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The Syrian refugee crisis and global security threats – a case study of Germany

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Introduction

The Syrian refugee crisis persists as one of the most significant refugee and displacement crises in contemporary global affairs. The event garnered significant global attention since it had a prominent impact on the European stage. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021), a staggering number of thirteen million individuals have sought asylum as a result of the protracted Syrian conflict that has persisted over the past decade. A significant number of individuals from Syria have migrated to various parts of the world in search of refuge, sanctuary, and security. According to a survey conducted in late 2020, it was found that approximately one million Syrian individuals classified as refugees or asylum seekers are currently residing in Europe. The European countries with the highest numbers of such individuals are as follows: Germany, with a population of 616,325, ranking it as the fourth largest Syrian refugee population globally; Sweden, with 114,995 individuals; Austria, with 57,887 individuals; Greece, with 38,496 individuals; Netherlands, with 37,792 individuals; France, with 23,510 individuals; and Switzerland, with 20,043 individuals (Statista, 2020).

Various official and non-official individuals and organisations have consistently expressed apprehension regarding the potential risks that Syrian refugees may pose to the safety, security, and economic stability of the host societies, revolving particularly around the notion that some refugees may have affiliations or sympathies with ISIS (Getmansky, 2021). For example, during his 2015 visit to Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon, Lebanese Minister of Education Elias Saab told

British Prime Minister David Cameron that one in fifty Syrians entering Europe could be ISIS members (Sims, 2015). A few years later, the top U.S. military commander in the Middle East, Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, expressed concern that a refugee camp in northern Syria containing the families of former Islamic State militants could serve as a breeding ground for future terrorists, and that those children are likely to become the next generation of jihadists who fight against the United States, Europe, and others (1920, Dickstein 2020).

The arrival of a substantial number of Syrian refugees in Europe elicited xenophobic apprehension in some nations. Syrian refugees have become widely linked to issues of security, violence, and crime as well being seen as a danger to social cohesion and jobs. They are occasionally perceived as constituting a threat from terrorism or insurrection (Crone, 2017). The aim of this study is thus to expand our understanding of the perceived connections between Syrian refugees and global security in order to investigate the assertions that Syrian refugees pose a threat to global security. Through a case study of Germany, using descriptive statistical analysis, the study reassesses the threat of Syrian refugees to global security between 2015-2020. The study is timely as millions of people are displaced around the world and the numbers of refugees are increasing because of wars, disasters, and climate change. The study is important as it questions the validity of claims that can have negative effects on host communities' perception of Syrian refugees.

The study proceeds as follows: The literature section theorizes about refugee threats to global security and presents a theoretical model and the gaps in the literature. The methodology section discusses the research gap, selection of the case study, the time frame, and the methods of obtaining and analyzing data. The study then proceeds to the discussion of connections between Syrian refugees and global security, which is followed by a case study looking at the research question through two pointers of crime ratio and terrorism cases. The study concludes with a note that more research is needed to shed light on the Syrian refugee crisis in general, and more particularly on their relation to global security.

Literature review: theorizing global security and the refugee threat

Global security is a broad concept that incorporates many facets of human existence. It encompasses a wide range of interconnected global challenges that have an impact on survival. It includes threats to human and economic security and the stability of states, threats posed by environmental degradation, as well as traditional or conventional threats from military power (Buzan, 1998). Nevertheless, it is customary to regard the concept of "security" as a term that is commonly comprehended primarily or exclusively emphasizing matters related to the military and security (Sheehan, 2005), which will be adopted for the purpose of this study.

Arnold Wolfers claims that the word "security" is typically normative. Nations use it to determine and justify what is the best or least harmful course of action, or expedient — a means to an agreed end (Wolfers, 1952). He contends that various nations have various expectations of security in the same manner as people have diverse capacities for detecting and identifying danger and threat. Because of their distinct political, economic, ecological, and geographical environments, different countries encounter threats at varying intensities in addition to having different forbearance levels; thus, according to Barry Buzan (2002), studying international security entails determining which threats may be tolerated and which call for prompt response. For him, security is not a matter of either power or peace but rather something in between (Buzan, 2007).

In its Human Development Report of 1994, The United Nations categorizes security into seven distinct domains including political security, economic security, food security, health security, and environmental security. Furthermore, international terrorism, drug trafficking, economic inequality, migration pressures, environmental degradation, and population growth, were also perceived as matters of significance (Booth, 2007: 321; MacFarlane and Khong, 2006: 11). Based on a study conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2019, it was found that the most significant risks to security, both in terms of probability and consequences, were weapons of mass destruction, data fraud, and cyberattacks. Additionally, environmental hazards such as extreme weather events, insufficient efforts in climate change

mitigation, and natural catastrophes were identified as significant risks (Lazarou, 2019). According to the International Centre for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities (ICERM, 2016), other threats to global security encompass terrorism, the proliferation of biological and nuclear weaponry, transnational organized criminal activities, the widespread availability of small guns and light weapons, as well as the persistent challenges posed by poverty and sickness.

