

Merkel's Generous Refugee Policy Puts Germany at Risk

Islamist terror attacks have increased markedly in the country since it opened its doors to migrants fleeing the Syrian Civil War.

On July 28, one person was murdered and another five were injured by an Islamist wielding a knife at a supermarket in Hamburg, Germany. The sad tale had an all-too-familiar ring to it for many Germans: The perpetrator should not have been in the country. His application for asylum had been rejected and he was awaiting deportation.

This latest attack may lead the German government to revisit the wisdom of its immigration policy. But it is more likely that, having allowed in almost 2 million refugees since 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel will simply double down.

Merkel recently reaffirmed that, despite a string of Islamist plots perpetrated by recent arrivals into the country, Germany will put no limit on the number of refugees it is willing to accept. Her stance poses a serious threat to all of Europe. Such large numbers of newcomers quickly present huge societal challenges, not to mention serious security concerns. And no European nation is more endangered by this than Germany.

It is not news that ISIS has used the Syrian refugee crisis to infiltrate Europe. In January 2015, ISIS told BuzzFeed that it was doing precisely that. And in November 2015, Iraqis posing as Syrian refugees helped slaughter 130 people on the streets of Paris.

Naturally, this did not go unnoticed by Germany's top intelligence officials. In February 2016, Hans Georg-Maassen, head of the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Germany's domestic intelligence agency, was clear that "we have repeatedly seen that terrorists . . . have slipped in camouflaged or disguised as refugees."

Yet one person reluctant to acknowledge this publicly was Angela Merkel herself. Six months later, she told a crowd of supporters that, "Islamist terrorism of ISIL is not a phenomenon that came to us by refugees, but something we already had."

In one regard, Merkel was right. Holger Münch, head of the Bundeskriminalamt, the country's domestic criminal-investigation agency, has stated that Germany averted eleven attacks between 2000 and 2013. For example, in 2006, three German citizens and a German-Turkish dual national trained in Waziristan at an Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) camp. IJU, which has multiple ties to al-Qaeda, encouraged the trainees to launch attacks on airports and U.S. Army bases in Germany. Thankfully, the cell was rolled up in the fall of 2007.

So when Merkel points out that Islamism in Germany did not just appear out of thin air in 2015, she is correct. But she is also giving only a partial view of the picture.

In 2015, the top three countries of origin for people applying for asylum in the EU were Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and Germany was the most popular destination for asylum seekers. Germany's Federal Statistics Office registered almost two million new people in 2015. Unfortunately, the terrorist threat it faced increased significantly as a result. Germany was the target of eight times more Islamist plots in 2016 than in 2015. Whereas plots targeting Germany constituted only 5 percent of all plots targeting Europe in 2015, in 2016, they constituted 27 percent of such plots.

Most of these planned attacks were the work of newly arrived asylum seekers, not home-grown German radicals. Most notoriously, Anas Amri, a Tunisian whose plea for asylum was rejected but who remained in the country, killed twelve people and injured another 48 after running them over with a truck at a Christmas market in Berlin late last year. Amri had pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Months earlier, in July 2016, Riaz Khan Ahmadzai — who entered Germany after claiming to be a refugee from Afghanistan — carried out a knife-and-axe attack on civilians on a train in Würzburg. He injured five. Less than a week later, Mohammad Daleel, an asylum seeker from Syria, carried out a suicide bombing at a music festival in Ansbach, injuring 15. ISIS directed both the Khan and Daleel attacks via messaging apps.

Germany thwarted many other planned attacks that year. For example, ISIS-trained Shaas al-Mohammad was convicted this May for, among other things, passing information to the group concerning targets to attack in Berlin, including

the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag. He had demonstrated a willingness to take part in any attack.

In September, German authorities arrested a 16-year-old Syrian asylum seeker. ISIS had been guiding him through the process of building a bomb. A month later, Jaber al-Bakr — a Syrian refugee in contact with ISIS who had acquired explosives — killed himself in prison, after being caught by other Syrian refugees and turned over to authorities. He had apparently been planning to target an airport in Berlin.

Compare this to Münch's data, and you find that more attacks were planned against Germany in 2016 alone than during the entire period from 2000 to 2015. Merkel is right — Islamist terrorism was “something [Germany] already had.” But now, thanks to her policies, the country faces a lot more of it.

As is her right, Merkel clearly remains committed to a very relaxed approach to immigration. But the German people should not believe this policy is devoid of consequences.

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