act of terrorism (LaFree et al. 2015). On January 6, 2021, tens of thousands of protesters broke through protective barriers and swarmed the United States Capitol Grounds, assaulting Capitol and Metropolitan Police Officers with knives, melee weapons, chemical irritants, and other deadly weapons (Arkin 2020). Thousands of them breached the Capitol building and searched the House and Senate chambers so they could stop Congress from certifying the 2020 electoral college, the last required step for Joe Biden to become the next US president. The breachers carried US flags, Trump flags, Gadsden flags, Christian flags, and even the Thin Blue Line flag, ironically meant to show solidarity with the same officers they were attacking (Hodges 2021, Lucas 2022). They yelled at the officers "four more years," "Don't attack us, we are not Black Lives Matter," and "This is the time to choose what side of history to be on" (Hodges 2021, p. 3). Capitol Police Sergeant Gonell later reported, "the rioters called me a 'traitor,' a 'disgrace,' and shouted that I (an Army veteran and police officer) should be 'executed'" (Gonell 2021, p. 2). Sergeant Gonell expressed difficulty in understanding how those citizens they were sworn to protect could be threatening their lives.

The morning before the scheduled certification, the sitting US president, Donald Trump, held a rally proclaiming that the election was stolen from him and that the sitting vice president, Mike Pence, needed to send the votes back to the states for recertification. Near the end of his speech, he told the crowd that "if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore" (Trump 2021). Around 2:10 pm, the first group of attackers broke through windows to enter the US Capitol. They were heard yelling, "where do they count the votes?" and chanting "hang Mike Pence," and a gallows had been erected outside (PBS News Hour 2021). The day before, Vice President Pence had refused to block the vote certification, despite pressure from President Trump (Karni 2021). Immediately after the building was breached, Vice President Pence was ushered off the Senate floor to hide with his family as the mob charged through the building searching for the Senate chamber and him specifically. As the growing mob tried to break into the Speaker's Lobby, a rioter was shot and killed. Members of both chambers were safely evacuated before their chambers were eventually breached (Leatherby & Singhvi 2021).

In the end, nine people died because of the attack, including four officers who later committed suicide. Approximately 150 Capitol Police and DC Metropolitan Police Officers suffered injuries, and hundreds of others were traumatized that day (Cameron 2022). Despite the casualties and anguish, many political leaders have since attempted to minimize the terrorist attack. After the Senate voted to acquit former President Trump on an impeachment charge of inciting an insurrection, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, proclaimed, "There's no question, none, that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day. . . . The people who stormed this building believed they were acting on the wishes and instructions of their president" (Sprunt 2021). Yet he voted to acquit, stating that President Trump was ineligible for conviction for unexplained constitutional reasons (Sprunt 2021). Later, the Senate blocked a bipartisan effort to establish an independent commission to investigate the attack, dismissing it as a political exercise and arguing that it was time to move forward (Naylor 2021). Officer Michael Fanone of the Metropolitan Police Department, who suffered a heart attack on January 6th after being dragged from the line, beaten, and tasered repeatedly, later testified, "I feel like I went to Hell and back to protect the people in this room. But too many are now telling me that Hell doesn't even exist—or that Hell actually wasn't all *that* bad" (Fanone 2021; emphasis in original).

As more information has unfolded about the events leading to January 6th, it becomes clear that an unanticipated threat has emerged from the far-right movement in the United States with the goal to undermine democracy. Evidence unambiguously shows that Stewart Rhodes, the leader

of the far-right group the Oath Keepers, started organizing the events of January 6th shortly after election day in November 2020 (Cheney 2022). He and ten others are charged with seditious conspiracy for recruiting others, training them in paramilitary combat, and coordinating travel with weapons (Lu & Lutz 2022). Despite not being in Washington that day, Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio was arrested and charged with conspiring to stop the certification. Other extremist groups have also been identified for their involvement in the attack. The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (2021) monitored the daily postings of the #StopTheSteal movement revealing that pro-Trump activists, the neo-fascist Proud Boys, unlawful militias, the Three Percenters movement, QAnon, and the Boogaloo Bois were among those intending to protest and stop the certification. Posts include clear language telling "patriots" to be ready to fight the traitors with guns as the last defenders of freedom (Atl. Counc. DFRLab 2021).

Again, planned and targeted violence for political gain is by any definition an act of terrorism (LaFree et al. 2015). Yet, if we consider the focus of counterterrorism rhetoric and efforts over the decades since the September 11th attacks, most attention has been placed on Islamic or jihadi extremism,[1] not domestic far-right extremism (Kearns et al. 2019). Of course, the shock of discovering that four US airliners had been hijacked and then witnessing thousands of people die as the World Trade Center towers collapsed that day in 2001 fundamentally changed how those living in the United States perceived their vulnerability to terrorism (Dunmire 2009). Unaware of Osama bin Laden's fatwa calling for the murder of Americans, many in the United States were stunned that a group of extremists harbored such animosity, and most were terrified that more catastrophic attacks were planned (Natl. Comm. Terror. Attack U. S. 2004). Indeed, political leaders perpetuated the message that "the country was attacked *because* of its virtue; the ideals that define America, those of freedom and democracy, were precisely what the 'evil-doers' aimed to destroy through their violence" (Anker 2005, p. 22; emphasis in original). The fear that Islamic extremists were determined to attack again paved the way for fundamental changes in how the United States protects itself from threats from both outside and inside of the country (Pokalova 2015). The atrocity of September 11th has been described as a black swan event, i.e., an event that falls outside the realm of regular expectation with consequences so severe that time is demarcated as "before" and "after," with the after period looking vastly different from the one before (LaFree et al. 2015).

The juxtaposition of the reactions to the Capitol attack with reactions to the September 11th attacks raises the question of why the former is being politically polarized and minimized, whereas the latter unified the country against a common enemy. In this article, we argue that black swan events (e.g., September 11th) can create existential threats that can be used to justify extreme reactions, under the guise of deterrence, that would otherwise be politically unacceptable. Furthermore, when deterrence disproportionately targets one group (e.g., Muslims), terrorist-like behavior by others might be perceived as part of the deterrence mechanism or dismissed as apolitical or mental illness, making it difficult to recognize it as terrorism. Considering the confluence of this, the mainstreaming of far-right concerns by the media, and underlying calls for a revolution by the US white power movement, an attack like the one on January 6th is unsurprising. After presenting these arguments, we examine the evolution of terrorism in the United States by documenting attacks in the United States by far-right and jihadi extremists since 2001. We conclude

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[1]Although we choose to use the term "jihadi" extremism or terrorism here, we recognize that the Quran's messages of jihad are complex, transcend violence to include generous forces for building new Islamic societies, and relate to a struggle against baser human impulses (Bonner 2008). Within the context of this review, we only use the term jihadi as an ideology associated with terrorist organizations like al Qaeda that perpetrate attacks against those who are unaligned with their own radical Islamic ideology.

that the pattern of attacks over the past two decades is disproportionate to the level of counter-terrorism concern in a way that is consistent with a misuse of deterrence and speculate that this pattern set in motion key dynamics that led to the January 6th attack on the US Capitol.

