**Compelling Storytelling Through Data Visualizations**

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I found the data visualization “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” by Pitch Interactive (<https://drones.pitchinteractive.com/>) to be very compelling, both from a data visualization and a personal perspective. My husband is Pakistani and his parents both immigrated from there in their early 20s. In fact, my father-in-law is there right now visiting an ill family member and has been deeply emotionally impacted by the pervasive poverty, instability, and psychological state of many of the civilians there.

This visualization depicts U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan from 2004 onward using an interactive timeline to demonstrate the scale and human toll of these strikes, breaking down the casualties into categories such as "children," "civilians," and "high-profile targets." Using clear visual cues and stark colour, it illustrates a visually intuitive and emotionally powerful narrative. For example, the lines descending from the top of the visualization seem to represent/mimic the trajectory of the drone strikes, creating a “visual metaphor” for us to visualize the extent of strikes. Viewers are also able to view the downward bar segments that represent the casualties caused by each strike, making it clear at a glance which strikes were more devastating. The interactivity of the graph also allows us to hover over individual strikes to reveal specific details like the date, number of casualties, and type of victim, ultimately engaging us more personally and encouraging us to explore the data in depth.

The visualization is clearly successful in storytelling by humanizing a complex geopolitical issue. The fine details, such as the tab specifically representing and describing the extent, location, timing, and outcomes of the strikes, encourages us to reflect on individual tragedies being represented by the statistics and the devastating human cost of this complex issue. For someone like me, with familial ties to Pakistan, this visualization feels particularly poignant. It illustrates how impactful visualizations can transform raw data into a powerful and emotional experience, bringing seemingly distant events to life and making them feel immediate and urgent rather than abstract or cold/detached statistics.

Despite its effectiveness, the visualization could improve in a few ways. First, it lacks context that might help us to better understand the causes and implications of the drone strikes. It could benefit from, for example, adding interactive annotations or short narratives along the timeline to highlight key geopolitical and historical events to give us a more comprehensive understanding and help us connect the data to the real world. Regarding its overall design, while the bold colour scheme (dominated by stark red tones) is visually striking and adds to the emotional impact, it would benefit from a broader palette to help differentiate between the features of the graph. For example, using more distinct colours/shades to differentiate between civilians, children, and high-profile targets may make it easier to interpret and visualize the causalities. Finally, while the interactive features are effective at encouraging us to explore the data more deeply, they could be expanded to provide even greater insights and improve the storytelling. For example, including more contextual information (e.g., any provocations, counter-attacks etc.), comparisons of different time periods/regions, the frequency and intensity of the strikes leading to the causalities, and/or various other metrics (e.g., ratios of civilians to high-profile targets) would make the visualization a richer and more immersive experience.