Spring 5-18-2024

Refugees or Migrants: Polish Reception to Ukrainian and Syrian Refugee Crises (2015/2022)

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ABSTRACT

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, millions of Ukrainians fled the country as refugees. The majority of which settled in the neighboring country of Poland, where they were greeted with open arms both by the government and the public. However, Poland's kindness towards Ukrainian refugees was an outlier: during the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, the Polish government and citizens adamantly opposed accepting refugees from Syria or other Middle Eastern countries. Their initial refusal meant they were woefully unprepared for the two million Ukrainians who chose to remain in the country both due to a lack of updated refugee law as well as institutional assistance programs. This paper juxtaposes the government and public response during the Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises, as well as analyzes how Poland's refusal to assist refugees in 2015 impacted their ability to do so in 2022.

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded its bordering country Ukraine in what was an escalation of the ongoing Russia–Ukraine War, which began in 2014. The full scale invasion resulted in the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, with approximately 6 million Ukrainians leaving the country, the majority being women and children. About 60% of these refugees, around 2 million people, have settled in the bordering country of Poland, and now make up 10% of Poland's overall population. While it is not unusual for any country to receive a large influx of refugees from a bordering nation in conflict, Poland placed itself in an incredibly strenuous position in regards to refugees. For the past decade, the Polish government has demonized refugees, with the country refusing to accept any during the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, and the current Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński stating that refugees "will not abide by Polish law" (Mazzini 2022). As a result, the country's refugee law has had little change over the past two decades, and the government never established any specific assistance or welfare programs for incoming refugee groups.

The Polish public also agreed with government rhetoric during the 2015 crisis, staunchly opposing any acceptance of refugees from Syria. When the Polish government initially accepted 7,000 refugees from Syria as part of a relocation plan proposed by the European Union, Polish citizens protested against the decision and what they viewed as an "Islamization of Europe" (Gander). Their opposition to refugees made their overwhelming support towards Ukrainian refugees all the more surprising. Suddenly, the majority of Polish citizens were engaging in some form of volunteer assistance, whether that be monetary donations or providing accommodations.

Similarly, Polish government rhetoric towards refugees was completely turned on its head following the Ukrainian refugee crisis, as the same officials who argued for border walls

now argued in favor of taking in as many refugees as possible. Within two weeks of the invasion, Poland passed an act to assist the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees entering the country on a daily basis. However, due to their own refusal to accept refugees prior to the current Ukrainian population, the Polish government was arguably one of the least prepared in Europe to take in such a large number of refugees in such a short period of time, as they lacked the extent of refugee policy and assistance programs that most EU nations put into place following the 2015 crisis; this then resulted in an overreliance on spontaneous volunteer action by Polish citizens to assist the mass influx of Ukrainian refugees.

BACKGROUND

Development of Refugee Law

A refugee is an individual who has fled their country of origin due to war, violence, conflict or persecution. They have a "well-founded fear of persecution" and cannot return home or are afraid to do so (1951 Convention, Article I, A(1)). They are protected by international law and are eligible to receive benefits from the country which they have entered. This separates them from an internally displaced person, who is someone that was forced to flee their home but never crossed an international border. The history of refugee law begins with the Russian Revolution in 1917, which resulted in approximately 2 million people fleeing Bolshevik rule and the establishment of a High Commissioner for Russian Refugees in the League of Nations in 1921 (Weis 1982, 28). However, due to the advent of the High Commissioner being linked to a specific internal war, refugee law at this time applied only to a few categories of refugees, such as Russians fleeing the Revolution and Armenians fleeing Ottoman violence. In 1933, the main such Convention was held in order to establish states' obligations towards refugees, including but not limited to welfare, education, and employment. However, while the 1933 Convention was a milestone in international refugee law, it was only ratified by nine states.[1]

Widespread refugee law as we know it today emerged following the worldwide destruction caused by World War II. The establishment of the United Nations came with it the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention). The convention more broadly defined a refugee as "any person who as a result of events occurring

[1] The nine State Parties to the 1933 Convention were Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, and the United Kingdom (Weis 1954, 197)

before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted…is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...or return to it" (1951 Convention, Article I, A(1). Once again, this Convention was in response to a specific war and its aftermath, in this case World War II, and therefore included a time stipulation that only defined "refugees" as those affected by events before the law's ratification. While the Convention stated that its provisions are to be applied without discrimination as to race, religion, or country of origin, it was initially limited to protecting specifically *European* refugees, with nations being given the option to separately declare that the provisions would apply outside of Europe. The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees removed the geographic and time stipulations from the original 1951 Convention, further broadening the scope of refugee status. Today, the Convention and Protocol has 146 and 147 signed parties respectively.

In 1999, the European Union specifically established their own refugee and asylum law in order to combat uneven distribution of refugees within the EU following the Yugoslav Wars (1991–2001), known as the Common European Asylum System. Through the CEAS, the EU continues to pass new legislation, including but not limited to, the Asylum Procedures Directive (provided minimum standards for asylum), the Reception Conditions Directive (established common standards for reception conditions), and the Dublin Regulation (set up systems to detect early problems in national asylum or reception systems). When Poland joined the EU in 2004, like all new members, it agreed to follow the established refugee guidelines.

One significant directive adopted during this time was the Temporary Protection Directive, which created a separate category from that of refugees, meant to expedite the application process in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons. Instead of the usual

refugee process, which required each applicant to be separately processed and have their case confirmed, temporary protection could be granted en masse to all displaced persons arriving from a specific country of origin. This was particularly beneficial for countries with weaker asylum systems, as the directive was created to combat the risk that any particular system would be "unable to process this influx without adverse effects for its efficient operation" (Council Directive 2001/55/EC Article 2 (a)). The directive was invoked for the first time in response to the February 2022 invasion, allowing all displaced persons coming from Ukraine to receive the status of temporary protection.

Ukrainian Relations with Poland and Russia

Ukraine's relationship with Poland and Russia, the nations that share the largest western and eastern borders with Ukraine respectively, can be explained by the fact that throughout history, the land that comprises modern Ukraine shifted between Polish and Russian rule. Even the name "Ukraine" comes from the Polish word "Ukrajina," meaning "at the border" or "borderland," implying its historical status as a territory or region within another nation, not its own state (Lagasse 2018). Russia and Ukraine's shared history begins with the Kieran Rus, a medieval state that lasted between the 10th and 13th century, which both countries view as their national heritage (the Kieran Rus also bordered and interacted with the Kingdom of Poland at this time).