THE MISUSE OF DETERRENCE IN COUNTERTERRORISM

Deterrence is one of the oldest and most widely used criminological theories and has been used to design and justify a broad array of counterterrorism strategies (Abrahms 2014, Frey & Luechinger 2003). Stemming from Beccaria (1764), deterrence is predicated on the idea that certain, swift, and proportionately severe punishments reduce rational decisions to commit crime (Nagin et al. 2015). Furthermore, Beccaria (1764) contends that any punishment that goes beyond these limits is tyranny or abuse rather than justice, detrimental to both sovereigns and civilians alike. Although adhering to these ideas goes against the self-interested nature of humanity, Beccaria (1764) cautions that deviations from deterrence principles lead to conflict between individuals within a society, which then can escalate to threaten the society itself. Since this treatise, waves of ground-breaking criminological research have revealed much about the strengths and limitations of deterrence, refining and clarifying this perspective. Accordingly, an individual's criminal decisions are based on the certainty, severity, and celerity of punishment (Nagin 1998). Notably, however, deterrence relies on perception rather than objective probabilities of sanctions and legally based understandings of likely punishments (Nagin 2013). Numerous studies have also revealed that a person's emotional state can fundamentally alter how they perceive the risk of potential punishment (Loewenstein 1996, Pickett et al. 2018). Furthermore, deterrence is not a singular means by which to reduce crime. Through the existence of publicly advertised laws and by witnessing the punishment of others, deterrence can generally prevent would-be offenders from offending (Stafford & Warr 1993). Conversely, under the banner of specific deterrence, policies have been designed to stop perpetrators from reoffending due to the threat of experiencing additional criminal sanctions (Bouffard et al. 2017). Taken together, these and many other important branches of deterrence research have tested and shaped Beccaria's (1764) treatise into a nuanced theory for explaining crime (a consequence of rational calculations in which the perceived reward exceeds the likely perceived consequence) and a platform to design crime prevention and counterterrorism strategies.

Criminology has also empirically revealed notable constraints in the capabilities of deterrence. First, the scope of deterrence is limited to only those who are willing to commit crime and are responsive to sanctions. Through investigating responsiveness to sanction threats, Pogarsky (2002) showed that some will refrain from crime regardless of the perceived criminal sanction (conformist), whereas others are incorrigible, as legal sanctions are perceived as inconsequential. Applied to terrorism, Abrahms (2014) argues that terrorists are unlikely to be deterrable due to their complex incentive structures. Second, the scope of deterrence can also be limited to partial crime reductions rather than absolute reductions. Described as restrictive deterrence, it has been demonstrated that offenders may not abstain entirely from crime and instead offend less frequently (Jacobs 2010, Paternoster 1989). It may be unreasonable to expect deterrence strategies alone to end terrorism. Third, policies justified through deterrence can inadvertently increase violence through backlash; this has been found repeatedly in the terrorism literature (see Argomaniz & Vidal-Diez 2015, Carson 2017, Dugan & Chenoweth 2012, Fisher & Becker 2021, Lafree et al. 2009, Piazza & Choi 2018). These collective shortcomings and risks demonstrate that any counterterrorism strategy rooted exclusively in deterrence should be thoroughly vetted, as it may have negligible impacts or exacerbate the violence that these policies seek to quell.

Shifting Deterrence

Given the goals and limitations of politics on designing policy, acts of terrorism, in particular, may tempt leaders to go beyond the boundaries of any recommendations from empirically driven deterrence research. Although "all that extends beyond [deterrence] is abuse, not justice" (Beccaria 1764, p. 3), Beccaria further notes that following "the heart" in instances like these destroys the underlying deterrence principles that benefit all those within a society. Relying on rhetoric doctrine rather than analytic understandings of terrorism and deterrence, the politically intuitive appeal of conjuring deterrence while ignoring its principles has driven longstanding "no retreat; no surrender" counterterrorism policies replete within many global terrorism conflicts (Sederberg 1995, p. 295). As can be seen in the following quotes, the framing of the US response under the War on Terror went well beyond what would be considered within Beccaria (1764) deterrence:

> A punishment, to be just, should have only that degree of severity which is sufficient to deter others (Beccaria 1764, p. 52).

> Our war on terror begins with Al Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated (Bush 2001).

When a security threat is salient and the leader is called upon to show authority, promises of severe punishment for offenders are often used (Mauer 1999). Yet when a policy approach is incongruent with the underlying theory for its justification, it should be unsurprising if the policy fails to yield the desired outcomes. Although many of the elements of the US response to the September 11th attacks and the War on Terror may also be motivated by retribution (Anker 2005, 2014) or incapacitation (Carvin 2012), excessive severity would likely increase the chances of more terrorism, meaning that these alternative goals undermine the possibility of deterring terrorism. Despite empirical evidence demonstrating backlash associated with aggressive counterterrorism, many elements of the war on terrorism persisted beyond the Bush administration. However, the next administration interpreted deterrence differently in important ways. The following quote from former President Obama (2010) demonstrates a move toward focusing on al Qaeda specifically rather than on all terrorism in general under the War on Terror led by the previous president:

> I think, it's important to understand that we are at war against a very specific group: al Qaeda and its extremist allies that have metastasized around the globe; that would attack us, attack our allies, attack bases and embassies around the world and most – most sadly attack innocent people regardless of their backgrounds, regardless of their religions. You know, al Qaeda is probably the biggest killer of innocent Muslims of any entity out there. And so that is our target and that is our focus.

The value of deterrence and the US counterterrorism deterrence strategy also varies across presidential administrations. As can be seen in the following quote from former President Trump (2018), deterrence was seen as secondary to incapacitation, with due process and deterrence only considered when necessary:

> Terrorists who do things like place bombs in civilian hospitals are evil. When possible, we have no choice but to annihilate them. When necessary, we must be able to detain and question them. But we must be clear: Terrorists are not merely criminals, they are unlawful enemy combatants. And when captured overseas, they should be treated like the terrorists they are.

Particularly when security threats are salient and unanticipated, US political leaders are expected to show authority and project strength, leading to promises of severe punishment for offenders (Medina-Ariza 2006). It is in these periods following unanticipated or black swan events, in particular, that deterrence became part of US presidential justifications for policy. During the Cold War, the US public demanded displays of definitive judgments and political strength in the
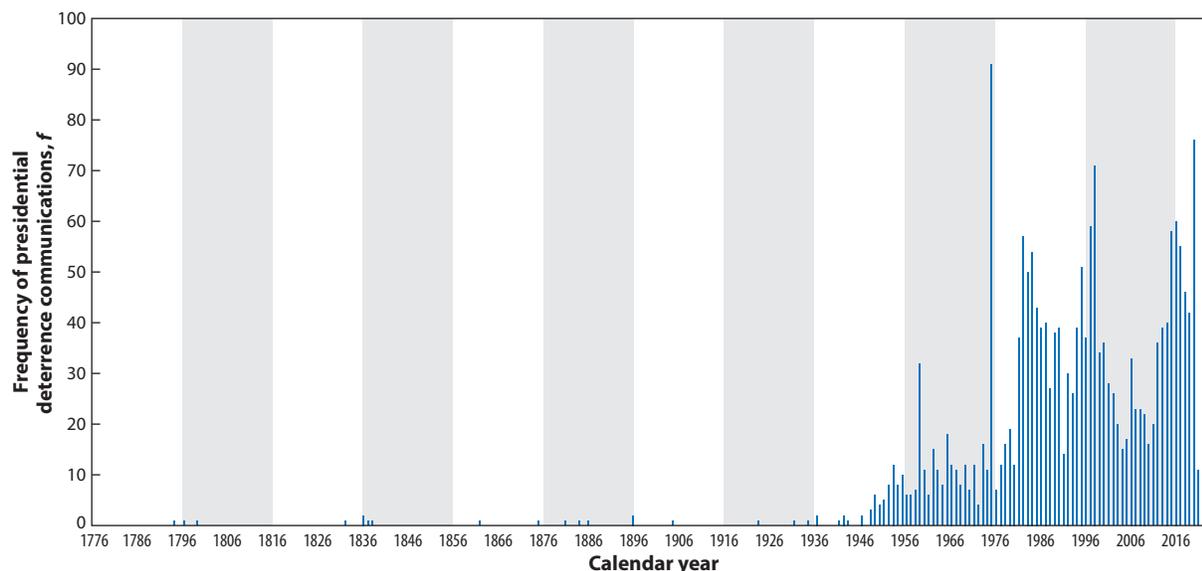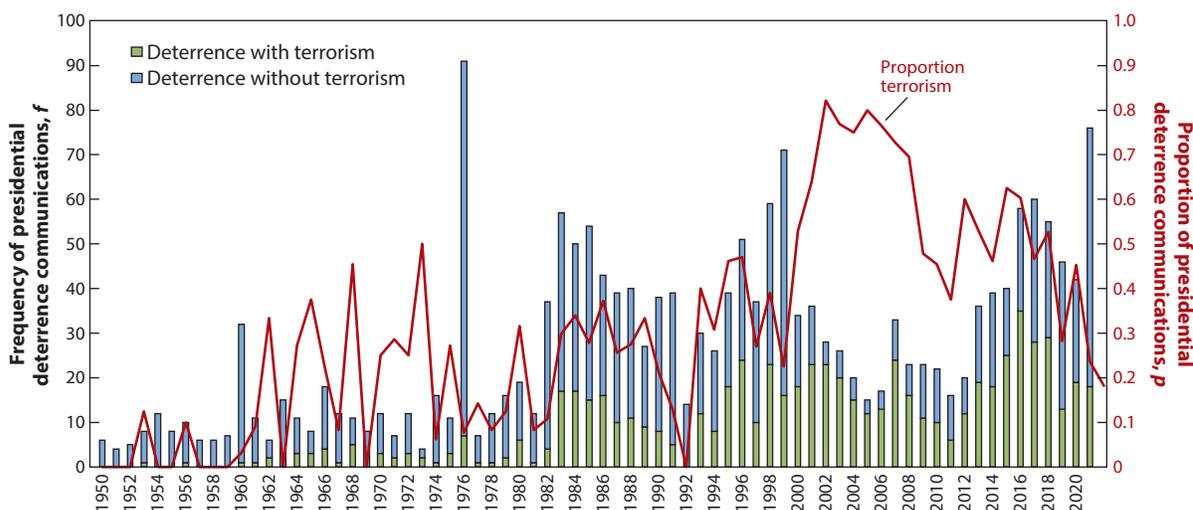
Figure 1

