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EDITORIAL

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Clauset and Woodard (2013) ask, "What is the likelihood of another September 11th-sized or larger terrorist event, worldwide, over the next decade?" This question has implications for numerous policy arenas—national security, international relations, public safety, disaster preparedness, and so on—but it also has resonance for any individual who remembers 9/11. Thus, the Area Editors chose this paper to engage the audience at the 2013 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) in Montreal. The discussions in this issue of *The Annals of Applied Statistics* include those presented formally at JSM 2013 as well as others from individuals who were unable to attend JSM 2013 or who contributed discussions after the meeting.

Clauset and Woodard (2013) did indeed stimulate an active discussion. Several points were raised in the discussion about assumptions. Substantive assumptions that were questioned include the framing of the problem—for example, how useful is it to characterize the impact of an attack by the number of casualties—and the quality and informativeness of terrorism data in general. Assumptions about the statistical modeling strategy were also questioned, particularly with respect to how best to model rare and extreme events and whether terrorist events are independent and identically distributed. Considering the controversial topic and the sensitivity of results to different models for rare event data, careful consideration of the assumptions is appropriate. Clauset and Woodard (2013) and the accompanying discussions should provide ample material for an interested reader to evaluate the importance of these assumptions to examining whether a 9/11-sized terrorist attack is an outlier.

REFERENCE

CLAUSET, A. and WOODARD, R. (2013). Estimating the historical and future probabilities of large terrorist events. *Ann. Appl. Stat.* **7** 1838–1865.

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