With this conceptualization of security in mind, the examination of the existing body of work on Syrian refugees brings back Huysmans' (2002) question of how migration has developed into a security issue in western Europe and how the European integration process is implicated in it. The political construction of migration has increasingly referred to the destabilizing effects of migration on domestic integration and to the dangers for public order it carried. Politicians claimed that the Syrian refugees disrupted national culture and homogeneity, took jobs, housing, and educational opportunities from nationals, and increased racial and ethnic conflicts in local neighbourhoods (The Debating Europe, 2018). Several politicians and European Union officials have openly voiced their apprehensions regarding the influx of Syrian migrants. For instance, Czech President Milos Zeman expressed his belief that Muslim refugees may not adhere to the laws and cultural norms of their host countries, and cautioned that their objective would involve the establishment of sharia law (Politico, 2016). Similarly, Viktor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary, was reported noting "We shouldn't forget that the people who are coming here grew up in a different religion and represent a completely different culture. Most are not Christian, but Muslim. Is it not worrying that Europe's Christian culture is already barely able to maintain its own set of Christian values?" (Politico, 2015). Along the same vein, Nadine Morano, France's opposition leader, noted in a televised appearance, "We're a Judeo-Christian country of white race. We respect France. And if you don't want to adapt, you can go."(Allen, 2015). Similarly, Bjorn Hocke, the leader of the Alternative for Germany party in Thuringia, was reported noting "Let's not forget, the Syrian who comes to us has still his Syria. The Afghan who comes to us still has Afghanistan. But if we lose our Germany, then we have no more home!" (Politico, 2015). Other officials have seen the Syrian refugees as unhealthy. For example, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the former Prime Minister of Poland and current leader of the Law and Justice party,

asserts that migrants have introduced diseases such as cholera and dysentery to Europe, along with various parasites and protozoa. While these organisms may not pose a threat to the health of the migrants themselves, there is potential for them to be hazardous within the European context (Politico, 2015). Similarly, Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, noted that the acceptance of migrants carries the potential risk of epidemics (The News, 2015). David Cameron, the former British prime minister, saw them as "swarm of people" who are motivated by the desire for improved living conditions and aspire to relocate to Britain (BBC, 2015), while Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Front, saw them as "slaves" and explained Germany's open doors policy likely originates from fear that its population is declining and may be aimed to reduce wages and perpetuate a system of labour exploitation by means of mass migration (Reuters, 2015).

The review of the literature shows a focus on the most contentious issues, such as demographics and unemployment and assertions that Syrian refugees pose a threat to security. This, however, has not been supported with evidence. There are no relevant search results when typing "Syrian", "refugees", "global security" on the web of science or empirical research that investigates the relationship between Syrian refugees and global security, a gap which this study attempts to fill.

Methodology: case selection and time frame
The selection of Germany as a case study was based on the fact that it hosts 616,325 Syrian refugees representing the largest number of Syrian refugee population in Europe, and the fourth in the world after Turkey (3,685,839), Lebanon (851,718), and Jordan (668,332) (Statista, 2020). Germany was chosen because of the availability and the validity of German official sources (Ali, 2021). (Germany does not receive international aid for hosting refugees thus has no interest in exaggerating their numbers to get more gain). Additionally, the behavior of the Syrian refugees in Germany is not impacted by ethnic, tribal, or religious ties that differ from Syrian refugees elsewhere. As such, Germany is an ideal case study.

The time frame selection between 2015-2020 was based on the fact that 2015-2016 marked the highest figures of Syrian asylum seekers in Germany after Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany announced

on 4th September 2015 that migrants would be allowed to access the border from Hungary into Austria and onward to Germany. Syrian refugees became the third-largest group of foreigners living in Germany after the Turks and the Poles, and Germany became the country with the fifth highest population of refugees in the world (Oltermann, 2020; Hasselbach, 2021; Hindy, 2018). The inclusion of years 2016-2020 in the case study was to allow greater analysis of the impact of Syria refugees on German security in the five-year time frame. The year 2016 marked the halt of the influx of Syrian refugees into Germany by the statement of cooperation between EU states and the Turkish government in March 2016, according to which Turkey would take any measures necessary to stop people travelling irregularly from Turkey to the Greek islands, and anyone who arrived on the islands irregularly from Turkey could be returned there (Wesel, 2021). However, the period between 2016-2020 remains significantly important to analyze the impact of Syrian refugees on the security of Germany in the following years.