Uses of the word "deter" or "deterrence" by US presidents in official communications from 1776 to 2021. Data taken from the American Presidency Project (**https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/**).

"absence of valid and reliable information" about an enemy, leading to the introduction of deterrence to the presidential policy domain (Lebow & Stein 1995, p. 157). Drawing upon the data collected by the American Presidency Project (**https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/**), **Figure 1** demonstrates that US presidents only began to regularly use deterrence to appeal to the public in the early 1950s in the context of the Cold War, with large shifts in the political prominence of deterrence persisting in the years since.

Rothe & Muzzatti (2004, p. 327) contend that the public framing of terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks "contributed to unnecessary levels of panic and fear, misguided public consciousness, and the development of legislation creating negative social ramifications yet to be seen." Once again, the US president relied heavily on deterrence rhetoric when faced with an unknowable challenge like the Cold War, as deterrence became more theoretically central following September 11th. **Figure 2** depicts the frequency of presidential statements on deterrence, showing the proportion that also referred to terrorism from 1950 to 2021. Although deterrence was alluded to more frequently by US presidents in the 1980s and 1990s, after 2001 most presidential discussions of deterrence also discussed terrorism, peaking at 82.14% in 2002. **Figure 2** also shows that this connection decreases proportionately in the following years, demonstrating that in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, when fear and uncertainty were highest, deterrence was linked more closely to terrorism than to other types of threats.

Deterrence and Public Policy: But This Time It's Different

The September 11th terrorist attacks have been described as a black swan event due to their unprecedented nature (LaFree et al. 2015) and the unique political environment they created (Fisher et al. 2018). In response to the destruction caused by these attacks and the climate of social and political uncertainty, President Bush received the highest recorded presidential approval rating, and his administration enjoyed an unprecedented increase in political support as

Figure 2

The frequency of presidential statements on deterrence alone and deterrence alongside terrorism, and the proportion of deterrence statements that included the word deterrence from 1950 to 2021. Data taken from the American Presidency Project (**https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/**).

the US populace "rallied around the flag" (Hetherington & Nelson 2003, p. 37). This political environment provided great latitude for policy options, as terrorism during this period was perceived as an existential threat (Quirin et al. 2021). It was within this political climate that the Bush Administration proceeded to centralize and nationalize education, sales tax, emergency management, infrastructure, and election administration policies formerly controlled by state governments (Posner 2007). This culminated in the USA PATRIOT Act, where long-established civil rights and freedoms related to due process and privacy were eroded despite their traditional cultural importance in the United States (Domke et al. 2006). These changes were justified by the "unprecedented" nature of the September 11th attacks, which was summarized by President Bush (2002): "We're in new times, folks. We're in a different world. We face an unprecedented threat, and we cannot respond with business as usual."

The seduction of extreme measures that violate the underpinning principles of deterrence that Beccaria (1764) cautioned about also extended to criminal justice responses and particularly within the rapidly expanding sphere of counterterrorism. Rather than following established principles that had sufficed previously, the existence of this black swan event and highly contested assumptions regarding the nature of the threat were interpreted as demonstrating that previous approaches could not be relied upon (Jackson 2007). Following the escalation of the consequences of terrorism presented by the September 11th attacks, the emerging threat was seen to be less like the terrorism previously experienced in the United States (Duyvesteyn 2004) and more akin to the major conflicts of the twentieth century, including World War II and the Cold War (Levine & Levine 2006). Indeed, in the same speech quoted above, President Bush (2002) remarked: "The struggles against Nazism and communism helped to define the twentieth century. The war on terror will be the defining conflict of the 21st century." This political framing provided the impetus for returning to previous strategies like deterrence that were viewed as successful in response to the previous existential threat, with, however, the caveat that something new and more extreme was required to outweigh this new threat.

Beyond the rhetoric comparing jihadi terrorism to previous existential threats to the United States, the policy domain around counterterrorism shifted. Although in the years preceding the September 11th attacks counterterrorism policy was primarily related to the prevalence of international terrorist organizations operating within a country, participation in the War on Terror became the major predictor of new counterterrorism legislation for the United States and its allies (Pokalova 2015). Mythen et al. (2013, p. 383) further argue that these post–September 11th legislative changes acted to protect the security of the "many" by exposing the identified "others" to scrutiny and hostility based on their perceived identity. Beyond alienating Muslims in general, these new policies were noted to have the ability to incentivize and sustain terrorism through two major mechanisms (Choudhury & Fenwick 2011). First, these more severe and broadly applied policies that extended their focus beyond terrorists themselves could lead to increased terrorism, as they play into terrorist recruitment narratives that portray governments as draconian and unjust (Kydd & Walter 2006). Second, in cases in which the punishment of crime is excessively severe or where previous due process mechanisms are abandoned, under Beccarian deterrence, we would expect these policies to be ineffective even if deterrence is rhetorically justified:

> But the punishment of death is not authorized by any right; for I have demonstrated that no such right exists. It is therefore a war of a whole nation against a citizen, whose destruction they consider as necessary or useful to the general good (Beccaria 1764, p. 51).

> Democracies represent the will of the people. The death penalty is the will of the people in the United States. There are some people who don't agree with the death penalty in our country, and it's not an easy subject for any of us. But the majority of the people—and our laws reflect the majority of the people—believe that if the death penalty is certain, just, and fair, it'll deter crime (Bush 2001).

As can be seen in the two previous quotes from Beccaria (1764) and Bush (2001), there can be an important gap that exists between the theory of deterrence and the way that deterrence is interpreted and employed. For example, although the pursuit and targeted killing of bin Laden for his participation in the September 11th attacks were justified through deterrence (Fisher & Becker 2021), this is beyond the stated limits of the theory of deterrence that have been long established due to potential for violent backlash. Indeed, across a range of studies, excessively severe or repressive government counterterrorism strategies have been linked to increases in terrorism (Argomaniz & Vidal-Diez 2015, Carson 2017, Dugan & Chenoweth 2012, Lafree et al. 2009, Piazza & Choi 2018). As such, although there are political and social seductions for governments to engage in extreme measures when black swan, or "but this time it's different," situations occur, policies that violate underpinning principles may only succeed in exacerbating the risk for violence. Beyond backlash and playing into terrorist narratives, these counterterrorism approaches can also provide an environment that increases the likelihood of additional violence when people perceive that they will be provided sanctuary for their criminal actions.

