**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 variables 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**

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)
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.

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START Research Highlight

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