Following the collapse of the Kievan Rus, and a brief period of Mongol rule, Ukraine fell under shared Polish and Lithuanian rule between the 14th and 16th century– with the exception of Crimea, which was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire in 1478 (Lagasse 2018). Ukrainians under Polish rule were subjected to serfdom and religious persecution, which resulted in a semi-

militarized group known as the Cossacks revolting against the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth in 1648; the violence and destruction that the revolt caused marked the beginning of a tense and bitter relationship between Ukraine and Poland. Ukraine was very quickly encroached by Russia, and by 1764, the majority of Ukraine was under Russian rule. For the next 150 years, the Russian Empire implemented policies of "Russification" in order to forcefully assimilate the Ukrainian peoples into the now Russian majority, such as suppressing the Ukrainian language by banning its usage in public and study, as well as converting members of the traditional Ruthenian Uniate Church (an Eastern Catholic theology) into Russian Orthodox.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 quickly gave way to Ukrainian attempts at independence in January of 1918. The Ukrainian War for Independence also resulted in a war against Poland, as Ukraine claimed that Polish land historically belonged to Ukraine, such as the city of Lwow (now the Ukrainian city of Lviv), which at the time had double the amount of Poles than Ukrainians. Poland and Ukraine would attempt to establish an alliance against invading Russian forces, but by 1922, the Soviet Union annexed Ukraine into their control. Polish and Ukrainian relations continued to deteriorate during and after the Second World War, due to the massacres of Poles in eastern Poland (now western Ukraine) carried out by Ukrainian nationalists. Whether this event was an act of genocide remains a point of contention between the two countries. After the war, Poland would lose much of its eastern territory to Ukraine and faced mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing by the Soviet Union.

Ukraine and Poland had little diplomatic interaction during the next few decades, but when Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Poland was one of the first countries to recognize their independence.

Poland and the EU

For most of the 20th century, Poland was predominantly a source country of refugees, not a destination country. This began to change in the 1990s, as Poland liberalized its economy and ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention in order to further align itself with Western Europe and the European Union. Relations between Poland and the EU began in 1989, when the European Commission and Poland signed a trade and economic cooperation agreement. The cooperation continued with the Europe Association Agreement in 1991, which "included the progressive establishment of a free trade area over ten years and a regular political dialogue at the highest levels of government" ("Poland"). Poland ascended to EU member status in 2004, after over a decade application process, which included their ratification of the Geneva Convention in 1992 and a revised Act on Aliens in 1997. The act introduced "new and…unknown institutions in the Polish legal system, such as the safe country of origin, safe third state, residence visa with a right to employment…[etc.]" and featured subsequent revisions in 2003 with the Act on Granting Protection to Aliens Within the Territory of Poland (Zdanowicz, 444). However, despite the new policies and institutions, Poland would continue to accept a minimal amount of refugees into the country.

According to the European Parliament, the first group of refugees entered Poland in 1989, and even then the number was less than a thousand asylum seekers. They also state that during the 1990s, "[M]any asylum seekers…do not necessarily wish to apply for asylum in Poland. Often they lodge for refugee status only when they are confronted with the possibility of deportation; many of them do not pursue the procedure" ("Migration and Asylum in Central and Eastern Europe: Poland," n.d.) As the yearly number of refugees would remain at an average below 1000 for the next decade, Poland did not have any major incentive to establish

overarching refugee assistance programs or policies. From 2004 to 2013 (correlating with Poland's ascension to EU status in 2004), Poland had an increase of refugees each year, plateauing around 1500 in the 2010s. Simultaneously, Poland utilized the EU's free movement provisions, with an estimated 1.3 to 2 million Poles residing in other member states. Between 2014 and 2016, there was a decrease in refugees granted asylum in Poland, corresponding to the refugee crisis that began in 2015 and the public discourse that the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość party led their electoral campaign with.

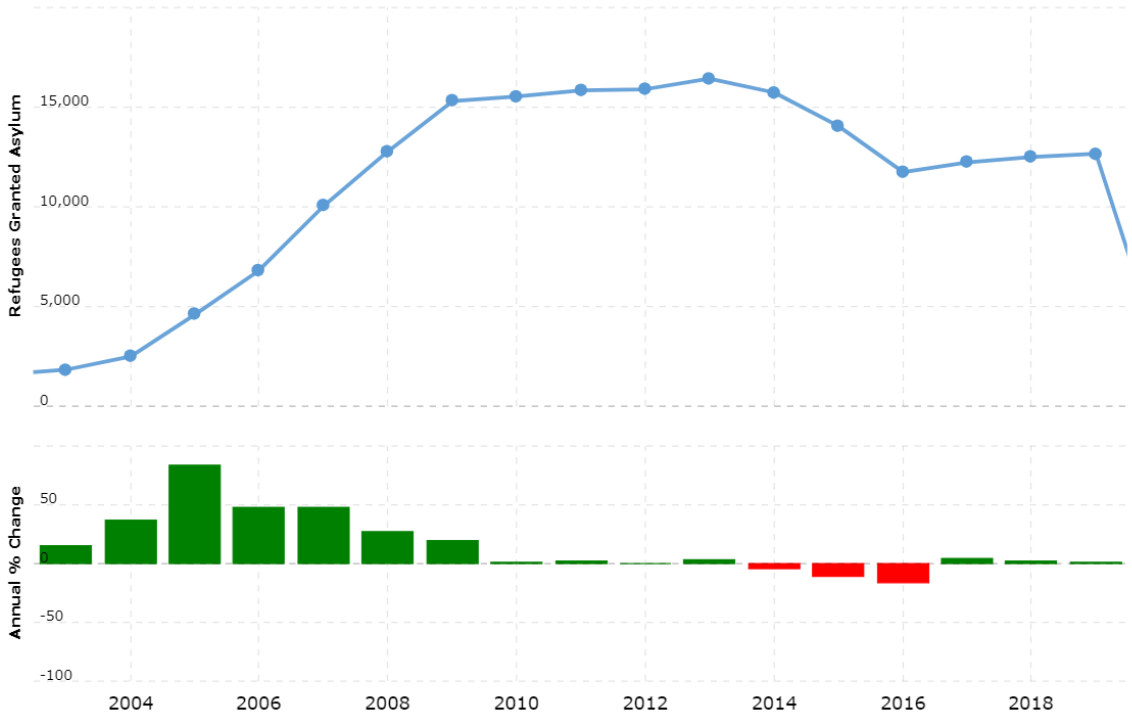


Figure 1: Chart showing the number of refugees granted asylum in Poland from 2004–2019 (2020 is an outlier due to COVID pandemic) as well as the annual percentage of change

Poland's refusal to accept refugees caused tensions between Poland and other member states during the 2015 Syrian Refugee Crisis. In order to alleviate pressure from Greece and Italy – the two main countries of entry for Syrian refugees – the EU passed an emergency relocation

proposal to move 160,000 refugees entering Greece and Italy to other EU member states. While the center-right liberal Civic Platform in Poland initially agreed to this proposal, they would lose power in the 2015 election. The newly elected Prawo i Sprawiedliwość party (Law and Justice, often abbreviated to PiS), retracted the agreement and refused to participate in the relocation process, greatly angering the two affected countries in the process (Cienski 2017). PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski cited security reasons as the logic behind the decision, stating that "after recent events connected with acts of terror, [Poland] will not accept refugees because there is no mechanism that would ensure safety" (Cienski 2017). They pushed back further on potential EU policy which suggested that countries that refused to accept a quota of refugees should pay €250,000 (£200,000) for each asylum-seeker they rejected, with the money going towards Greece and Italy's humanitarian efforts. In Poland's case, this would amount to €1.6bn (£1.25bn) for the 6500 refugees they refused to accept. Kaczynski stated that "such a decision would abolish the sovereignty of EU member states…we have to oppose that, because we are and will be in charge in our own country" (Cienski 2017). The party's win signaled a rightward shift in Polish politics, as the country became increasingly Eurosceptic and aligned itself with fellow central European countries: Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Refugee law has been on the forefront of international policy ever since the ratification of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Many scholars have written on why certain countries are more inclined to accept refugees than others, as well as why these same countries differ in their responses towards separate groups. Some of these reasons include the demographics of certain groups– ethnicity, gender, religion – as well as the historical relationships between the host countries and countries of origin.

