*Violence against refugees in the context of terroristic attacks in Europe 2013 - 2016*

**Creating awareness**

Since 2015 the number of xenophobic motivated attacks on refugees or their accommodations has increased significantly. The present graphic serves the purpose of creating awareness of the many attempted and succeeded attacks on refugees. For a better understanding the graphic allows to put these attacks into perspective with elsewise motivated terroristic violence and filter the data by multiple factors, e.g. the date and the target. To give the reader more information on each incident, information is displayed in an interactive way within tooltips and within the so-called “Infobox”. He is provided with data on the date and place of the attack, the numbers of injured or killed people, the target and perpetrator and the kind of attack and weapons used. Additionally, a short summary of the incident can be read.

The graphic should help finding answers to the following questions:

* Are there specific areas that suffer more often from (specific kinds of) attacks than others?
* Are there structural differences in the kinds of attacks, the targets, the numbers of fatalities or the affected areas?
* Which actors occur? What kind of attacks are they responsible for and where are they active? Are there changes over the years?

**Data**

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is a database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 to 2016. It includes data on domestic, transnational and international terrorist incidents and provides relevant information, such as the date, location, weapons, target and the responsible person or group if known. The global terrorism database was introduced in 2001 at the University of Maryland. It is provided by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) which still works in close collaboration with multiple researchers from the University of Maryland. The data is based on publicly available, open-source materials and can be downloaded here on GTD's website. Incidents have been included if they met START's definition of terrorism as an "intentional act of violence or threat of violence by a non-state actor" and at least two of the following criteria:

1. The violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal.
2. The violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims.
3. The violent act was outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law.

**Data Preparations**

Since the goal was to display terroristic attacks in Europe with a focus on attacks on refugees over the last few years, some modifications of the original dataset were necessary. First, the data set was reduced to attacks occurring in Eastern and Western Europe between 01/01/2013 and 01/01/2017. Next, a new category for refugees based on the incident’s description was set up since they were originally only categorized as “Other”. To provide the user with limited amounts of filter options on the targets and perpetrators, a reduction to the most common groups and some further grouping was needed. However, the user is still able to find out about the specific target and perpetrator (group) in the Infobox.

**Insights**

From the graphic the following insights can be derived:

1. The most common terroristic attacks in Europe were refugee-related, targeted towards private citizens and businesses, or religious figures and institutions (mostly mosques).
2. Refugee-related attacks in 2013-2016 took mostly place in Germany, but there were also significant numbers of attacks in Sweden and Finland.
3. The line plot shows a tremendous increase in refugee related attacks for the year 2015 (extra plot under the “Overview” button).
4. Attacks with many casualties are mostly executed by global highly organized terrorist groups (circle size as indication).

**Discussion**

While many praised Germany for not putting a limit on the number of refugees allowed to find shelter in the country over the last couple of years, more and it seems like more people started expressing concerns and xenophobic thoughts. Newspapers regularly informed about refugee shelters being set on fire by right-wing extremists, especially in more Eastern parts of Germany such as Saxony.

The visualization backs this information and shows the high frequency of these incidents, while also providing the reader with more detailed information. Looking at the line plot providing the reader with data on the numbers of (refugee-related) attacks over the years, one can clearly see that especially the years 2014 and 2015 suffered from huge amounts of all kinds of terroristic attacks throughout Europe. Refugee-related attacks, on the other hand, almost exclusively took place in 2015.

Often, opponents of Germany’s migration policies based their arguments on the danger stemming from potential terrorists in disguise as asylum-seekers. The map clearly depicts terroristic attacks by Muslim extremists that many citizens fell victim to, highlighted by the size of the circle displaying the number of people that were killed through the attack. This includes the attack on people attending the concert at Bataclan and the related attacks throughout the city of Paris in December 2015, as well as the attack in Nice and Berlin involving trucks being driven into crowds of people.

While nowadays terrorism in Europe is often understood as terroristic attacks committed by Muslim extremists as part of global terrorist groups such as ISIS, the map clearly shows that there are many more forms of terror occurring all over Europe. However, just like the size of the depicted circles increases with the amount of people killed, it is clear why such far-reaching attacks attract more attention by the media and wider public.

Nevertheless, the reader is given the opportunity to analyze the different kinds of attacks in more detail using the filters. Doing so, one can identify areas where specific kinds of attacks and weapons or specific perpetrators are more common. For example, bombings and explosions occur more often in Ireland or the Ukraine, where more politically motivated attacks took place.

**Conclusion**

The graphic meets the first goal of this visualization and creates awareness for the many refugee-related attacks in Europe. Furthermore, the graphic stays objective at all times and gives the reader the opportunity to form his own opinion. The many filters, colors and shapes allow a thorough analysis on the macro level. At the same time, the tooltips and the information box give a lot of detail when evaluating specific events. Overall, the graphic’s interactivity not only makes the experience more engaging, but primarily helps the reader make comparisons and draw conclusions.