

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND HOW IT IMPACTED THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

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Abstract

In order to understand this crisis, there is a need to look back at what triggered this with the main catalyst being the Syrian civil war. It can be said that the incident started once with the Arab Spring protests back in 2011 as the Syrian population grew in discontent with the Bashar al-Assad government resulting in protests in hopes of removing said government. Sadly the protests were violently suppressed and sparked the fire of armed conflict in the country, throwing it in the civil war that has ravaged the country.

The purpose of this article is to shed some light on the current refugee crisis that the European Union is facing, especially on the negative aspects of it that came under the form of a surge in criminal activity and terrorist acts, how it affects the Union, its security and the security of its citizens.

Keywords: *refugee crisis, crime rate, criminality, terrorism, crime.*

Introduction

In order to understand this crisis, there is a need to look back at what triggered this. The main catalyst of the crisis was the Syrian civil war. It can be said that the incident started once with the Arab Spring protests back in 2011 as the Syrian population grew in discontent with the Bashar al-Assad government resulting in protests and hopes of removing said government. Sadly the protests were violently suppressed and sparked the fire of armed conflict in the country, throwing it in the civil war that has ravaged the country.

As the violence in Syria escalated, millions fled their home in order to seek refuge or find a better life, with Al-Jazeera estimating that around 11 million had fled the country or that they had been displaced as of 2015 (Al

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Jazeera, March, 2015). However the first Syrian refugee to touch the shores of Europe was registered in 2012 and by 2015 more than 313000 asylum applications were filed Europe, with Hungary being the first to be overburdened by the applications and refusing to accept any more refugees, a decision that sparked great controversy. Because of the great influx of refugees, Germany and the Czech Republic had to suspend the Dublin Regulation (a EU law that determines the EU Member State responsible for examining an application for asylum seekers seeking international protection under the Geneva Convention and the EU Qualification Directive, within the European Union (Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003), with the objective to prevent an applicant from submitting applications in multiple Member States and to reduce the number of "orbiting" asylum seekers, who are shuttled from member state to member state with the country in which the asylum seeker first applies for asylum is responsible for either accepting or rejecting the claim, and the seeker may not restart the process in another jurisdiction) for Syrians and started to manually process the applications, followed shortly by a plan to redistribute 120.000 asylum seekers across the EU, drafted and accepted by ministers of interior and home affairs of the EU. The plan was rejected by mostly East European countries, some speculating that economic and social cost would prove too much of a strain for them.

How refugee crisis impacted the European continent

By 2016 Austria imposed a restriction on the number of refugee entries, Slovenia and countries of the Balkan region announcing that they will allow a number of 580 refugees per day to pass their borders, putting a serious strain on the Greek authorities that are stuck with large numbers of refugees on their hands, sparking fears that the Greek government will not be able to handle this situation and may prove dangerous for their internal security.

Looking at statistics and numbers, Austria had 18.000 Syrian refugee arrivals in 2015; by 2018 the number reached 48.103 only for Syrian nationals. The Czech Republic on the other hand was accused of breaking human rights for the "degrading conditions in which the refugees are held, some claiming this is a tactic to deter refugees from remaining in the country (Migrant Crisis: Czechs Accused of Human Rights Abuses – BBC News, 2015). France even though after the Paris attacks of 2015 had remained stern on its decision to accept more than 30.000 refugees, as Françoise Hollande stated that it is France's humanitarian duty and "we have to reinforce our borders while remaining true to our values" (The Washington Post, 2015). Germany

had received around 12.000 refugees of Syrian origin in the year of 2013, with the number more than tripling by 2014 (39.332) and by 2015 reaching around 161.000. It is important to note that after the suspension of the Dublin Regulation, the influx of refugees had started to seriously stress German infrastructure and logistics. Germany at the moment has the highest approval of asylum requests at 96%, authorities expecting more to come (BAMF – Bundesamt Für Migration Und Flüchtlinge, December 2015).

Hungary however is at the complete other side of the spectrum since 2015 it has closed its border and erected a fence with barbed wire on the southern borders, especially with Croatia and it blocked train travel. The government itself sees the refugees as illegal immigrants that seek jobs and a danger the Hungarian culture and proceeded to outlaw refugees and reject asylum claims at the border (The Guardian, September 15, 2015). Poland, as well, had a stern approach towards the refugee crisis as it accepted only 150 refugees mostly of Christian beliefs and as the population had shown strong anti-migration and anti-refugee sentiments and after many polls had demanded a stop to refugee quotas.

Romania was asked to house around 6.500 refugees according to EU quotas, but the Romanian government negotiated that it will accept this only if EU will grant its citizens equal access to the visa-free Schengen area.