Governments' Rejection of Refugees

Countries that are against admitting refugees often engage in xenophobic language in order to distinguish the group from the proposed host country. For example, the process of "othering" is used to cast groups out from the norms of a specific social social group and create an "us versus them" dynamic between the two groups. In the context of refugees and overall migration, scholars such as Nurcan Akbulut writing alongside Oliver Razum, as well as Caress Schenk, state how migrants, in particular refugees, are especially vulnerable to the process of othering, as they seemingly fall nearly into a nationalistic us-versus-them framework. (Schenk 2022) Furthermore, they argue that these groups are often publicly demonized, whether as a threat to public health or through a distorted perception as to their presence in a specific host country (Akbulut and Razum 2022).

Another concept which coincides with othering is that of securitization theory: the idea that national security policy is often carefully manufactured by politicians and decision-makers. In this theory, issues that are not necessarily threatening in themselves are transformed into issues of "security" by politicians and therefore must be urgently dealt with. The theory was

developed in the 1990s by the Copenhagen school of Barry Buzan, Ole Wœver, and Jaap de Wilde in their book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. The book examined the characteristics and dynamics of security in five distinct sectors: military, political, economic, environmental, and societal as well as a focus on specific regions in an immediate post-Cold War context. They term the idea of an "existential threat" and stipulate that each of these sectors have their own such threats. The existential threat to the societal sector relates to the nature of identity, and thus they assert the potential for migrant groups to be securitized due to a perceived existential threat to identity (Buzan 1997, 23). In this way, refugee groups would first be othered in order to be deemed a threat to a country's identity or national security.

The Copenhagen school's securitization theory has been used by many scholars in order to explain countries' refusal to accept refugee groups (Max O. Stephenson Jr. and Yannis A. Stivachtis, Ian Paterson and Gareth Mulvey, Md. Sohel Rana and Ali Riaz). While each of these scholars focus their research on different regions of the world, they all employ the securitization theory to argue the extent of its effectiveness in othering refugee groups as well as highlight what a successful securitization of refugees causes in regards to policy. Stephenson and Stivachtis juxtaposed the securitization of Syrian refugees with that of their integration into Eastern Mediterranean countries in order to discuss the actions these host countries should undertake for successful integration (Stephenson and Stivachtis 2023). Meanwhile, Ian Paterson and Gareth Mulvey challenged securitization by contrasting Scotland with the larger United Kingdom: the former of which failed to securitize refugees while the latter enacted such policies (Paterson and Mulvey 2023). Finally, Md. Sohel Rana and Ali Riaz used the theory to present a historical timeline of securitization regarding Rohingya refugees within Bangladesh (Rana and Riaz 2023).

Other scholars, such as Karen Jacobsen cite more concrete examples of local absorption capacity and relations with the country of origin. Based on previous scholars, Jacobsen argues that negative refugee policy often coincides with periods of economic decline, as a better economy means that countries will be better suited to withstand resource demands. She also argues that local people are "then less likely to be threatened when refugees bring resources such as agricultural skills, labor, and capital" (Jacobsen 1996, 667). However, it is important to note that her study, which was published in 1996, focuses on less developed host countries in Africa, Asia, and Central America as that was where the bulk of refugee movement had occurred since 1960 (Jacobsen 1996, 656). As such, the issues surrounding government acceptance of refugees differ from highly developed countries who have greater means to accommodate an influx of refugees.

Public Acceptance of Refugees

Economic security and employment can impact a population's acceptance of refugees. While Jacobsen implied that the correlation was between a fear of losing one's employment, other scholars had opposite findings (Jacobsen 1996, 667). For example, Kirk Bansak, writing alongside Jens Hainmueller and Dominik Hangartner, found that respondents throughout Europe favored asylum seekers with higher employability; those who worked high-skill occupations in their country of origin were more likely to be accepted compared to those who had been unemployed (Bansak et al, 219). The economic conditions of the host country therefore affect whether the public feels threatened by refugee employment or wishes for them to be integrated into the labor market.

Identity and demographics also play a key role in the acceptance of refugees amongst a host country. Jacobsen cites what previous scholars refer to as the "Haitian-Cuban syndrome" to explain why the latter population was accepted as refugees to the United States in the 1980s while the former was not: Cuban asylum seekers were leaving an unfriendly communist country, while Haitian asylum seekers were not. As such, the US was willing to classify Cubans as refugees even though they could not prove individual persecution while the Haitians, who were in a similar situation but not communist, were not classified as refugees (Jacobsen, 664-665). A similar bias was cited by Bansak et al. as well as Birgit Glorius's study on European public attitudes towards immigrants and refugees following the 2015 refugee crisis. While those fleeing due to ethnic or religious persecution were favored more by respondents, there was still a clear bias towards those of the same or similar ethnic and religious background (Glorius 2018, 10).

Refugees in Poland

The concepts of othering and securitization can be applied to Poland in order to juxtapose their response to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 and the Ukrainian one in 2022. The Polish government othered Syrian refugees and depicted them as security threats whereas Ukrainian refugees were immediately and overwhelmingly accepted into the country. Poland's differing reactions to these two crises underscores the country's lack of development of refugee law and varying perceptions of different identities.

METHOD

This paper analyzes how the Polish government and public responded to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 and the Ukrainian refugee crisis in 2022, as well as how the difference in response caused a lack of national refugee policy in Poland prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and over-reliance on local authorities to assist Ukrainian refugees. Poland serves as a unique case for multiple reasons. Firstly, as the country that shares the largest western border with Ukraine, Poland has seen the majority of Ukrainian refugees pass through their borders. Secondly, Poland's right-wing government, the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), has been historically hostile to refugees and the country refused to take part in the refugee relocation process in 2015. As a result of this hostility, Poland refused to implement any nation refugee infrastructure or law despite what was required of them to comply with the European Union. Therefore, Poland was unprepared for the sheer number of Ukrainians who required government assistance, instead relying on grassroot volunteer efforts to house and feed refugee groups. Thus, Poland illuminates how a lack of institutional refugee systems and policy can negatively impact government assistance for refugees. Finally, the paper analyzes why a country and government so hostile to refugees in the past has suddenly taken in a number equal to 10% of their total population and the immediate effects of such a shift.

This paper uses qualitative methods to examine a historic shift in government and public response towards the Ukrainian refugee crisis versus previous ones, as well as how the lack of national refugee policy has impacted the effectiveness of refugee assistance. To this end, I conducted close readings of speeches, interview transcripts, and press releases from PiS officials

following the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis and the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis.[2] I then contrasted the difference in rhetoric regarding Syria and Ukraine. Furthermore, I compiled 10 polls conducted in Poland between 2014 and 2022, regarding civilian opinions towards refugees, Ukraine, and the government's position on refugees in order to demonstrate a historical shift in public opinion. Finally, I analyzed Poland's enactment of the Act on Assisting Citizens of Ukraine immediately following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in relation to pre-existing international refugee law, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, the EU's Temporary Protection Act, and the Dublin Regulation.

