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Thinkful Capstone Analytic Report and Research Proposal

Description of Dataset

NATO responded to the 9/11 attacks by implementing its collective defense mandate, in addition to leading a UN mandated International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2014. 29 countries make up NATO. The US, UK, France and Germany are the most important founding members of NATO. As such, they have been influential in shaping NATO’s presence in Afghanistan.

These countries came together for collective defense as outlined by NATO’s mission, but what has been each country’s role in collective humanitarianism? The estimated number of displaced Afghans is 3, 700,000. This project asks, what has been the role of the UK, US, France and Germany in receiving refugees from Afghanistan?

To answer this question I analyzed the number of refugees who have residence or asylum in each country.

This UN Data set from the United National High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides data on the location of refugees around the world along with the country of origin of the refugees and the year the data was calculated. The purpose of the data is to provide information and understand global trends to allow for thoughtful public debate and decision-making considering these vulnerable populations. The data covers the time period of 1975 to 2016

According to the data Refugees fall into two categories -

1)‘Refugees’ defined as:

“Persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statue, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. “‘Refugees assisted by UNHCR

2) Refugees and people in refugee-like situations:

“…includes groups of persons who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

I analyzed the data using definition #1. I selected the time period 2006-2016 because it begins a few years into the war and ends two years after the end of NATO engagement. This time period captures the height of NATO engagement and illustrates the continued role of NATO countries after the end of their mandate.

*Which country accepts the most refugees?*

This first chart “Refugees from Afghanistan 2006-2016 shows the number of refugees from Afghanistan who are residents or asylum seekers in France, Germany, UK and the US. The numbers of refugees in Germany has increased significantly since 2006, reaching a height of 46,292 in 2016. In fact, Germany’s reception of refugees from Afghanistan seems to have spiked between 2013 and 2016. In contrast, the number of refugees in the US has declined since 2006 from a height of 13,242 to 1466 in 2016 and remains the lowest level among all the NATO countries analyzed in this study. The UK has also seen a substantial decline in the number of refugees received. The reduction in the number of refugees received seems to have occurred around 2010 and leveled out around 2012, hovering between 9-10,000 refugees per year. France is the most consistent in terms of accepting refugees. Whereas the other countries have accepted over 10,000 refugees in a year, France has never accepted more than 7685 refugees, which occurred in 2016. Interestingly, France began as the country with the lowest level of acceptance, yet as of 2016, France accepted more refugees than the US.

*What is the spread of refugee acceptance?*

The second chart is a histogram showing the distribution of refugees in residence. From this histogram there appears to be quite a spread between the level of refugees accepted. Most countries accept less than 10,000 per year. Germany’s acceptance of 46,292 refugees (2016) is an anomaly among the statistics.

*What is the relative role of the US against these NATO countries together?*

I took the mean of each country’s number of refugees over the specified time period. On average, Germany accepted the most refugees, followed by the UK, France and the US. This same pattern of refugee acceptance is true when looking at the median. Interestingly there is a significant difference between the median of France and the US whereas the difference between the means of France and US is smaller. This can be accounted for by the anomalous figure of 2006 when the US took in a greater amount of refugees than the subsequent five years, whereas France’s refugee acceptance remained rather steady over the designated period of time of this project study.

Finally, looking at the summary statistics of the countries together versus the summary stats of the US the mean of refugees accepted by the US (2546) falls well below the mean of the NATO average (12725). The NATO average is particularly high because of the role of Germany.

Further research

Considering the war in Afghanistan was started in response to the 9/11 attacks, by analyzing this data several questions emerge. Primarily, why does the U.S. accept fewer refugees from Afghanistan than its NATO allies? Are there particular political considerations that influence the number of refugees accepted? During this time period, why did Germany increase the number of refuges while the UK and US have reduced the number of refugees and France has shown a slight increase? Answering these questions requires qualitative analysis of mandates of NATO, individual country analysis of political environment etc. as well as quantitative analysis over a longer period of time.