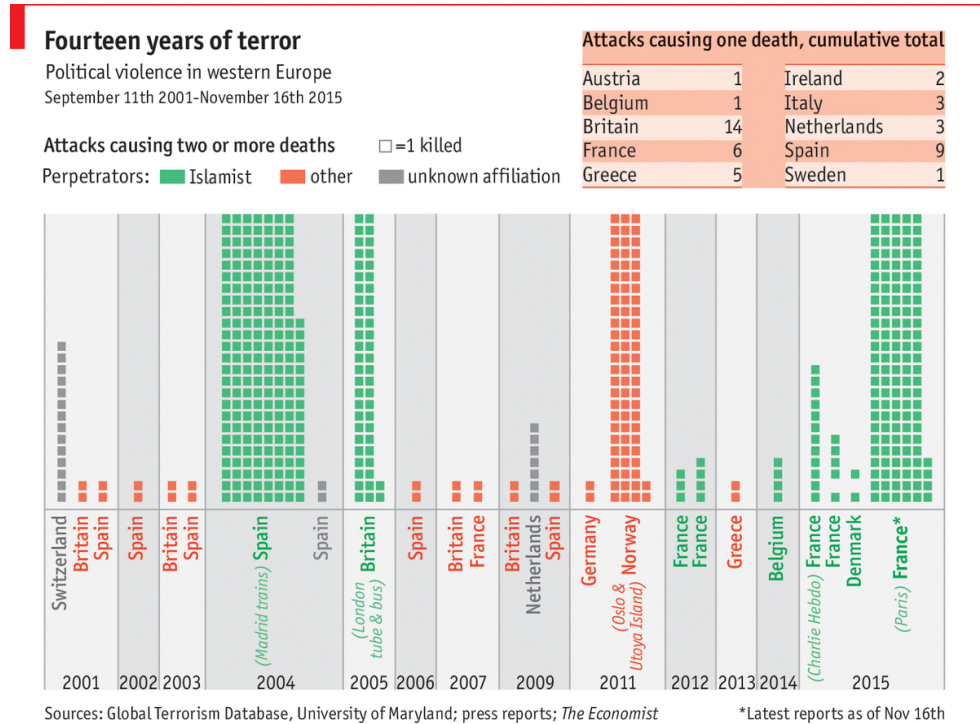
Sweden was the first country in the EU that granted permanent residency to all asylum seekers as well as the right to reunite with their families (more exactly to bring them to Sweden). As of 2012 almost 3.000 Syrian nationals settled in Sweden as refugees, grew to more than 9.000 in 2013 and doubled in 2014 summing up to approximately 31.000 refugees with an additional 9.000 that settled on the grounds of family reunification. Sweden received 10.000 stateless individuals on the grounds of them residing previously in Syria. As of 2015 51.338 Syrian refugees had applied for asylum in Sweden but after 2015 the number of applications has decreased (Asylsökande till Sverige 2000-2017). As a critique, there have been concerns that these policies may be a launch pad for a boom in the people smuggling business.

Please note that the numbers and statistics are for Syrian refugees only and do not include those from Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Libya and so on.

As the saying goes each coin has two sides, and the EU's open border policies also brought disastrous events under the form of terror attacks and a spike in crime rates, the most affected by it being France and Germany.

As it is known, France has went through one of the most shocking and horrific episodes from its history during the November 2015 attacks in Paris, were a series of well-coordinated terrorist attacks occurred: suicide bombers struck at the Stade de France during a football match, followed by mass shootings and suicide bombings at a number of cafés and restaurants and one of the more notorious mass shooting occurring at the Bataclan theatre. Thanks to the professionalism and quick reaction of the French authorities, the further escalation of these incidents was cut short.

Table 1: Attacks that had caused at least one death
(September 11th 2001 – November 16th 2015)
(Source: The Economist, November 16, 2015)



With the table above (The Economist, November 16, 2015), one can observe that in the past 14 years, Europe has been affected by a wave of terrorist attacks made by Islamist perpetrators, with the year 2015 mostly

affecting France with the Charlie Hebdo and November attacks. The acts of Friday 13th claimed 129 lives; the shootings at the office of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, the beheading of a man at a chemical plant near Lyon as well as a foiled armed attack on a TGV train are part of the incidents that have impacted the French population. It is important to focus on one key piece of evidence that came up after the investigations of the 2015 attacks as a supposed Syrian passport was found near the lifeless body of one of the perpetrators, which bore the name of Syrian national that transited through Greece earlier in October. The passport eventually proved to be fake and the credentials on it were that of a loyalist soldier of Bashar al-Assad that had died months ago before the incident, the rest of the assailants being identified EU nationals and it is believed that they had been radicalized by Islamic State operatives from the Middle East or it has been a homegrown radicalization (The Washington Post, 2015). The incident itself sparks debates and concerns, the possibility of radical Islamists infiltrating the continent might prove in fact to be a reality. With the EU opening its arms towards refugees it is complete ignorance or stubbornness to not admit the fact that this will eventually bring unwanted outcomes. The fact that the borders are so open towards refugees or even if they would become more restricted in the future is still a good prospect for illegal activities as human trafficking might boom, with a good example being the rise of cocaine prices in the US post 9/11, as well as people being the new commodity that cartels smuggled in country, as it proved more beneficial for them since it meant that they didn't have to grow or produce it (which implicated time in the equation for illegal profit), only needing to charge the individuals that wished to cross the border. The same scenario can be applied to Europe today, Sweden's policy of offering permanent residency for asylum seekers might even encourage people smuggling, or even the prospect of a more closed border could still boom this illegal activity as tight borders are good for business.