[2] Due to my lack of knowledge in the Polish language, these were all translated sources

MAIN CASE/ANALYSIS

Poland's Government Rhetoric Towards Refugees in 2015

The refugee issue came to the forefront of Polish discourse in the 2015 parliamentary election, which resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS or Law and Justice Party).[3] The PiS party is a right-wing national conservative and Christian democratic party which emphasizes the "Polish family" and "rejects all actions aimed at cultural unification [and] political correctness" (PiS 2014). During the 2015 electoral campaign, party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski used various rhetorical devices in order to dehumanize and "other" refugees, delegitimize them, and frame them as threats to health, security, and religion. One consistent method of othering was Kaczynski's usage of the word "migrant" instead of "refugee" in speeches and interviews regarding the Syrian refugee crisis. By referring to refugee populations as "migrants," and even more specifically "*economic* migrants," Kaczynski and other PiS politicians delegitimized the population's status as having a "well-founded fear of persecution" and lessened sympathy towards their plight. Furthermore, their renaming lessened Poland's legal obligations under the 1951 Convention, as they are not required to accept any immigrants coming to the country for economic betterment.

PiS also used fears of disease and threats to bodily health to shift public discourse against refugees. At a campaign rally, Kaczynski stated that "migrants have already brought diseases like cholera and dysentery to Europe, as well as all sorts of parasites and protozoa which…while not dangerous in the organisms of these people, could be dangerous here" (Cienski 2015)

[3] This was also the first time in democratic Polish history that the victor was able to create a government without the need of a coalition, highlighting the extent of the party's support in Poland.

Cholera and dysentery specifically had not had cited outbreaks in over two decades at that point, so his reference to their presence in refugee groups not only suggests threat to Polish health, but also that the groups carrying them come from primitive or undeveloped societies. He also emphasized their non-European background by stating the parasites may not be dangerous in "these people" but "could be dangerous *here* [Europe]." The implication here is that these refugees have supposedly built up an immunity to the diseases mentioned where Poland has not, and therefore their foreign presence would be dangerous to Polish health.

Another concern that PiS leaders brought up in their refusal to take refugees was that of national security and identity. Such rhetoric appeared as early as September 2015, when Kacyznski stated that "first the number of foreigners increases rapidly, then they…declare that they will not obey our laws, our customs. And later…they impose their sensitivity and their requirements in a public space…in a very aggressive and violent way" ("Wypowiedzi Na Posiedzeniach Sejmu - Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej" 2015). Kacyznski alienates the group by referring to them as "foreigners" with differing laws and customs than that of Polish society. Then, he continues to emphasize their supposed violence and aggression, to instill fear in the ethnically and religiously homogeneous Polish population. When members of the opposition call out that his statements are not true, he responds by telling them to "look around Europe…look at Sweden…[at] Italy…France…Germany," referencing countries who had taken large amounts of refugees from Syria. His comments suggest that these countries have already had their identity and customs destroyed by refugee populations, and therefore Poland must stop a similar event occurring in their own country.

Following the November 2015 Paris attacks,[4] PiS began to specifically reference "terrorism" in their concerns of bringing in refugees. When the EU decided to relocate 120,000 refugees among various member states,[5] Poland refused to comply with the policy, with Kacyznski stating in a Q&A interview that "After recent events connected with acts of terror, [Poland] will not accept refugees because there is no mechanism that would ensure security" (Broomfield 2016). The proposal also included a clause stating that any non-participatory Member States (with a justifiable and objective reason for this non-participation) would have to make a financial contribution to the EU budget equal to 0.002% of its GDP. Poland refused to comply with this clause as well. Their decision not only rendered an entire population as likely terrorists, but also angered fellow EU Member States, who saw the decision as lacking solidarity and hypocritical, considering the number of Polish nationals living abroad in various other EU countries.[6]

Islamophobia was also a major factor in the Polish government's rhetoric regarding the refusal to accept refugees during the 2015 crisis, as the country is overwhelmingly a homogenous, Catholic nation, and therefore viewed the religious minority, which made up 0.1% of Poland's population at the time (Dudzińska and Kotnarowski 2019), as a threat to their Polish culture and family. Even prior to PiS's victory and Poland's subsequent rightward political shift, the previous Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz also made it clear that Poland would voluntarily assist

[4] On the evening of November 13, 2015, a coordinated group of terrorists launched a series of bombings and shootings in popular night spots, businesses, and restaurants (as well as a failed attempt at the Stade de France football stadium). The attackers killed 130 people and left an additional 416 people injured. The following day, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility for the attacks, stating that they were in retaliation for France's airstrikes on Islamic State targets in Syria and Iraq.
[5] This Decision came from a series of implementation packages titled the *European Agenda on Migration*
[6] It is also worth noting that Poland originally accepted the relocation plan, and then chose to breach it following PiS's electoral victory.

only Christian refugees fleeing aggression from the newly Islamic State of Syria.[7] After announcing that Poland would accept 60 Christian Syrian families as refugees, she stated that "Christians who are persecuted in such a barbaric fashion [in Syria] deserve to be helped by a Christian country such as Poland" (Winterbauer 2015). The Polish Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro, in defending Poland's decision to deny entry of Muslim Syrian refugees, stated that "[W]e [Poland] defended our sovereignty against the foreign culture of Islam that they wanted to impose on us" (Tilles 2020). In 2020, the European Commission reported that 85% of the Polish population is affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, and hence the government's usage of religious rhetoric is a clear attempt to instill fear in the masses.

The Government and Ukraine

The Polish government's rhetoric and attitude regarding refugees changed drastically following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As the largest EU member state bordering Ukraine, Poland quickly became both a transit and destination country for Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russian aggression. Poland and Ukraine have similarities– cultural, geographic, and historical– which Poland and Syria do not, and hence many of the government's previous securitization and othering of Syrian refugees could not be done to Ukrainians. For example, mentions of terrorism and security were linked to Islamic extremism, but as Ukraine is a majority Orthodox Christian nation, these claims would not apply. Instead, PiS argued that accepting Ukrainian refugees was in fact beneficial towards Polish national security. In a letter to the Gazeta Polska (a right-wing Polish newspaper), Kacyznski stated that:

[7] In February 2015, the Islamic State carried out the mass abduction of over 200 Christians in northeastern Syria, the last of which would not be released until a year later and for millions in ransom money. The State also targeted churches and other religious sites in bombings. (Tharoor)

> At stake in this fight is not only the independence of Ukraine, but also the independence and security of our homeland and the current world order. It is therefore in the interest of every Pole to support Ukraine, and to take action in the interest of its cause, and also of **our victory** (First News 2022. Emphasis added).

Similarly to his previous comments regarding Syrian refugees, Kacyznski places his emphasis on "security." However, where in 2015 he claimed the security threat to be Syria, the refugee country of origin, in 2022, Poland's security threat is Russia, the country creating refugees. He argues that Ukraine is currently acting as a buffer state between hypothetical Russian aggression against Poland, and therefore Ukraine's victory is crucial to Polish survival, hence his usage of the phrase "our victory" as opposed to simply Ukraine's victory.