The Absence of Deterrence as Criminal Sanctuary

> Sanctuaries, and impunity, differ only in degree, and as the effect of punishment depends more on their certainty, than their greatness, men are more strongly invited to crimes by sanctuaries, than they are deterred by punishment.... To increase the number of sanctuaries, is to erect so many little sovereignties; for, when the laws have no power, new bodies will be formed in opposition to the public good, and a spirit established contrary to that of the state. History informs us, that from the use of sanctuaries have arisen the greatest revolutions in kingdoms and in opinions (Beccaria 1764, p. 67).

Beyond backlash and playing into terrorist narratives, these counterterrorism approaches can also provide an environment that increases the likelihood of additional violence when people

perceive that they will be provided sanctuary for their criminal actions. As can be seen in the above quote from Beccaria (1764), when punishment does not apply to all or when punishment is uncertain, this too leads to crime. The language that conflates jihadi terrorists with Muslim people in general (Choudhury & Fenwick 2011) leads to increased hate crimes against Muslims (Disha et al. 2011). Although this can be seen as retaliatory, as Disha et al. (2011) asserts, some offenders might feel emboldened by the severity or implied severity of the government toward Muslims and perceive that they will be unlikely to suffer repercussions for their violent actions (Dugan & Chenoweth 2020). Indeed, King et al. (2009) demonstrate that in US locations where lynching was prevalent prior to 1930, police compliance with federal hate crime law, police reports of hate crimes that target Blacks, and the likelihood of prosecuting hate crime cases were all suppressed.

Another possible consequence of this type of misuse of deterrence is that terrorists can also receive leniency when their acts are classified as something less severe, which is consequential because punishment for being prosecuted as a terrorist in the United States is more severe than for other crimes (Parada 2019). The extensive focus on Islamic terrorism after September 11th combined with a long history of perceiving violence by White persons as ideologically neutral (Parada 2019) might have resulted in officials and civilians classifying terrorism by White perpetrators as something else. To explore this possibility, D'Orazio & Salehyan (2018) conducted an experiment in which they presented the same failed armed attack to nearly 1,200 respondents changing only the perpetrator's ethnicity and group affiliation. Those events in which the shooter had ties to an Islamic extremist organization were more likely to be labeled terrorism (58%) than a mass shooting, whereas only 9.5% of the events in which the shooter had ties to a white supremacist organization were described as terrorism. Furthermore, Arab shooters were found to be 6.7 times more likely than Whites to be labeled a terrorist, whereas Whites were 1.3 times more likely to be labeled mass shooters.

Following from this branch of research and Beccaria's (1764) *On Crimes and Punishments*, the political and social obsession with severely punishing Islamic terrorism, coupled with decreases in the perceived likelihood of punishment for other forms of terrorism in the wake of these black swan events, may have resulted in increased terrorism through backlash and emboldened violence through perceived sanctuary. The latter is especially likely if people perceive that they are part of government-supported deterrence mechanisms. Parada (2019) explains that white supremacists perceive themselves as soldiers in a war against others (see also Belew 2018). Following these concerns, we next investigate the targeting of Arabs and Muslims after September 11th and the mainstreaming of far-right beliefs in the United States that could have contributed to both backlash and emboldenment, leading to increased jihadi and far-right terrorism in the United States.

## THE TARGETING OF ARAB AND MUSLIM AMERICANS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH

On October 26, 2001, President Bush signed into law the USA PATRIOT Act, which, among other things, expanded the surveillance abilities of law enforcement to allow the tapping of domestic and international phones, permitted secret searches and access to private records without oversight, and authorized indefinite detention of immigrants without trial (Pub. L. No. 107-56, 115 Stat. 272, 18 U.S.C. § 101–225). Its provisions have been mostly used on Arabs and Muslims in the United States, including their "community institutions, charities, and businesses" (Cainkar 2009, p. 123). The day before the act was signed into law, US Attorney General John Ashcroft told the US Mayors Conference that "those who violated the law remain in custody. Taking suspected terrorists in violation of the law off the streets and keeping them locked up is our clear strategy to prevent terrorism within our borders" (Ashcroft 2001). Indeed, in the same speech, he

bragged of having arrested or detained nearly 1,000 individuals as part of the investigation into the September 11th attacks (Ashcroft 2001). What was later revealed is that those suspected terrorists were overwhelmingly Arab or Muslim men who were largely arrested based on their looks or reported suspicious behavior and were unable to verify at the time of arrest their legal presence in the United States. None of them were ever found to have terrorist connections (Cainkar 2009). In addition to unnecessarily depriving law-abiding civilians of their liberty, this also undermined efforts to establish both specific and general deterrence from terrorism.

What US leaders say and do matters. Ashcroft (2001) also said that day that "today's terrorists enjoy the benefits of our free society even as they commit themselves to our destruction. They live in our communities – plotting, planning, and waiting to kill Americans again," stoking fear and suspicion that the next major attack might come from our neighbors. He also made a call for everyone to join this fight. "Every American must help us defend our nation against this enemy. Every state, every county, every municipality must join together to form a common defense against terrorism" (Ashcroft 2001). Over the next several years, the FBI interviewed 8,000 Arabs and Muslims living in the United States and detained more than 5,000 terrorism suspects in preventive detention, none of whom were later convicted of a terrorist crime (Cole 2006). These public acts by the US government affected both Arab and Muslim Americans and those who observed their apprehension by the FBI (Cainkar 2009). Many of the Arab and Muslim Americans interviewed by Cainkar (2009) in the years following September 11th were questioned by law enforcement because a neighbor or coworker reported them for suspicious behavior. Indeed, after September 11th, US opinion polls showed unusually high support for stopping someone who fits a terrorist profile (68%) and conducting specialized surveillance of Arabs and Muslims living in the United States regardless of citizenship (32%) to prevent terrorism (Cainkar 2009).

The condoned and encouraged targeting of Arabs and Muslims after the September 11th attacks appears to have increased their vulnerability to hate crimes in line with Beccaria's (1764) sanctuary hypothesis (Disha et al. 2011, Peek 2011). Indeed, Dugan & Chenoweth (2020, p. 716) present evidence that when members of the US government expressively and tangibly oppose immigration, rates of violence directed toward Latinx persons increase, suggesting that perpetrators are emboldened by the government's messaging: "In other words, some may perceive that the government is giving them a license to act on their anger." Disha et al. (2011) show that hate crimes against Muslims jumped from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001. This increase is even more severe if hate crimes against others that are likely perceived as Muslim are added to this figure (Disha et al. 2011). The retribution against Muslims was so immediate and acute that President Bush visited the mosque at the Islamic Center of Washington on September 17th to urge Americans not to avenge the terrorist attack the previous week by harming innocent American Arabs and Muslims. "The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. . . . Islam is peace" (Bush 2001). Within the first week after the attacks, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) had already reported 350 attacks against Arab Americans. Among them were two Muslim girls who were beaten on a college campus in Arizona and a mosque that was rammed by a car going 80 mph in Indiana. Attacks against those who are mistaken for Arab or Muslim also rose. Most severe was a Sikh gas station owner in Arizona who was shot and killed (Milbank & Wax 2001). The aftermath of hatred targeting Muslims was so devastating that more than a decade later, members of the 114th Congress introduced House Resolution 413, albeit unsuccessfully, entitled "Honoring the victims of hate crimes of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, where individuals were targeted by violence and hatred because they were Muslim or perceived to be Muslim" (US Congr. House 2015).