The study uses descriptive statistical analysis to investigate the question on the threat of Syrian refugees to global security. This method provides simple summaries about the sample and about the observation that has been made. It allows the researcher to quantify and describe the basic characteristics of the data set, which can then be organized, simplified, and summarized. For instance, a data set that includes hundreds or thousands of individual data points or observations can be reduced into a number of statistics that offer helpful details about the population of interest (Mann, 1995). Because they are used to summaries or describe a sample's or data set's properties, such as a variable's mean, standard deviation, or frequency, descriptive statistics are appropriate for this study.

The data used in this research was obtained from Statista, a German company based in Hamburg used by more than 2.000 universities worldwide including Harvard University, Stanford University and Yale University, with more than 150.000 Statista-cited media articles (Statista, 2020). Data from Statista included crime rates, a Global Terrorism Index, and a ranking of the largest Syrian refugee-hosting countries. The Global Terrorism Index Score is a report published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace. It provides a com-

prehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism since 2000. The Index runs from 0, no impact of terrorism, to 10, highest impact of terrorism. It is a composite measure made up of four indicators: incidents, fatalities, injuries and property damage (Statista, 2020; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020). Data was also obtained from the US Department of State. Its country reports on terrorism are submitted in compliance with Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f of the Act, which requires the Department of State to provide to Congress a full and complete annual report on terrorism for those countries and groups meeting the criteria of the Act (US Department of State, 2021).

The criteria of posing a threat to global security included: property crime, violent crime, terrorism, cybercrime, financial crime, crime clearance and arrests/settlements with a comparison of the most dangerous and the most peaceful countries in the world. Based on the UN definition of global security, the question whether Syrian refugees pose a threat to global security translates into the issue of whether they pose a terrorism threat. While studying terrorism, the criteria included: the global terrorism index, terrorist attacks by region, terrorist attacks by country, number of fatalities worldwide, most expensive terrorist attacks worldwide by insured property losses, countries with the highest number of deaths by terrorism, terrorist attacks worldwide by attach and target types, most effective terrorism groups worldwide based on number of attacks, and global economic costs of terrorism. While terrorism has no universally agreed, legally binding, criminal law definition, this research defines it as the systematic use of terror, especially as a means of coercion.

The Syrian refugee crisis from a global security perspective
Currently, the Syrian refugee crisis is considered one of the biggest challenges of European and bordering countries (UNHCR, 2016) which generated tensions in global politics. While some states perceived the Syrian refugees as victims that needed protection, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, others were more skeptical, such as Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia who perceived them as a security threat to their nations and took all possible measures to obstruct the route that the Syrian refugees used (Sabic and Boric, 2016; Strickland 2016). In the following, I will argue that the political rhet-

oric around Syrian refugees poses a far greater risk to national and global security than the settlement of more refugees.

The Paris attack on the night of Friday 13 November 2015 was a landmark that sparked the a round of refugee panic after the body of one of the attackers was found near a Syrian passport that had apparently been used to enter Europe. Since then, in the US, more than half of governors said they would seek to block Syrian refugees from their states. Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz said he would introduce legislation to ban Muslim Syrian refugees. Donald Trump tweeted on 17 November 2015 "Refugees from Syria are now pouring into our great country", then he tweeted. "Who knows who they are – some could be ISIS". He issued an executive order banning Syrian refugees from entering the United States, indefinitely. He insisted that not even Syrian children could be trusted. In Canada, Premier Brad Wall of Saskatchewan encouraged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to withdraw his commitment to accept 25,000 Syrian migrants by the end of the year (MacLellan, 2015). These fears were also echoed in Europe; in Germany, allies of the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, voiced security concerns over her open-door policy. The Bavarian finance minister Markus Soder told a German newspaper that the Paris attacks had changed everything and that the days of uncontrolled immigration and illegal entry could no longer continue as before (Kingsley, 2015). These fears were reflected in a Pew Research Centre study in 2016 which found that 59% of European respondents believed that the coming of refugees would increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country. They said that Muslim values were incompatible with countries in Europe and North America where they might seek to settle and that it was dangerous for Muslims from Islamic State-held territory to live alongside non-Muslims in the West (MacLellan, 2015; Hood, 2019)