This emphasis on a common victory was further highlighted by President Andrzej Duda in a speech given on the anniversary of Russia and Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland, where he likens the 1939 invasion to Russia's current invasion of Ukraine. He spoke that "history is repeating itself" in Ukraine, and that Russia is "returning to its imperialistic desires to dominate other nations" (Tilles 2022). He claims that Poland's history is the reason for their assistance of Ukraine, stating that "[W]e [Poles] know that from 80 years ago and we're seeing it again…that is why we are doing everything to help the defense of our Ukrainian neighbors" (Tilles 2022). The word "neighbor," while factually correct as the countries border each other, also serves a rhetorical purpose as it contrasts from the previously mentioned othering of Syrian refugees. Ukrainians are not foreigners but neighbors, and therefore part of the same community as Poland.

Another connection between 2015 and 2022 responses to refugees is the issue of national health. As previously mentioned, in 2015 Jaroslaw Kaczynski created the imaginary threat of dangerous diseases and parasites entering refugees through refugee populations from Syria. In

2022, international health organizations such as the World Health Organization held legitimate fears of a surge in COVID-19 cases due to Ukraine having a lower vaccination rate than Poland. In February 2022, only 35% of the Ukrainian population was fully vaccinated against COVID, contrasting with just over half of the population in Poland (a number that was already lower than the European Union average of 70%) (see Fig. 2). Despite this, border police in the town of Medyka, the main border crossing between Poland and Ukraine, stated that "COVID is obviously…not a priority…not for us, and not for the refugees that are arriving" (Daunt 2022). In fact, the Polish government abolished the quarantine requirement for refugees, and allowed Ukrainian refugees to be exempt from testing for COVID before crossing the border. Similarly, proof of vaccination was also not mandatory (Malchrzak 2022). This series of decisions show a clear disparity in treatment where an imaginary health risk is created to deny refugees entry whereas a legitimate health risk is ignored to allow them expedited entry.

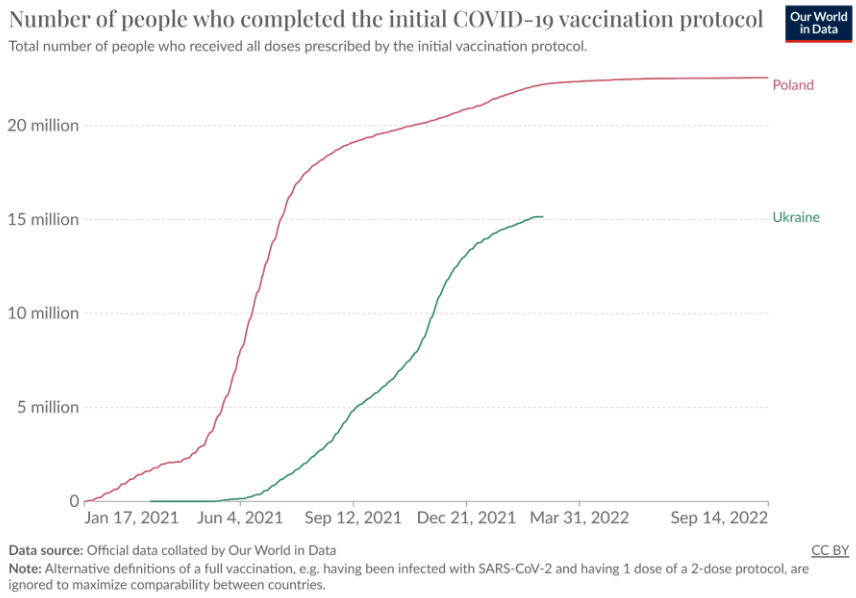


Figure 2 : Mathieu, E., Ritchie, H., Ortiz-Ospina, E. et al. A global database of COVID-19 vaccinations. Nat Hum Behav (2021) (Data in Ukraine cuts off at February 27, 2022 due to the Russian invasion)

The difference in response is also not due to any evolution in refugee policy over the seven years between the Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises, as seen by how the government treated refugees coming from the Belarussian border around the same time as those coming from Ukraine. The Polish-Belarus border crisis began in May 2021, when Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko retaliated against proposed EU sanctions by telling his bordering EU countries that "we stopped drugs and migrants. Now you will eat them and catch them yourselves" (Evans 2021). The comment caused Poland to immediately close their border with Belarus and both countries stationed security forces at their respective ends, causing thousands of refugees mainly from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to be stranded in the Białowieża Forest. In a speech given in the Sejm (Poland's lower house of parliament and the highest governing body) by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, he highlights the distinction of terms used to describe various fleeing populations:

> Belarus is bringing in planes, special flights from several places in the Middle East. By doing so, it has lured migrants. These people are migrants, they are not refugees. Some people confuse the two terms. Migrants have been brought here to become human shields and destabilize the situation in the Republic of Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic States and the entire European Union. (Morawiecki 2021, 2)

Similar to Kaczynski's quotes from 2015, Morawiecki purposefully distinguishes between "refugees" and "migrants" in order to lessen possible sympathy towards the ill-treatment of the group both by Belarussian and Polish border officers.

The idea of "destabilization" is also brought up multiple times in the speech, at one point even connecting back to 2015. He states that "this is the exact same operation that was carried out from a different direction in the years 2015 and 2016" and that "this time, they [migrants]

failed [to destabilize Poland and the European Union" (Morawiecki 2021, 2, 6). His use of the word "operation" brings up strong connotations implying that no refugee in 2015 or 2021 was legitimate, and that instead they were either knowingly attempting to destabilize Poland or unknowingly being used by state actors for that purpose. This is notable because unlike in 2015– where Poland was heavily criticized for their actions at the border– in 2021 the EU defended Poland. By linking the two crises together, Poland argues that their responses to both were justifiable when in reality, the EU only viewed the latter as so.

Furthermore, the Polish government released a statement on their website that directly addressed those at the Polish-Belarusian border as illegal border crossers, further delegitimizing their claims for asylum. The press release details various methods of illegal border crossing, such as the attempt to use forged documents or presenting false information about the country of origin and attempts to obtain the refugee status based on false grounds" (Polish Authorities 2021). The latter method is especially relevant in its phrasing as it reflects the PiS rhetoric which doubted the legitimacy of claims for refugee status. While the statement does not directly refer to any particular group of people, it was available in English and Arabic– making it clear that the audience was for those arriving from the Middle East.