Yet anti-Muslim hate has persisted well beyond the aftermath of September 11th. **Figure 3** shows the number of hate crimes against Arabs or Muslims from 1994 through 2019. Presidential
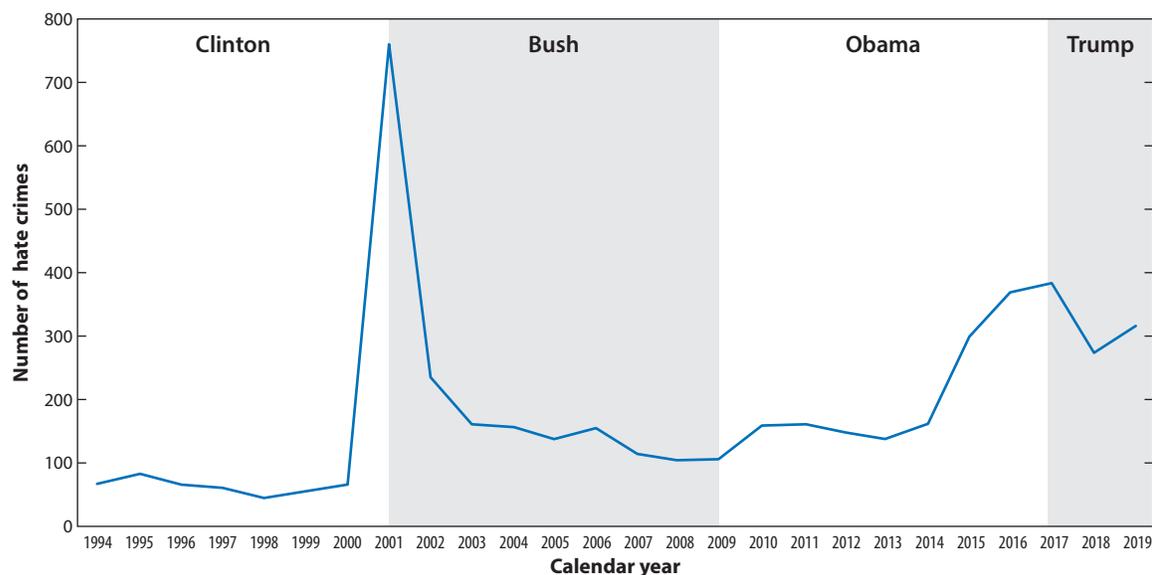
Figure 3

Anti-Muslim/Arab hate crimes, 1994–2019. Data taken from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Hate Crime Database (FBI 2022).

administrations are also marked to reveal patterns across US political regimes (for discussion of the importance of regimes in counterterrorism, see Dugan & Chenoweth 2012). We include the Clinton years as a baseline and see that such hate crimes were relatively rare until 2001, averaging 64.4 crimes each year. The number of crimes peak in 2001 at 753 and dropped to a higher average of 153 crimes each year throughout the remainder of the Bush administration. Under Obama, hate crimes against Arabs or Muslims maintained a similar average as the post-2001 average for Bush until 2015, when they jumped from 163 in 2014 to 300 in 2015, a rise of 84%. This trend peaked in 2017 with 385 crimes. The 2015 to 2017 period covers the contentious 2016 presidential primaries, election, and the first year of the Trump presidency. Rises in hate crimes during a presidential election are common; however, it is atypical for hate crimes to continue to rise after an election year, as they have dropped after all prior recorded election years (Levin & Reitzel 2018).[2] As discussed below, the 2016 presidential election was especially vitriolic toward Muslims, as candidate Trump repeatedly promised that he would ban persons from Muslim countries from entering the United States (Fisher et al. 2018).

THE MAINSTREAMING OF FAR-RIGHT CONCERNS

Meanwhile, fringe organizations that shared anti-Muslim ideals and were active well before 2001 shaped US mainstream talking points through the media and Internet (Bail 2015). Bail (2015) used plagiarism software to measure the permeation of press releases from pro- and anti-Islam organizations from 2001 to 2003 and found that only three of the 50 organizations achieved high levels of media influence. Two were explicitly anti-Islam (Middle East Forum and Center for Security

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[2]The hate crime trend was not standardized by the Arab and Muslim population living in the United States because those data were unavailable until 2010. We reconfigured **Figure 3** from 2010 through 2019 using the anti-Muslim/Arab hate crime rate per 100,000 Arabs living in the United States and found the same general pattern exists, as the hate crime rate doubles from 2014 to 2017 before it declines and then rises again.

Policy), whereas the only pro-Islam organization was CAIR. Analysis further revealed that displays of negative emotion strongly predicted media attention (Bail 2015). Frustrated by the disproportionate amount of negative media attention Islam received after September 11th, one Muslim leader lamented that "the crazy guy in Afghanistan waving the sword is more likely to get press than me sitting here calmly refuting all of the foolish stuff that crazy guy says" (Bail 2015, p. 57). Over time, donations to these once-fringe organizations increased substantially, allowing them to leverage their growing popularity and resources to create an industry of terrorism "experts" to appear in media outlets (Bail 2015). By the end of 2008, anti-Islam organizations shared "dense network ties to elite think tanks, philanthropic organizations, and religious organizations. These included the Heritage Foundation, the Hudson Institute, and the Republican Jewish Coalition," as measured by the number of shared board members (Bail 2015, p. 60).

Perhaps the most salient evidence of how much anti-Muslim sentiment had permeated the mainstream is the rise of the Birther movement during the 2008 presidential election. The so-called "Birthers" perfidiously claimed that then presidential candidate Obama's birth certificate was falsified and that he was born outside of the United States (Pham 2015). Combined with this were implicit and explicit accusations that Obama was also Muslim (Kelley-Romano & Carew 2019). Perhaps the most visible proponent of the Birther movement was businessman and future president, Donald Trump. In fact, in 2011, Trump publicly contemplated running against Obama and used the birther issue to attract media attention and appeal to White voters. Indeed, mainstream media outlets kept the Birther conspiracy alive even after Obama released his birth certificate by covering Trump's persistent conjecture undermining Obama's legitimacy (Kelley-Romano & Carew 2019). This pattern repeated itself in the 2016 Republican presidential primary when in 2015, despite being behind in the polls, candidate Trump's controversial rhetoric led him to receive more than one-and-a-half times the add-equivalent value in news coverage than that of the three leading Republicans (Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, and Ted Cruz) (Patterson 2016). The centralization of Trump's proposed Muslim ban, as pointed out by Fisher et al. (2018, p. 140), is well demonstrated by comparing shifts in mainstream Republican sentiment from reacting to his anti-Muslim rhetoric by calling him a "cancer on conservatism," "not who we are as a party," and "inconsistent with American values" to defending his Muslim ban as providing proper vetting for national security. Indeed, the presidential candidate who, in an interview on *Fox and Friends*, described that in his counterterrorism strategy he would "take out" the families of ISIS and was endorsed by a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) newspaper, *The Crusader*, became the 45th president of the United States (Fisher et al. 2018, p. 140).

Donald Trump's presidency welcomed to the mainstream the more clandestine and dangerous organized white power movement, which had remained on the fringes during the aftermath of September 11th. David Duke, the former Grand Wizard of the KKK, tweeted after Trump won (Duke 2016):

> This is one of the most exciting nights of my life → make no mistake about it, our people have played a HUGE role in electing Trump! #MAGA (@DrDavidDuke).

Although it might be tempting to think of the KKK, neo-Nazis, and other white power groups as disparate and disorganized, archival research by Belew (2018) maps how the white power movement resurged after the end of the Vietnam war and declared war against the US federal government, forming a coalition of new right extremist groups that included disenchanted others like evangelicals who felt betrayed by Reagan's moderate approach to abortion. The unified white power movement comprised neo-Nazis, skinheads, Aryan Nations, Klansmen, religious extremists like the Christian Identity, and others who followed the blueprint of the 1974 utopian novel *The Turner Diaries* to form a leaderless resistance movement, that plotted "attacks on

infrastructure, assassinations, and counterfeiting to undermine public confidence in currency" (Belew 2018, p. 4). Belew (2018) argues that because the public actions by this movement were often attributed to lone wolves or small pockets of isolated white supremacists, the magnitude of this threat was obscured to the public and its leaders. We, however, argue that the terrorist activities of the white power movement of the late twentieth century and the far-right movement of the early twenty-first century were also obscured due to the type of criminal sanctuary described above as a misuse and subversion of deterrence.