The rhetoric regarding the supposed Syrian threat is consistently accompanied by the assertion that a significant proportion of Syrian refugees are comprised of young boys or young men, the population group from which terrorists are likely to be recruited. There is a considerable number of individuals who are undoubtedly evading conscription into the Syrian armed services (NBC News, 2015). A significant proportion of Syrian refugees are males in their late teens

to middle age because they are most able to act as vanguards for their families to prepare the way for the rest to follow safely through legal channels of family reunification. Moreover, the apparent intention of the departure of some other males from Syria is to escape forced recruitment into terrorist organizations such as ISIS, so that the objective long-term impact of refugees leaving Syria may be to reduce the terrorist threat (Kingsley, 2015). The notion that the self-proclaimed caliphate of ISIS serves as a sanctuary for potential anti-Western terrorists is called into question by the mass departure of refugees from Syria. Given the proximity to ISIS controlled areas, if the purported sanctuary were indeed available, individuals would likely be inclined to congregate there in large numbers, rather than subjecting themselves to hazardous journeys to Europe. ISIS has made various public statements regarding the refugee issue, cautioning that Western countries, dominated by Jews and Christians may not prioritize the well-being of migrants and could perhaps compel them to convert as a condition for staying in their respective nations. According to Beauchamp (2017), it is highly unlikely that ISIS would express such sentiments if the utilization of extensive refugee flows were a viable method for the organization to clandestinely transport operatives into Europe.

The Paris attacks had a profound impact on the worldwide perception of Syrian refugees, leading to a shift in the way the international community perceives both Syrian refugees and the broader refugee crisis. As a result, it is imperative to use caution in asserting a correlation between the Paris attacks and Syrian refugees, pending the completion of a full review encompassing all pertinent information. The responsibility for the attacks was asserted by ISIS, who declared that it was a retaliatory measure in reaction to French military airstrikes targeting their group (Cruickshank, 2017). The identification of Syrian and Egyptian passports found in close proximity to the deceased individuals involved in distinct terrorist incidents has generated considerable attention. Nevertheless, the Egyptian authorities have officially asserted that the Egyptian passport in question is attributed to a victim of the attacks, rather than one of the individuals responsible for the perpetration. Although a small fraction of the attackers were of Iraqi nationality (Elgot, 2015), the majority of persons implicated

in the Paris attacks were citizens of France and Belgium, with ancestral ties to Morocco and Algeria (Traynor, 2015) who were able to navigate across international borders with relative ease, facing little hindrances because of their European passports.

While acknowledging the legitimate concerns surrounding terrorism and the refugee crisis, it is important to note that the fears being voiced often tend to be overstated. From a comprehensive perspective, the potential negative consequences are surpassed by the magnitude of the humanitarian catastrophe. The refugees were exposed to the peril of mortality, malnourishment, and hypothermia. Numerous individuals have experienced the loss of beloved individuals, resulting in the fragmentation of families. However, individuals persist in departing from their residences in pursuit of a more secure and improved existence. By affording these migrants a viable alternative outside of Syria and potentially depriving ISIS of its supply of possible manpower, the acceptance of a larger number of refugees has the potential to contribute to the defeat of ISIS, rather than impeding their departure from Syria. An essential primary step in mitigating the risk of radicalization among Syrian refugees is the implementation of strategies aimed at decreasing the population density within refugee camps and increasing the number of refugees accepted into host countries (Seligman, 2019). Beauchamp (2017) maintains that a significant proportion of the Muslim population does not exhibit a strong inclination towards engaging in armed jihad. Syrian refugees are rather seeking to escape from conflict, with their primary objective being the attainment of a secure and stable existence.

Finally, it can be argued that the anti-refugee rhetoric in Western countries presents a significantly greater risk to security compared to the act of resettling additional refugees. According to MacLellan (2015), Muslim adolescents who are consistently exposed to the notion that they are not accepted in Western societies have feelings of detachment and ambiguity over their sense of self, rendering them susceptible to radicalization and potential involvement in violent extremist schemes. The experiences and emotions of Muslim teenagers who encounter the concept of non-acceptance within Western communities can potentially exert substantial influence on their self-perception and susceptibility to radicalization. When individuals reg-

ularly suffer rejection or a sense of not belonging, it can lead to feelings of detachment, alienation, and ambiguity about their identity and place in society (Bronsard, 2022). The experience of detachment and ambiguity can give rise to a conducive environment for the emergence of extremist ideologies, as individuals may actively search for alternative communities or belief systems that offer a sense of affiliation, meaning, and self-definition. According to Aly (2012), extremist groups frequently capitalize on these weaknesses by providing individuals with a false perception of their identity, a purpose in life, and a pledge of inclusion. Ben-Meir (2015) looks at integration as the driving force behind the process of deradicalization, encompassing many socio-economic, religious, and political strategies aimed at addressing the vulnerabilities faced by young Muslims. Mitigating the risk of radicalization can be achieved through the promotion of inclusivity, understanding, and acceptance within Western societies. Additionally, fostering strong connections and cultivating a sense of belonging among individuals, irrespective of their cultural or religious affiliations, can contribute to this objective. In preventing radicalization and fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance, the implementation of support networks, mentorship programmes, and the facilitation of discussion and cross-cultural understanding are of significant importance (EUMS, 2006)

Case study - Germany

This section undertakes an analysis of the data provided by the US Department of State regarding terrorist acts that occurred in Germany from 2015 to 2017. The primary aim of this analysis is to examine the involvement of Syrian refugees in these assaults. The study then proceeds to examine the crime rate in Germany from 2000 to 2019, with particular emphasis on the timeframe spanning from 2015 to 2017. The subsequent analysis involves the examination of data obtained from the global terrorism index and the top fifty countries. This data is then juxtaposed with information derived from the ranking of nations that host the biggest number of Syrian refugees.