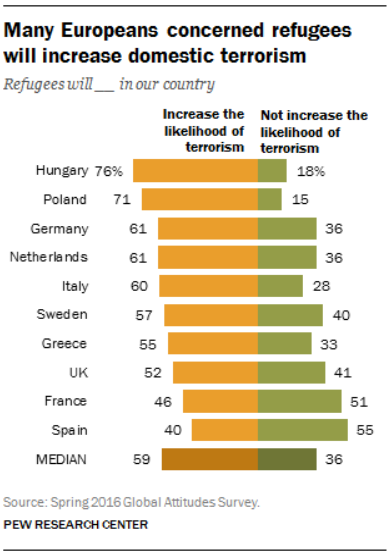
Polish Public Responses to Refugees

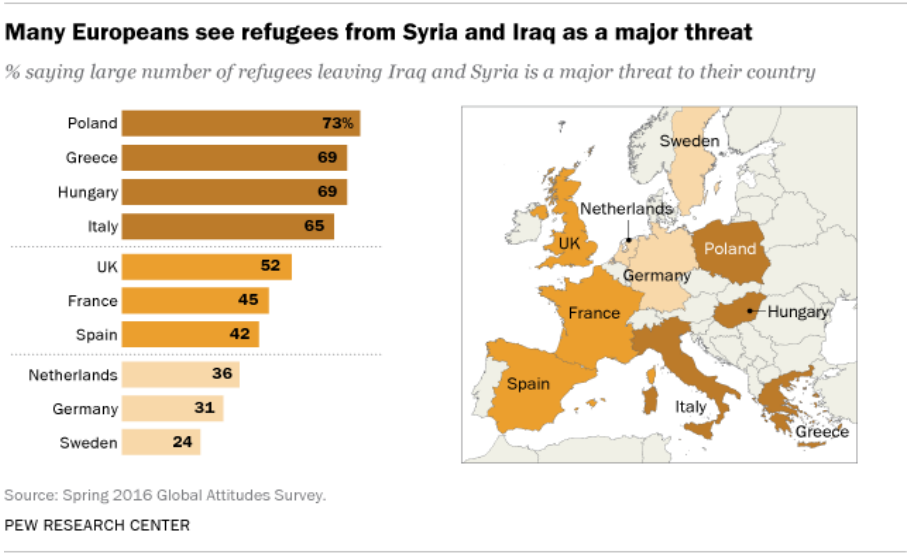
Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Polish public held overall positive opinions towards refugees and migration, though this would take a sharp downturn in late 2015, following the Syrian refugee crisis. In a series of polls titled "European opinions of the refugee crisis" conducted by the Pew Research Center in spring 2016, Poland consistently held the most negative views relative to other European countries. A substantial majority of Poles (71%)

believed that refugees would increase domestic terrorism and saw refugees from Syria and Iraq as a major threat (73%). Polish public opinion had begun to reflect the rhetoric used by PiS officials regarding national security and terrorism. These views were in contrast to its fellow EU member states, particularly those in Western Europe. The countries with the lowest percentages (i.e. the friendliest towards refugee populations) were Spain and Sweden respectively, with just under half of Spain believing refugees would increase domestic terrorism (40%) and a quarter in Sweden viewing refugees from Syria and Iraq as a threat (24%). The disparity in numbers highlights Poland's extreme views when compared to Spain and Sweden, the latter of which took more refugees per capita than any other European country.

Poland's negative view towards refugees was also related to a general negative view towards Islam. 81% of those who perceived refugees as a threat also had a negative view towards Muslims. Polls conducted by the Polish Public Opinion Research Center around the same time found similar results, as Polish respondents held far more positive views towards Ukrainian refugees coming from Crimea and Donbas than Middle Eastern or African refugees. These negative views manifested in a large-scale protest in September 2015 against the EU relocation plan. At this protest, around ten thousand right-wing demonstrators gathered in Warsaw, held placards calling to "Stop the Islamization of Europe," and chanted slogans such as "Today refugees, tomorrow terrorists" (Gander 2015). The publication of Islamaphobic rhetoric regarding national security also resulted in a general misrepresentation of the amount of Muslims in Poland at the time: most Poles believed the 0.1% population actually consisted of around 7% of Poland's total population (Dudzińska and Kotnarowski 2019). In 2016, Poland's population was around 38 million, meaning that most Poles believed the 38,000 Muslims in Poland equated to 2.66 million.

Many of the public's opinions related to the religious identity of Syrian refugees and their supposed intrinsic security threat, harkening back to Poland's position as a deeply Catholic nation as well as government rhetoric on the topic. The church holds significant power in Polish society, with 87% of the population identifying as Catholic in the 2011 census (PEW 2011). While Pope Francis had urged Catholics to open their homes to refugees from the Middle East, many Polish clerics opposed this, saying that to do so would be at risk of damaging Poland's Christian character. One Polish priest went as far as wishing Pope Francis an early death due to his proposal, stating that "I pray for the Pope in his wisdom to open his heart to the Holy Spirit, but if he does not, I pray for his quick departure to his Father's house." (Day 2018) though this comment was criticized by even those that agreed with the government's anti-refugee policies. Nevertheless, refugee policy caused a break in the Polish church from the international Catholic community, prioritizing their own political ideals over the wishes of the Pope.





Figures 3 and 4: Poushter, Jacob

Pew Research Center (2016) "European opinions of the refugee crisis in 5 charts"

Poland and Ukraine

Polish sentiments towards refugees remained consistently negative over the next few years, but the war in Ukraine would change this entirely. In the few days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Polish individuals and families mobilized on a national scale, providing immediate assistance to the Ukrainian refugee population. Most initial refugee assistance was indeed provided by individual volunteer efforts as opposed to the government or non-government organizations. Families provided material supplies such as food or clothing, transportation into major cities, and even shelter in their own houses and apartments. Similarly, owners of guesthouses and hotels made their rooms available to refugees (Domaradzki 2022). In return, the government provided monetary assistance in the form of 1200 zloty (around 250 EUR) to individuals and companies providing accommodation and food to refugees (European Commission 2022). The overwhelmingly positive response and large amounts of spontaneous volunteers shocked the international community, and raised questions about what had changed between 2022 and 2015.

The first clear factor in the difference in public attitudes towards refugees arriving from the Middle East versus from Ukraine is that of identity. Since Ukrainian refugees were white and Christian as opposed to Syrian refugees being Arab and Muslim, Polish citizens did not feel threatened by the former group's presence in Polish society. As previously mentioned, approximately 87% of the Polish population identified themselves as Catholic in 2011, and more notably, 97% of the population is ethnically Polish (PEW 2011). This makes Poland one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in the world, and thus not historically familiar with ethnic or racial diversity. It is for this reason that Polish citizens misrepresented the amount of Muslims residing in Poland: even such a small population is immediately noticeable to an

overwhelmingly white majority. Ukrainians, due to their similar racial and religious identity, would not be as immediately noticeable.

The second factor is that Ukrainians and Poles have had pre-existing social and economic relationships due to their proximity to one another and shared history as communist states. In 2008, Poland created the Karta Polaka (or Pole's Card), a document which confirmed belonging to Poland to those who could not obtain dual citizenship in their own countries and Poland, and did not have previous Polish citizenship. Those who could prove a previous connection to Poland, with which in Ukraine there are many due to much of Western Ukraine previously being Eastern Poland, were allowed to work and do business on equal terms as Polish citizens (Pole's Card 2022). Around 50,000 Ukrainians received this card, with an additional 1.5 million Ukrainians having Polish work permits. As such, their increased presence due to the refugee crisis was not as noticeable to the Polish population as there was already a significant Ukrainian minority working and residing in Poland.