Table 2: GTD, terrorist attacks ranked by fatalities in Europe (2001-2018)
(Source: GTD Search Results, 2018)

GTD ID	DATE	COUNTRY	CITY	PERPETRATOR GROUP	FATALITIES	INJURED	TARGET TYPE
201511130008	2015-11-13	France	Paris	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	93	217	Business, Private Citizens & Property
201607140001	2016-07-14	France	Nice	Jihadi-inspired extremists	87	433	Private Citizens & Property, Private Citizens & Property
200403110003	2004-03-11	Spain	Madrid	Al-Qaida (suspected)	73	450	Transportation, Transportation
201107220011	2011-07-22	Norway	Utoya	Right-wing extremists	69	60	Private Citizens & Property
201605190058	2016-05-19	Greece	Unknown	Unknown	66	0	Airports and Aircraft, Private Citizens & Property
200403110007	2004-03-11	Spain	Madrid	Al-Qaida (suspected)	62	450	Transportation, Transportation
200403110001	2004-03-11	Spain	Madrid	Al-Qaida (suspected)	37	450	Transportation, Transportation
200507070002	2005-07-07	United Kingdom	London	Al-Qaida	27	340	Transportation
201705220006	2017-05-22	United Kingdom	Manchester	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	23	119	Business, Private Citizens & Property, Private Citizens & Property
201511130006	2015-11-13	France	Paris	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	19	26	Business, Private Citizens & Property
200403110004	2004-03-11	Spain	Madrid	Al-Qaida (suspected)	19	450	Transportation, Transportation
201603220001	2016-03-22	Belgium	Zaventem	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	18	135	Airports and Aircraft, Private Citizens & Property
201603220002	2016-03-22	Belgium	Brussels	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	17	135	Transportation, Private Citizens & Property
201511130003	2015-11-13	France	Paris	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	15	26	Business, Private Citizens & Property
201708170002	2017-08-17	Spain	Barcelona	Muslim extremists	14	101	Private Citizens & Property
200507070004	2005-07-07	United Kingdom	London	Al-Qaida	14	110	Transportation
200109270003	2001-09-27	Switzerland	Zug	Unknown	14	18	Government (General)
201612190002	2016-12-19	Germany	Berlin	Jihadi-inspired extremists	12	48	Private Citizens & Property, Private Citizens & Property
201501070001	2015-01-07	France	Paris	Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	12	12	Journalists & Media, Police, Private Citizens & Property
201706030010	2017-06-03	United Kingdom	London	Jihadi-inspired extremists	11	48	Private Citizens & Property, Private Citizens & Property

In the table from above there is a list of incidents (the only parameters set for the search was the European Continent, a time period from 2001 up to 2018 and the list was ordered by number of fatalities the incident had produced) that had happen in the span of 17 years, all ordered by the number of fatalities each had produced (GTD Search Results, 2018). One can easily observe that the majority of the perpetrators were affiliated with a radical Islamist movement and the incidents seem that a surge in these attacks had occurred since the Syrian refugee crisis had begun. It can be seen that France has faced most of them, followed by the United Kingdom, but fatalities are not the only thing to worry about as in Germany the police reports for 2016 were presented (PKS: Gewaltkriminalität Steigt in 2016 Dramatisch – Schelmenstreich), there was an increase in rapes and murders done by refugees, more specifically 12% of the murders and 14,9% of rapes were committed by refugees (which make roughly 3% of the population). (Bericht Zur Polizeilichen Kriminalstatistik, 2016)

Conclusions

As a conclusion, one can realize that the refugee crisis can have a devastating outcome for the European continent and the Western Values that it holds, proving that the mass importing of refugees has become a burden for most European countries as their National Security Services are lacking personnel. Along with the overcrowding of the security infrastructure had proven to be critical for the success for Islamic terrorist cells or radicals to infiltrate and establish a base of operation. A solution could be that each European citizen should consider enlisting in one of their National Security Services, especially the younger generations since there is a need for young and motivated individuals with a strong will to serve in such services because a youth with a strong sense of duty and a population with a security culture will make almost impossible the possibility of an escalation in terrorism. The future of next generations lays solely in our hands, it is our duty to stay united, to stay strong and to stay vigilant in the face of evil.

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