Despite overwhelming evidence that 14 Klansmen and neo-Nazis were guilty of murder, conspiracy, and felony riot charges when they shot and killed five protesters at a "Death to the Klan" rally in Greensboro, NC, all-White juries acquitted them in 1979. Indeed, these acquittals and those of 13 white supremacists in 1988 on sedition charges after they conspired to kill a federal judge and an FBI agent as part of an effort to overthrow the federal government (Simmons 1988) galvanized the white power movement and provided a perceived green light for more violence (Belew 2018). Its violence against the government intensified through standoffs like the ones in 1992 in Ruby Ridge and 1993 in Waco, where local and federal law enforcement wore military gear and weapons to attack separatist compounds. The white power movement culminated when Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols used nearly 5,000 pounds of fertilizer to bomb the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, including 19 children. The plan for the bomb came directly from *The Turner Diaries* (Belew 2018).

According to Belew (2018), the white power movement mostly receded to online spaces after the Oklahoma City bombing, although they remained intent on building a global Aryan nation. A leaked 2009 assessment by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS 2009) warned that the economic and political climate of the time was similar to that in the 1990s when right-wing extremism was at the height of its resurgence. The report identified risk factors for recruitment and mobilization and detailed evidence that the movement was growing again. In addition to electing the first Black president, the nation was also experiencing a recession, a rise in illegal immigration, legislation restricting firearms, a rise in a new world power (China), and the return of disgruntled military veterans from war (DHS 2009). Although this report provided a critical warning of what was to come, it was retracted because Republican legislators and veterans groups criticized its inclusion of military veterancy as a risk factor, helping to conceal this growing threat from public view (Borchers & Hagan 2021).

The resurgence of a new generation of white power extremists through a self-proclaimed "alt-right" became more visible throughout the Obama and Trump administrations. Dylann Roof, the white supremacist who in 2015 shot and killed nine Black worshipers at a Bible study in Charleston, SC, wore a mixture of the symbology used by the earlier white power coalition (Belew 2018). The "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, VA, in August 2017 brought together white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and Confederate sympathizers to demonstrate over the removal of a Confederate statue, killing one woman and injuring other counter-protesters (MacFarquhar 2021). President Donald Trump openly refused to condemn white supremacism, including during a 2020 debate with presidential candidate, Joe Biden, when he instead told the "Proud Boys—stand back and stand by" (Ronayne & Kunzelman 2020). Indeed, this was interpreted by the Proud Boys in private social media channels as an endorsement of their violent tactics, and the group immediately saw a spike in new recruits (Frenkel & Karnie 2020). Intentional or not, far-right groups and their grievances had become part of the mainstream public conversation, thus making it unsurprising that within four months of that debate, thousands of protesters would converge on the US Capitol to stop the certification of what they perceived as a stolen election.

Considering the misuse of deterrence by the Bush administration in response to the September 11th attack as documented above, and following Beccaria's (1764) argument, this would lead to

increased violence within the United States. Specifically, we anticipate that the disproportionate targeting of Muslims in the United States and abroad, combined with the explicit anti-Muslim sentiment that moved from the fringes through mainstream audiences and expressed openly by the Trump administration, resulted in a growing backlash in jihadi attacks in the United States. Furthermore, we anticipate that as far-right ideals began to be legitimized by mainstream outlets and Republican leaders, including the President, far-right extremists expected sanctuary and were emboldened to attack more often. In fact, Fisher et al. (2018) predicted such backlash and emboldenment, given the expressive hostilities during the Trump campaign. We now look more directly at the patterns of terrorist attacks by far-right and jihadi extremists over the period that anti-Muslim and far-right ideology moved from the fringes into the mainstream to assess whether they are consistent with what we would expect from a misuse of deterrence.
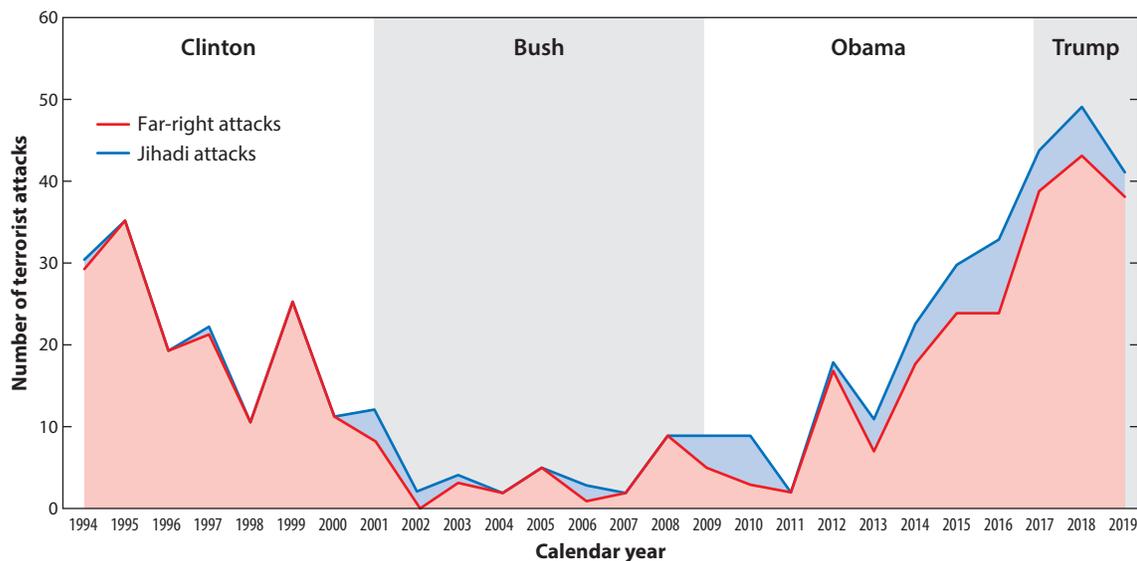
PATTERNS OF FAR-RIGHT AND JIHADI TERRORISM IN THE UNITED STATES

We use the Global Terrorism Database (GTD; **https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/**) to chronicle jihadi and far-right terrorist attacks perpetrated in the U.S. between 1994 and 2019 (LaFree et al. 2015).[3] GTD collection follows a practice of broadly including events and allowing users to filter cases for their purposes. This is reflected in its definition of a terrorist attack and inclusion criteria (for details, see START 2021). Terrorism in the GTD is defined as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a nonstate actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation" (START 2021, p. 11). Also, because definitional overlap sometimes conflates terrorism with other forms of violence, the GTD includes an indicator called "Doubt Terrorism Proper" (START 2021, p. 12), which is marked if the event could arguably fall into a category other than terrorism (e.g., homicide). For purposes of this research, we include all cases recorded in the GTD, even if doubt terrorism is marked because of the evidence that terrorist acts in the United States by White perpetrators are more likely to be classified as something other than terrorism than acts by Muslims or Arabs (D'Orazio & Salehyan 2018, Parada 2019).