A confusing aspect regarding individual Poles' acceptance of Ukrainian refugees is that while the two countries have previous relationships, these have not always been positive. Poland and Ukraine have had a tense relationship due to many historical events that have been viewed differently between the two countries, such as the massacres that took place in eastern Poland during World War II and ethnic cleansing following the war's conclusion. This relationship has also reflected itself in how the Polish public views Ukrainians. Just prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS 2022) conducted a survey on Polish citizens' attitudes towards other nationalities, and found that while their attitude towards Ukrainians was sympathetic, this was by no means the majority. Instead, what is relevant to note for explaining Polish attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees is the -0.21 value towards Russians,

showing that the majority of Poles are either indifferent or apathetic towards Russians due to their historically antagonistic relationship. Therefore, Poles were more inclined to assist Ukrainians as they viewed them as a fellow victim of Russian aggression. Scholars such as Hanna A. Ruszcyzyk go even further with this idea, arguing that Poland's historical relationship with Russia has caused an "intergenerational trauma" response that compels the average Polish citizen to assist Ukrainians however possible (Ruszczyk 2022). Much of this response also coincided with Kaczynski's claim that Russia would not stop at Ukraine, bringing up memories of Russia's invasion of Poland in 1939.

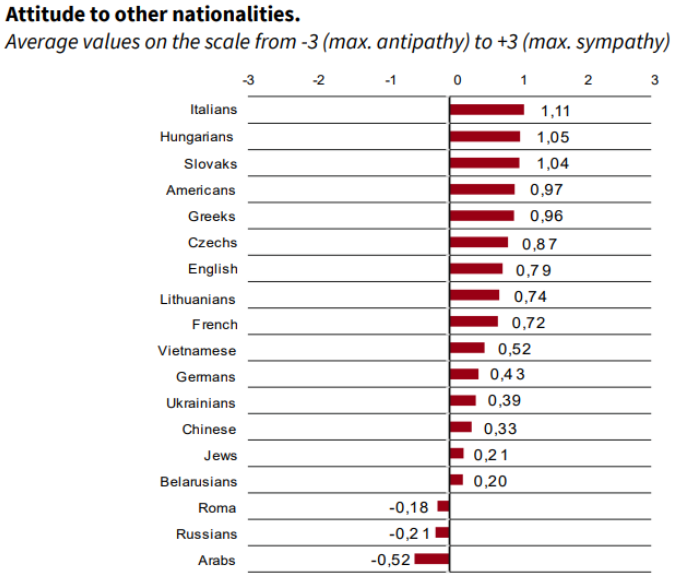


Figure 5: Public Opinion Research Center (2022). Attitude to Other Nationalities, CBOS.

In the coming months of the refugee crisis, public opinion regarding Ukrainian refugees began to steadily decline. As early as two months after the crisis began, CBOS found that support for Ukrainian refugees dropped 10%, and by the following year, one-fifth of the Polish population they surveyed were opposed to accepting Ukrainian refugees into Poland (CBOS

2023). CBOS cites the "uncertain economic situation" in Poland at the time as explanation for these changes, but more so than that one can look at the decline in volunteer action and "refugee fatigue," as Polish citizens carried the weight of the refugee response efforts. In July 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe Gonzales Morales, highlighted the extent of volunteer assistance after an official visit to Poland: "Over 2 million refugees currently stay in Poland and most of them are hosted as guests in private homes by Polish people…this explains why I do not see refugee camps in Poland" (OHCHR 2022). However, at the same time that Morales made his visit, Poland had withdrawn the previously granted payments that were made to Polish households hosting Ukrainian refugees (Notes from Poland 2022). Polish citizens were already largely responsible for refugees, and the increasing lack of government assistance as time went on only further burdened the civilian population, causing a decline in support and public opinion.

Polish Law

Due to their own refusal to accept refugees prior to the current Ukrainian population, the Polish government was arguably one of the least prepared in Europe to take in such a large number of refugees in such a short period of time, as they lacked the institutional systems that most EU nations put into place following the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015. As previously mentioned, Poland only ratified the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol in 1992, with minimal additions to national refugee law since then. Poland passed the Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection to Aliens Within the Territory of Poland, which encompassed the categories of refugee status, asylum, permit for tolerated stay, and temporary protection under a single act.

The most significant development in Polish law regarding groups attempting to gain asylum in Poland prior to Ukraine was one that did not assist refugee groups, but further prevented them from entering the country. In September 2021, Poland's parliament amended the 2003 Act in response to the Belarus border crisis, adding an article that permitted the Head of the Office of Foreigners to:

> disregard the application for asylum filed by a person intercepted crossing irregularly, unless the foreigner i) arrived directly from a territory in which the their life or liberty was under threat of persecution, ii) presented credible causes for the illegal entry in the territory of the Republic of Poland and iii) filed an application for granting international protection immediately upon crossing the border. (UNHCR 2021)

The phrase "arrived directly from a territory…" is mimicking a similar phrasing in Article 31(1) of the 1951 Convention which prohibits states from imposing penalties on refugees who illegally crossed a border "coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened" (1951 Convention). Poland attempted to bypass the prohibition of imposing penalties by arguing that Middle Eastern refugees coming from Belarus were not coming "directly" from their countries of origin and therefore were not protected by this law. However, this literal interpretation of "directly" in a geographical sense incorrectly assumes that refugees are required to apply for their status in the country bordering that which they are fleeing; the UNHCR criticized this interpretation and stated that the word "directly" should be interpreted broadly (UNHCR 2021). The effects of this law in practice were that Poland did not need to process the applications of any Middle Eastern refugees crossing through Belarus, instead arguing that as they were on Belarusian land, they should file for asylum there.

The Ukrainian refugee crisis caused a surge of new law in Poland, much of which was hyper specific towards Ukraine as a result. The main piece of law Poland passed was the "Act on

Assistance for Ukrainian Citizens" on March 12, 2022, which in fact was not a piece of refugee law at all. This act stated that any Ukrainian who left the country "as a result of Russian aggression, came directly to Poland and then declared their intention to stay in Poland, [would] have the right to legally stay in Poland for 18 months" (Lesinska 2022). Those who wished to obtain residential status as well as the advantages associated with it were required to apply for a PESEL number, the Polish national identification number. Acquiring a PESEL number then allowed refugees to open a Polish bank account, and subsequently access to the labor market. This law also provided Ukrainians with the benefits of full access to the labor market with no work permit required and access to the health care system. However, the law did not classify these Ukrainians as "refugees" but instead granted them "temporary protection." This difference becomes incredibly relevant when discussing the drawbacks of the assistance act, as it meant that the act did not need to comply with the 1951 Convention's articles on universality.

The main issue with the March 12 Act is that since it was a special act created directly in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, all of its benefits apply only to those coming to Poland in the context of the Russia–Ukraine war, and even more specifically, only Ukrainian citizens. Those without Ukrainian citizenship who were residing in Ukraine at the time, such as other refugee groups and international students, were excluded from the expedited refugee process granted by the March 12 Act. Instead, these individuals – who were covered by the EU Temporary Protection Directive – were required to apply for temporary protection pursuant to the 13 June 2003 Act on Granting Protection to Aliens (Law of 12 March, II). These separate pathways were due to an inconsistency in language between the EU's and Poland's temporary protection laws: where the EU defined the group as "displaced persons fleeing Ukraine" Poland specified "Ukrainian citizens fleeing Ukraine."