The analysis starts with a survey, in the following Table 1, of terrorist acts or incidents when individuals or associations were subject to police or judicial action for terrorist-related offenses.

Table 1: Survey of Terrorist related incidents in Germany

2015
In March, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (MOI) announced that it had banned the organization "Tawhid Germany" and the associated "Team Tawhid Media" as extremist anti-constitutional organisations. Police and security services in the states of Bavaria, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Schleswig-Holstein carried out a number of raids and investigative operations on the night of March 25-26 to implement the order.
Also, in March, the Stuttgart Higher Regional Court sentenced Ismail Issa to four years, six months imprisonment for membership in a foreign terrorist organization "Jaish al-Muhajarin wal-Ansar" (JAM-WA). Co-defendants Izzedine Issa (Ismail's brother) and Mohammad Sobhan A. were sentenced to three years and two years, nine months imprisonment, respectively, for supporting a terrorist group. The court found Ismail Issa guilty of travelling to Syria and participating in combat action in 2013.
In June, the Düsseldorf Higher Regional Court sentenced German-Polish dual national Karolina Rafalska to three years and nine months in prison and German Ahmed-Sadiq Munye to one year and nine months parole for providing monetary and material support to ISIL. Rafalska raised a total of US $5,580 to help her husband Fared Saal, a prominent member of ISIL in Syria and a close associate of German-born ISIL fighter Dennis Cuspert. She also sent him video equipment which was used to produce propaganda videos. Munye was sentenced for transferring US $2,400 to Saal.
In July, the Berlin Superior Court sentenced Fatih I. (28) to three years and six months imprisonment on two counts of supporting a foreign terrorist organization as well as fraud. The court found he was guilty of having defrauded a bank of US $27,350, of which he transferred US $7,650 to Junud Al Sham in Syria and supplied the group with a four-wheel drive vehicle in 2013. In March 2014, he transferred US $41.695 to ISIK, an ISIL-predecessor organisation.
In September, the Berlin Superior Court sentenced German citizen Fatih K. to six years imprisonment for membership in the terrorist group "Junud al-Sham." The court found him guilty of travelling to Syria for training and preparing propaganda videos. The court found

no evidence that he had participated in combat. He had previously been incarcerated for 22 months for membership in the German Taliban Mujahedin.
In October, the trial against eight violent Islamist extremists accused of stealing US $20,758 in a wave of robberies to finance terrorist groups in Syria began in Cologne. The men were arrested in November 2014 after having been active from 2011 to 2014. The men were believed to have received training with ISIL.
In October, the Frankfurt Prosecutor's Office indicted an unnamed 35-year-old Turkish German citizen for planning a bomb attack on charges of preparing an act of violence, forging documents, and violating weapons and explosives laws. He was arrested in April together with his wife, who has since been released, on suspicion they were plotting to carry out an attack at a large-scale public event. The couple had bought three litres of hydrogen-peroxide at a hardware store under false identities on March 30. The man also kept a ready-assembled pipe bomb and other weapons and ammunition in his basement.
In December, two returned ISIL fighters Ayoub B. (27) and Ebrahim H. B. (26) were sentenced by the Higher Regional Court of Celle, Lower Saxony, to four years and three months and three years in prison, respectively for membership in a terrorist organisation. According to the court, Ayoub and Ebrahim were members of ISIL in Syria between June and August 2014. Ayoub and Ebrahim were able to convince the court that they broke with ISIL, thus receiving a lower sentence. In July 2015, Ebrahim participated in an investigative TV documentary, warning people against joining ISIL.
2016
On February 26 in Hannover, a Moroccan-German teenage girl stabbed a police officer in the neck, inflicting grievous bodily harm. Prosecutors described her actions as inspired and ordered by ISIS. Upon conviction, authorities imposed a six-year prison sentence.
On April 16, three German teenage boys bombed the Sikh Temple in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia, injuring three people attending a wedding party. Authorities charged the main perpetrator, along with his two accomplices, with attempted murder, causing grievous bodily harm, and detonating an explosive. Essen police later told the media that the attackers had links with Islamist extremists in northwest