A central challenge in creating the database of far-right- and jihadi-perpetrated attacks is that even when the perpetrator is known, their ideology is sometimes unknown. Miller (2017) and Miller et al. (2022) created auxiliary files that link broad ideology and specific types of right-wing or far-right motives to the US events in the GTD. Miller et al. (2022, p. 3) define right-wing terrorism as "terrorist attacks (per the GTD) that were motivated by ideologies that advocate a return of certain elements of society (and its various political, economic, and cultural institutions) to some imagined historical state (Jackson 2009), in western society." The crucial message by Miller et al. (2022) is that within the far-right ideology are several other first-level subideologies that delineate different movements and mark each attack by as many of the first-level ideologies that fit the perpetrator (e.g., anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, antiabortion). For the current research, we classified all attacks that were identified as right-wing as far-right because of the evidence that the disparate movements fall under a single coalition (Belew 2018). All attacks that were classified as Islamic extremism were coded as jihadi terrorism.

The GTD documents 918 terrorist attacks perpetrated in the United States between 1994 and 2019. Most of these, 718 attacks, were attributed to a specific individual or movement; of those attacks, most were motivated by a far-right ideology (400 attacks). More than a third (258 attacks) were motivated by another ideology, and only 8% (or 60 attacks) were perpetrated

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[3]We selected 1994–2019 to include all available years during the Clinton administration for a baseline through to the end of the available GTD data.

Figure 4

Stacked area chart of far-right and jihadi terrorist attacks in the United States, 1994–2019. Data taken from the Global Terrorism Database (**https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/**).

by jihadis. **Figure 4** shows yearly counts of attacks by each ideology mapped onto the four presidential administrations over that period. This figure reveals two notable patterns. First, the trend of attacks by far-right and jihadi terrorists was higher under Clinton, Obama, and Trump than for the years when George W. Bush was president. Attacks peaked in 1995 and declined until 2002, which aligns with Belew's (2018) description of how the far-right became less active after the Oklahoma City bombing. Attacks by these perpetrators (and others) in the United States remained relatively low throughout most of Bush's presidency, suggesting that the strong deterrence language might have worked. Jihadi and far-right attacks increased slightly to 9 attacks during the 2008 presidential election and rose again to 18 during the 2012 presidential election, which is consistent with the predictions of backlash and emboldenment. Attacks also increased substantially during the midterm election year of Obama's second term in 2014 and continued to rise steeply through to Trump's presidency with a peak in 2018 of 49 attacks (75 total attacks during Trump's one term)—another midterm election year. Attacks during these years could also have been due to backlash and criminal sanctuary, as far-right ideas had increasingly entered the mainstream conversation. In fact, Fortunato et al. (2022) use interrupted time series on monthly attacks and show that the re-election of Obama in 2012 and the election of Trump in 2016 were associated with increased frequencies of attacks by the far-right.

This rise in far-right attacks leads to the second obvious pattern in **Figure 4**. The distribution of ideological attacks is dominated by the far-right (shown in red). In fact, attacks by jihadi perpetrators in the United States (shown in blue) were relatively rare until 2001 and became more common after Obama took office, suggesting little backlash while President Bush was in office. Under Clinton, the far-right attacks in the United States reached an average of 21.43 a year, compared to the jihadi average of 0.29 per year (or once every 3.5 years). Under Bush, the averages were much closer with far-right at 3.75 and jihadi at 1.13 times per year. Under Obama, the difference grows again with far-right attacks averaging 12.5 attacks and jihadi averaging 4.38 attacks each year. Finally, under Trump, the far-right attacked nearly ten times more per year than jihadi

perpetrators, 40 to 4.67. The discordant association between the actual heightened far-right terrorist threat shown here and the espoused jihadi threat based on media reports (Kearns et al. 2019) strongly supports our expectation that the misuse of deterrence by US leaders has masked public perception, making it difficult for the public to see the full scope of the far-right terrorist threat.

Of course, differences in lethality could explain why jihadi attacks receive more attention than far-right attacks since September 11th. A review of the number of fatalities resulting from terrorist attacks in the United States shows that the coordinated attacks on September 11, 2001, which killed nearly 3,000 victims, appear to be outliers rather than a shift to a new normal. Since 2002, 362 victims and 45 perpetrators have been killed in the United States because of terrorist attacks. Of the victims, more than half (181) were killed by the far-right, less than a third (111) were killed by jihadi motivated extremists, and only 7.46% and 8.01% were killed by other attributed or unattributed perpetrators, respectively.

In general, we find that since the catastrophic attacks on September 11th, the United States suffered from more attacks by the far-right than by jihadi extremists and more people were killed in the far-right attacks than in the jihadi attacks. All of which counters the narrative that propagates our vulnerability to jihadi terrorism (Kearns et al. 2019). Perhaps attacks against Americans outside of the United States explain the disparate attention Islamic extremism receives. Since 1994, jihadis attacked US targets outside of the United States 18 times under Clinton, 112 times under Bush, 91 times under Obama, and 45 times under Trump. When standardized by year, the rates are 2.6, 14.0, 11.4, and 15.0 across administrations. For comparison, the domestic far-right rates across administration are 21.4, 3.8, 12.5, and 40.0 per year, which are also higher on average than the averages for the total jihadi attacks against Americans inside and outside of the United States.

Although far-right terrorism has been the most prevalent and lethal in the United States since the September 11th attacks, we now consider whether the most active and most lethal groups or movements align with the expectations of backlash and emboldenment found when deterrence is misused. **Table 1** presents the ten most active and ten most lethal groups or persons from September 12, 2001, through December 31, 2019. The list on the left ranks the groups/persons by the number of attacks and the list on the right ranks them by the number of fatalities. Although the ranking is based on the total number of persons killed, the columns also list the number of US citizens that were killed. Each group is also categorized via a superscripted letter into either

Table 1   Ten most active and lethal terrorist groups or individuals that attacked in the United States from September 12, 2001, to December 31, 2019

Attack rank	Group or individuals	Attacks	Total/US fatalities	Fatality rank	Group or individuals	Total/US fatalities	Attacks
1	Unattributed	126	39 (36)	1	Jihadi-inspired extremists[b]	107 (92)	35
2	White supremacists/nationalists[a]	60	76 (64)	2	White supremacists/nationalists[a]	76 (64)	60
3	Anti-Muslim extremists[a]	54	5 (5)	3	Anti-government extremists[a]	75 (71)	38
4	Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	40	0 (0)	4	Unattributed	39 (36)	126
5	Anti-government extremists[a]	38	75 (71)	5	Incel extremists[a]	24 (24)	5
6	Jihadi-inspired extremists[b]	35	107 (92)	6	Anti-Semitic extremists[a,c]	19 (18)	21
7	Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	26	0 (0)	7	Anti-police extremists	16 (16)	10
8	Anti-abortion extremists[a]	26	4 (4)	8	Muslim extremists[b]	13 (11)	11
9	Anti-Semitic extremists[a,c]	21	19 (18)	9	Neo-Nazi extremists[a]	12 (12)	8
10	Pro-Trump extremists[a]	17	0 (0)	10	Anti-White extremists	10 (10)	12

Data taken from the Global Terrorism Database (**https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/**).

[a]Far-right.

[b]Jihadi.

[c]In four attacks, the perpetrator could have been jihadi. Only one fatality resulted from those attacks.

far-right (*a*) or jihadi (*b*), whereas other ideologies or unattributed groupings have no superscripted letter. This allows us to compare the activity and lethality of groups by ideology.