The unequal treatment also extended to smaller utilities offered by the Act, such as one-off cash allowances and free transportation on the Polish State Railways, the latter of which was provided with proper identification of Ukrainian citizenship. Journalists in Mlyny reported third country nationals sleeping in train stations as they lacked the funds to purchase tickets or the ability to use public transportation without charge ("First Person" 2022). Had this been classified as a refugee law and not temporary protection, these unequal conditions would have been in direct violation of Article 3 of the 1951 Convention, which reads: "The Contracting States shall apply the provisions of this Convention to refugees without discrimination as to race, religion, or country of origin" (Convention, 17). Instead, the Act is reminiscent of earlier pieces of international refugee law, which were enacted following specific wars or disasters and therefore only applied to those groups. To this end, Professor Katarzyna Andrejuk wrote that the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be seen as a "focusing event" alongside which Polish refugee law developed:

> The influx of refugees led to the creation of new legal regulations, but these did not deal with the rights of refugees in general, but only with the group of migrants from Ukraine, for whom a separate legal category was created. (Andrejuk 2023, 1)

She explains that while refugee policy in Poland rapidly developed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these laws remained within a consistent paradigm of Polish responses towards refugees: the March 12 Act only applied to Ukrainian refugees (who already had public acceptance in 2014 during the beginning of the war) and it did not change nor overturn existing laws such as the June 2003 Act.

Overall Impact on Poland

While the Polish government responded quickly to the crisis with the March 12 Act, the reactionary nature of the act meant that it was not properly prepared to deal with the overall impacts of a large influx of people entering the country in such a short period of time. One sector that was particularly affected was that of housing. Polish researchers Radoslaw Trojanek and Michal Gluszak analyzed the short run impact of Ukrainian refugees on the Polish housing market in the first two months following the start of the crisis. Their data showed that between February and April 2022, rents increased dramatically in major Polish cities (by 16.5% and 14% in Krakow and Warsaw respectively), demonstrating a massive increase in prices compared to previous years (Trojanek and Gluszak 2022). In contrast, housing prices did not see such significant change, which is evidence of the correlation between price increases and the refugee crisis, as the main impact was on short form rentals and not long term housing.

To combat this housing crisis, the government established collective accommodation centers and communal housing, an intended temporary solution that instead became a long-term home for many refugees that could not find their own housing. One such center was the Warsaw Expo Conference Center, which housed around 9000 refugees with little privacy or comfort. This solution too was shut down by the Polish government, both by charging Ukrainians to remain in state accommodation and later by the dismantling of specific centers (the Warsaw Expo Center being one of them). In November 2022, Poland revealed that beginning in March 2023, they planned to charge Ukrainian refugees who remained in state funded accommodation for more than four months would be charged 50% of the cost per day, per person. After six months, this percentage would increase to 75% (Reuters). While more vulnerable groups such as the elderly,

disabled, or pregnant women would be excluded from this plan, it still served as discouragement towards the population which struggled not only to find housing but also employment. Made worse still was the fact that in September 2023, Poland shut down the Warsaw Expo Center, which was the largest of such state-funded accommodations in a major urban center.

Another sector of Polish life that struggled due to the influx of Ukrainian refugees was that of education. At first, Ukrainian parents held off on enrolling their children in the Polish school system, hoping that the conflict with Russia would be short lived. As that proved not to be the case, they increasingly began enrolling children, placing yet another source of pressure on struggling local governments. Districts were unable to plan for the following school year as there was no way to fully predict how many children would be enrolled, and even the 10% of the refugee child population being enrolled in the first three months caused teacher and supply shortages in major cities such as Warsaw. The city's school system was already 2,000 teachers short prior to February 2022, and volunteers once again carried most of the burden regarding the purchasing of school supplies, with a shift in attitude occurring after the first two months. Izabela Bogusiewicz, a headmaster of an elementary school south of Warsaw, told the Wall Street Journal that "'In the beginning there was a lot of kindness and support… but then I have received single calls from parents complaining that the quality of teaching has worsened'" (Ojewska 2022). In order to enroll Ukrainian students, the caps of class size were increased and curriculums were adapted to combat the language barrier. However, these changes meant that teachers were overworked due to the larger class size and accommodating two separate language curriculums at once, resulting in the worsening of education quality that parents complained of. Education serves as another example of civilians being burdened with the responsibility of assisting refugees, resulting in a decline of public support and fatigue.

CONCLUSION

Prior to February 2022, Poland's response to refugee crises in recent years was marked with xenophobic rhetoric towards Syrians in 2015, which othered the population and deemed them threats to security. The PiS government opposed the arrival of any Syrian refugees, with public opinion agreeing with this policy. As a result, Poland's national refugee law did not change in any significant way after 2003, when it passed the Act Granting Protection to Aliens Within the Territory of Poland. Instead, laws were passed to further exclude refugee populations from the country and penalize their attempts of entering.

However, due to the Ukrainian refugee crisis in 2022, Poland went from being a country with one of the lowest number of refugees in Europe to the highest. Previous rhetoric used to other and securitize Syrian refugees was discarded when discussing Ukrainians. Instead, securitization was used to accept Ukrainian refugees into Poland. This sudden change caused shifts in government rhetoric, public perception of refugees, and the development of new law. However, while PiS responded quickly and thoroughly to the Ukrainian refugee crisis through the March 12 Act, they would overtime begin to withdraw government assistance, leaving much of the responsibility to local governments and civilian volunteers. Over time, this resulted in a decrease in public support for the Ukrainian population. As such, Poland's refusal to admit refugees in 2015 hindered their ability to fully assist Ukrainian refugees in 2022, leading to an overreliance on spontaneous volunteers which then lowered public support.

This project was limited both due to time lack of familiarity of the Polish language and overall time constraints. Many of the government sources had to be cited from pre-existing scholars who had translated the excerpts into English, instead of directly from the source. As a

result, there is likely far more existing data that could have been used. Similarly, many sources in foreign languages, whether that be Polish or Ukrainian, were not easily accessible, and some older articles are no longer available. The single semester format also limited the extent of research that could be carried out, once again resulting in only a small sample of sources. Finally, recent developments in Polish politics may cause the findings to become outdated, as the PiS party failed to maintain a majority in the Senate during the October 2023 Parliamentary Elections, and many Ukrainian refugees have left Poland for countries in Western Europe.

As this is an ongoing case, further research can return to Poland in the future to examine the long term impacts of the Ukrainian refugee crisis on various sectors of Polish society. Furthermore, the case can be applied to any future refugee groups that attempt to enter Poland in order to highlight any changes in government rhetoric or public opinion. Finally, the research can be expanded to compare Poland with a country that both accepted Syrian refugees in 2015 and Ukrainian ones in 2022, such as Germany. In comparing the two countries, the case could further analyze the difference effectiveness in refugee policy.

Poland serves as an example of a country whose previous policy and stances had overarching consequences nearly a decade later. Other countries that have demonized refugees can look towards Poland as a case where a country was required to entirely flip their previous stances, and what such a sudden shift can cause. Instead, countries should, regardless of their opinion on refugees, establish and develop their refugee law in order to prevent a similar occurrence.

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