Germany.
On July 18, a 17-year-old Afghan refugee attacked passengers on a commuter train near Ochsenfurt, Bavaria with a knife and an axe, reportedly shouting "Allahu Akbar," and injuring five people before he was fatally shot by the police. Bavarian Minister Herrmann confirmed that the attacker travelled unaccompanied to Germany, sought asylum, and lived in Ochsenfurt with a foster family for two years. A hand-painted ISIS flag was found in the attacker's room and ISIS claimed responsibility for this attack via social media**.**
On July 24, a 27-year-old Syrian asylum seeker injured 12 people (three seriously) in an Ansbach (west-central Bavaria) suicide mission by reportedly detonating an explosive device in his backpack. The perpetrator had tried to enter an open-air music festival immediately before but was denied entry. Bavarian Interior Minister Herrmann said the suspect (who had attempted suicide on two previous occasions) arrived in Germany in 2014, received permission to remain in Germany after his asylum claim was rejected in 2016, and had spent time in a psychiatric clinic. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.
On December 19, an attacker killed a truck driver, took control of his large truck, and then drove it into a Christmas market in Central Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring at least 50 people. On December 20, ISIS claimed the attack was perpetrated by "a soldier of the Islamic State" through its propaganda outlet, *Amaq*. Although the main perpetrator, Anis Amri, was shot and killed in Italy while fleeing Germany shortly after the attack, German authorities continue the investigation and have arrested several other individuals in connection with the attack.
2017
On July 28, a United Arab Emirates-born Palestinian refugee who had been denied asylum allegedly killed one and injured five others with a machete while shouting Allahu Akhbar in a Hamburg grocery store. Reportedly radicalized shortly before the attack, the defendant was known to the police and assessed as mentally unstable rather than a security risk. The incident sparked widespread calls for stronger enforcement of deportation laws and discussion of the difficulty of identifying threats.

On November 27, the Mayor of Altena in North-Rhine Westphalia was seriously injured in a knife attack. His attacker said the mayor's refugee-friendly policies were the motive for the attack.

 (https://www.state.gov/country-reports-on-terrorism-2/

The table presented above illustrates that Germany experienced a sequence of terrorist incidents or terrorist-related offenses throughout the period spanning from 2015 to 2017. A total of eight instances were documented in the year 2015, followed by five incidents in 2016, and subsequently two occurrences in 2017. Although there have been instances in which Syrian refugees in Germany were implicated, sympathized with, or engaged in communication with ISIS and subsequently faced legal proceedings, as reported by media sources such as DW (2017), an analysis of the data pertaining to terrorist attacks during the specified study period reveals that Syrian refugees were only involved in one of the fifteen recorded attacks, wherein the assailant was denied asylum and had psychiatric issues. In contrast to the prevailing notion that ISIS affiliates primarily originated from Syria and migrated to Germany, the provided table presents evidence indicating that foreign terrorist fighters were actually departing from Germany, where they were citizens or residents, to engage in the Syrian conflict. According to estimates provided by security officials in 2015, a significant number of individuals, over 760 in number, who were residing in Germany, had left the nation to engage in the ongoing hostilities in Syria. A considerable portion of these individuals were associated with extremist groups such as al-Qaida, ISIS, and other factions promoting violent Islamist ideologies. Approximately one hundred such individuals perished in Syria and approximately 250 individuals returned to Germany (US Department of State, 2016). A substantial number of German citizens continue to engage in combat in Syria, indicating a persistent trend (US Department of State, 2017).

Next, we make a comprehensive examination of crime statistics in Germany spanning the period from 2000 to 2019 (see Figure 1). This demonstrates a notable decrease in crime rates commencing in 2015. This fall coincided with the decision made by former Chancellor Angela Merkel to extend asylum to a substantial number of Syrian refugees, resulting in their significant influx into the country (DW, 2021). In 2019, Germany had a decline in its crime rate, with a recorded figure of 6,548 offences per 100,000 population down from 7530 in 2014. This marks the continuation of a downward trend for the third consecutive year. The crime rate in Germany experienced an increase from 7,625 incidents in 2000 to 8,037 incidents in 2004, followed by a subsequent decrease to 7,253 incidents by 2010. The period between 2010 and 2015 witnessed an escalation in the crime rate. However, subsequent to this period, a discernible trend of crime reduction emerged, resulting in the prevailing low levels observed in recent years. Over the period from 2000 to 2019, the year that exhibited the highest incidence of criminal activities was 2004, recording 6.63 million offences (Statista, 2021), which was long before the influx of Syrian refugees.