Unsurprisingly, far-right terrorist entities occupy more spots on both rankings than other ideologies, including jihadi. Far-right groups or persons represent six of the ten most active and five of the ten most lethal, whereas jihadi groups hold the one and two positions in each ranking, respectively. Others include two eco-terrorist groups, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), who never killed anyone, and anti-police and anti-White extremists, who were each responsible for ten or more fatalities. Anti-police extremists became active under Obama beginning in 2013, and anti-White extremists were first detected in the GTD in 2000 with four attacks and showed up again in 2016, 2017, and 2019. White supremacists/nationalists are the most active with 60 attacks and 76 fatalities. Jihadi-inspired extremists are the deadliest with 107 fatalities in their 35 attacks. Note that the GTD defines jihadi-inspired extremists as assailants who were motivated by a specific jihadist organization or leader. Unlike Muslim extremists, they may not necessarily be Muslim. The deadliest attack since September 11th falls under anti-government extremists and was perpetrated in October 2017 when Stephen Paddock used automatic weapons to shoot attendees at the Harvest Festival concert in Las Vegas, NV, killing at least 59 people and injuring more than 850. The GTD codes this incident as far-right because a witness overheard Paddock espousing anger over the standoffs in Waco and Ruby Ridge. Another witness reported Paddock's concern that the US government will confiscate guns and that somebody should wake up the American public to get them to arm themselves. Both claims echo major grievances by white power groups since the 1990s (Belew 2018). The next most fatal attack falls under jihadi-inspired extremists. In June 2016, Omar Mateen opened fire at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, FL, killing 50 and injuring 53. Prior to the attack, Mateen pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and stated that the attack was in retaliation for US air strikes in Iraq and Syria. The third most lethal attack falls under White supremacists/nationalists and occurred in August 2019 when Patrick Crusius opened fire on customers in a Walmart in El Paso, TX. Crusius targeted Mexicans explicitly and published a manifesto that espoused concern over a Hispanic invasion of Texas.

These last two attacks are especially relevant to this article because Mateen's expressed motive of retaliation is consistent with an expected backlash from a misuse of deterrence. Furthermore, the attack ignited political controversy when President Obama refused to refer to it and other attacks as "radical Islamic terrorism" because that phrase suggests that Islam in general is the problem. Then candidate Trump and other Republicans demanded that Obama resign for refusing to name the problem (Powell 2016), demonstrating the salient tension between anti-Muslim sentiment and efforts to defuse it. In contrast, despite Crusius' online manifesto stating that the attack was a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas, he was not charged with terrorism or even a hate crime (Parada 2019). The FBI and federal prosecutors did refer to the shooting as domestic terrorism, and President Trump condemned white supremacy and blamed the internet and video games for the violence (Chavez 2019). Despite this condemnation, Trump initially described the attack as a mental health problem (Edwards & Kotera 2022), consistent with what we would expect under a misuse of deterrence.

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The patterns of terrorist attacks in the United States clearly show that the jihadi threat was not as severe as public rhetoric would suggest. However, anti-Muslim sentiment grew, as evident by the rise in hate crimes that targeted Arabs and Muslims, and terrorist attacks by the far-right gained momentum following the election of President Obama as predicted by the aforementioned DHS report. Yet these events gained relatively little attention, and those that did gain attention were

more likely to be classified as something else. We argued above that this disproportionate attention was likely exacerbated by the misuse of deterrence by the Bush administration in response to the September 11th attacks. The mainstreaming of anti-Muslim hostilities combined with the propagation of far-right ideals by Donald Trump set the climate for his eventual election as President of the United States in 2016. During his time in the White House, President Trump continued to use divisive language that aligned far-right principles with the Republican party in general and demonized the Democratic party (Finley & Esposito 2020). Early in his campaign for reelection in 2020, President Trump set the stage for a possible standoff by accusing the Democrats of massive voter fraud, raising the prospect that if he lost the election he would refuse to concede (Hasen 2020). In the timeline of events leading to the January 6th attacks, Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (2021) found that after the Electoral College confirmed Joe Biden as the winner on December 14, a myriad of far-right groups was primed to respond by the time Trump tweeted on December 19, "Statistically impossible to have lost the 2020 election. Big protest in DC on January 6. Be there, will be wild!" (Atl. Counc. DFRLab 2021). For some in this movement, the war they have been waiting for had finally begun (Belew 2018).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This review set out to explain how an event as monumental as the January 6th attack on the US Capitol by far-right terrorists was unanticipated and became politically polarizing despite the heightened attention given to terrorism over the past two decades and the unity shown after the September 11th attacks. We argued that the September 11th attacks were a black swan event that created latitude for the Bush administration to implement policies and practices that would have been politically infeasible previously and that those policies and practices created backlash by jihadis and emboldened the far-right. Furthermore, the perpetuation of fear from Islamic terrorism helped obscure the rising threat coming from the far-right.

At the same time, whether motivated by vigilantism, revenge, or merely anger, some Americans felt emboldened to attack Muslims and those who looked Muslim, which is evident from the spike in hate crime following September 11th. Although this research shows that hate crimes continued to persist at levels well above those prior to September 11th and that the far-right perpetrated acts of terror at an increasing rate, public discourse by US leaders argued that America's greatest threat was still Islamic terrorism. A cursory search[4] through the American Presidency Project database (**https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/**) shows that all three presidents rarely spoke of the former while speaking frequently about the latter. President Bush never referred to far-right terrorism, President Obama's administration made reference twice after 2 of 100 attacks, and President Trump referenced it four times—mostly by defending his record. In comparison, the presidents referred to Islamic terrorism 34, 20, and 12 times, respectively. Yet this research shows that far-right terrorists attacked 331% more often than jihadi extremists since September 11th and 75% more people were killed by the far-right than by jihadi assailants. Clearly, the greatest terrorist threat in the twenty-first century United States has thus far been the far-right.

As warned by Beccaria (1764) and contemporary scholars on terrorism, excessive punishment that disproportionately targets one group while overlooking others' offending could cause backlash from targeted groups and emboldenment from protected groups, increasing the likelihood of terrorism from both. Indeed, several of the jihadi perpetrators in the GTD cite the US treatment

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[4]Search terms for far-right include "far-right," "right-wing," "white supremacy," and "white supremacist," and the search terms for jihadi include "Islamic extremism," "jihad," and "jihadi."

of Muslims as their reasoning behind the attacks. Furthermore, the growth of far-right terror-
ism and the emergence new far-right threats (e.g., incels, conspiracy theorists) suggests that an
unintended sanctuary might have fostered their progress. Of course, we cannot know the coun-
terfactual. What might have happened had the US government taken seriously its own agency's
findings in 2009 that far-right groups were recruiting disgruntled veterans? Perhaps we will soon
learn, as the US Department of Defense (US Dep. Def. 2021) recently released a report on coun-
tering extremist activity within the Department of Defense, which culminated from a Countering
Extremist Activity Working Group that was established in February 2021.

Although we proposed causal mechanisms for the growth in US far-right violence that eventu-
ally led to the attack on January 6th, we only examined whether the patterns of attacks were aligned
with our theoretical expectations. More can be said only after these claims are tested using differ-
ent measurements and analytic techniques. Triangulation has revealed many important nuances
regarding the interplay of politics, policy, and terrorism, and future research is needed to refine
and test the extent to which sanctuary may increase the likelihood of terrorism. If the findings of
this study are robust to future analyses, counterterrorism efforts should attend to all ideologies
underpinning terrorism. Government leaders should restrain themselves from using rhetoric that
unjustifiably alarms the public and instead aim for the proportionality supported within the sci-
entific deterrence literature. Although this may be an unreachable principle given the political re-
wards gained from raising alarm during existential crises, it is particularly at these crucial times that
politicians and policy makers should follow scientifically supported responses rather than falling
prey to the idea of "but this time it's different." Deterrence research has identified important lim-
itations of frequently relied upon counterterrorism approaches, and we are better positioned to
empirically estimate the likely outcomes of specific approaches. This progress has revealed that we
cannot focus solely on one terrorism ideology or rely entirely on deterrence. Humans respond to
more than just threats of punishment, and we now know that governments can use a wider variety
of policy levers to influence terrorism. Finding methods for addressing the grievances of those
who are vulnerable to being recruited by extremist groups, including military veterans, should be
a policy priority. Extremist ideologies will persist, but we can find ways to undermine their ability
to recruit and commit acts of violence by dismantling sanctuaries and maintaining proportion-
ate sanctions. As we write this conclusion, former President Trump has promised pardons to the
January 6th rioters if he is re-elected (Rabinowitz & Polantz 2022). Clearly, more effort is needed
to break the cycle of misusing deterrence.

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The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that
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