Additionally, analyzing data from the global terrorism index 2020 (Figure 2) and top fifty countries, and comparing this to data from the ranking of the largest Syrian refugee-hosting countries (Figure 3) shows that Germany, with 616,325 Syrian refugees representing the fourth largest Syrian refugee population in the world, comes number 48 in the terrorism index of the top fifty countries experiencing terrorism incidents,   scoring 3.97.[1] Contrastingly, France, with 23.510 Syrian refugees comes number 38 with index 4.61; and the United Kingdom, with 11412 Syrian refugees comes number 30 with index 5.16 (Statista, 2020). Data suggests that there is no clear correlation between a country's ranking as one of the largest hosts of Syrian refugees and its rating on the global terrorism index. Ranking

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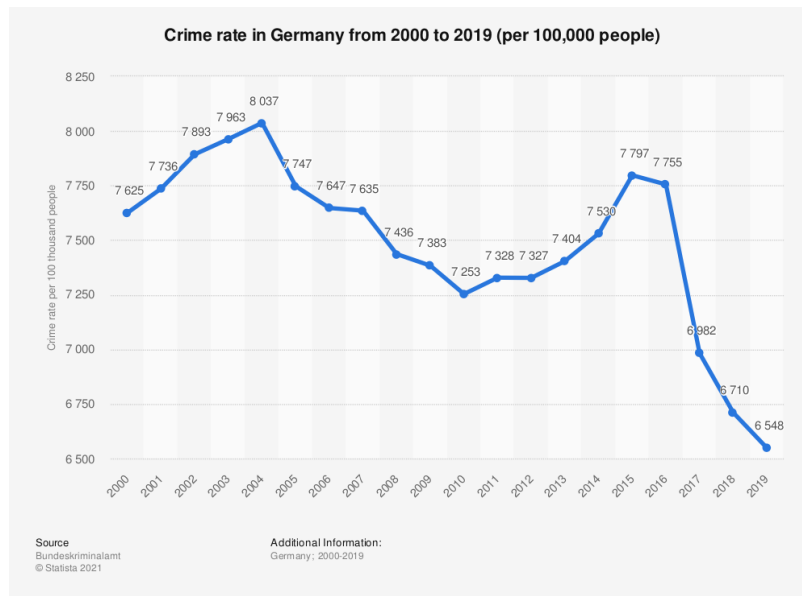[1] Index from 0, no impact of terrorism, to 10, highest impact of terrorism.
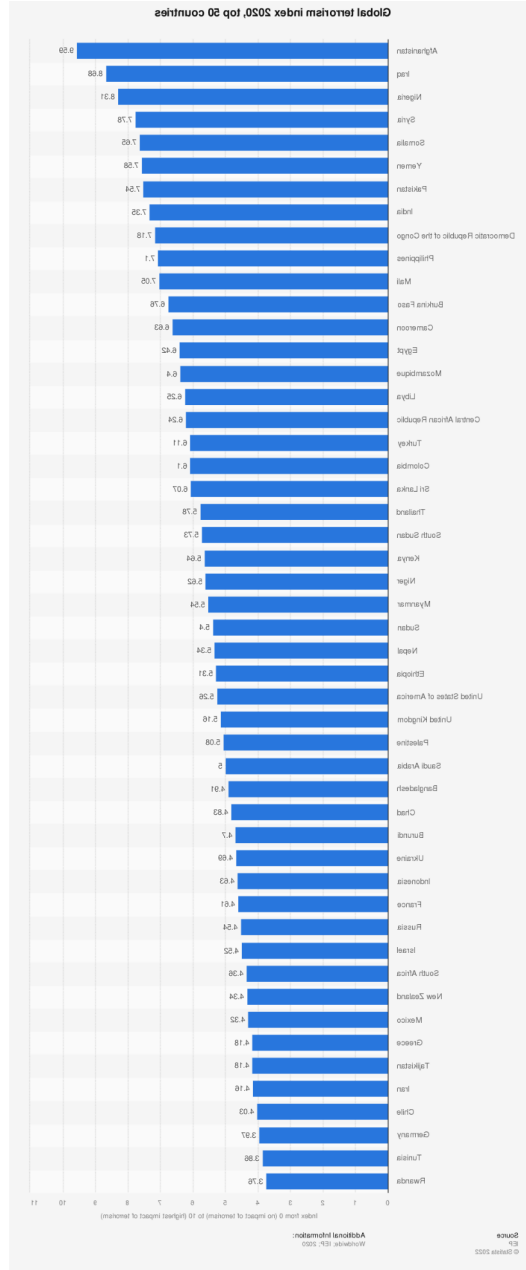
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tries was not associated with a higher scale on the global terror-
ism index.
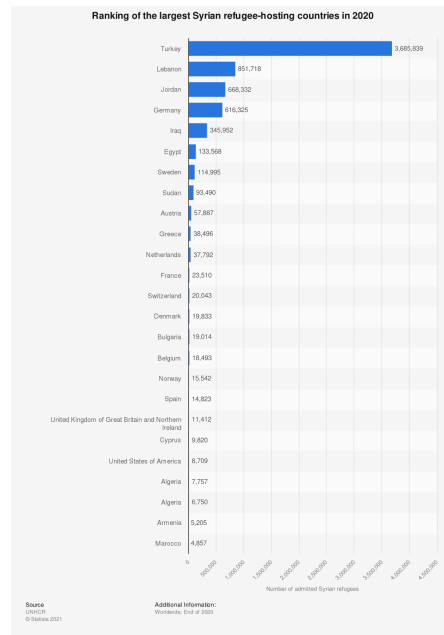
Figure 1: Crime Rate in Germany

Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1040013/crime-rate-in-germany/

Figure 2: Global terrorism Index 2020

Global terrorism index 2020, top 50 countries

Country	Index
Afghanistan	9.59
Iraq	8.68
Nigeria	8.31
Syria	7.78
Somalia	7.65
Yemen	7.58
Pakistan	7.54
India	7.35
Democratic Republic of the Congo	7.18
Philippines	7.1
Mali	7.05
Burkina Faso	6.76
Cameroon	6.63
Egypt	6.42
Mozambique	6.4
Libya	6.35
Central African Republic	6.24
Turkey	6.11
Colombia	6.1
Sri Lanka	6.07
Thailand	5.78
South Sudan	5.73
Kenya	5.64
Niger	5.62
Myanmar	5.54
Sudan	5.4
Nepal	5.34
Ethiopia	5.31
United States of America	5.26
United Kingdom	5.16
Palestine	5.08
Saudi Arabia	5
Bangladesh	4.91
Chad	4.83
Burundi	4.7
Ukraine	4.69
Indonesia	4.63
France	4.61
Russia	4.54
Israel	4.52
South Africa	4.36
New Zealand	4.34
Mexico	4.32
Greece	4.18
Tajikistan	4.18
Iran	4.16
Chile	4.03
Germany	3.97
Tunisia	3.86
Rwanda	3.76

Index from 0 (no impact of terrorism) to 10 (highest impact of terrorism)

Additional information:
Worldwide; IEP; 2020

Source
IEP
© Statista 2022

Figure 3 Ranking of Syrian Refugee Countries

Ranking of the largest Syrian refugee-hosting countries in 2020

Country	Number
Turkey	3,685,839
Lebanon	851,718
Jordan	668,332
Germany	616,325
Iraq	345,952
Egypt	133,568
Sweden	114,995
Sudan	93,490
Austria	57,887
Greece	38,496
Netherlands	37,792
France	23,510
Switzerland	20,043
Denmark	19,833
Bulgaria	19,014
Belgium	18,493
Norway	15,542
Spain	14,823
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	11,412
Cyprus	9,820
United States of America	8,709
Algeria	7,757
Algeria	6,750
Armenia	5,205
Marocco	4,857

Source: UNHCR © Statista 2021

Additional Information: Worldwide; End of 2020

Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/740233/major-syrian-refugee-hosting-countries-worldwide/.

Conclusion

The study presents evidence that challenges the notion that Syrian refugees pose a threat to the host countries where they have sought asylum. At present, there exists a dearth of reliable empirical evidence to substantiate the claim that Syrian refugees constitute a menace to global security. The case study reveals a lack of evidence indicating the involvement of Syrian refugees in terrorist attacks that occurred in Germany over the period of 2015-2017, except for one case wherein the assailant was denied asylum and had psychiatric issues. In contrast, an examination of crime rate data from 2000 to 2019 reveals a significant and ongoing decline in crime rates, particularly beginning in 2015, coinciding with the arrival of a substantial wave of Syrian refugees into Germany. Moreover, upon examining data derived

from the global terrorism index and the top fifty countries, and subsequently comparing it to data obtained from the ranking of nations hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees, it becomes apparent that a higher ranking in terms of hosting Syrian refugees does not correspond to a higher ranking on the global terrorism index.

The perceived risk of an influx of Syrian radicals inundating the Western countries seems to be significantly overstated. The Western countries present a potential haven of stability, security, and economic prospects for refugees. In the same vein, refugees possess the potential to contribute positively to their host nations, rather than being solely burdens and threats. The case study shows that the relocation intents of the individuals were not decided by a deliberate purpose to cause harm; rather, the impetus behind individuals' decisions to move to the West is rooted in their expectations and aspirations for the fulfilment of fundamental necessities such as security and subsistence, as well as their desire for social standing and recognition.

Each passing day, there is an increasing need to deepen our understanding of the Syrian refugee crisis on a broader scale, placing specific focus on its impact on global security, particularly in the context of rising nationalist sentiments. It is the potential security threats arising from xenophobic reactions to the influx of Syrian refugees that have significant consequences for security, should they go unchecked. Over time, it is probable that the escalation of the rejection of Syrian refugees would exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the threat of terrorism. The potential consequences of this action may undermine endeavours to foster dialogue with moderate Muslims and exacerbate anti-Western sentiments in the Middle East and Europe.

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