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The war in Ukraine, which broke out in February 2022, has challenged Hungary in various ways. The country's geographical location has made it a clear route and destination for refugees. A large part of the country's population, apart from the southern border region which faced a flood of refugees in the 1991 Yugoslavian war, has not had such experience in its immediate neighbourhood since the Second World War, with tens of thousands of people leaving their houses in shambles, carrying their valuables in barely a few bags, and with the war taking place on its territory, the vast majority of refugees are women, young, old and children. Refugees have not arrived in the country in visibly large numbers since the former Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s, so discussions on the Hungarian refugee issue have typically been confined to narrow professional circles and professional issues. Until 2015, for most Hungarian citizens, immigration or asylum seemed to be a somewhat exotic topic with little impact on daily life.

It also brought a surprising challenge for the government. The refugee crisis that sprouted up in 2015 had at the time become firmly entrenched in government communications, sending a message to the public that refugees were to be feared, refugees were to be locked up, but better still, the best way to protect against the flood of refugees, who have been colloquially referred to as "migrants", is to build a wall, a multiple reinforced wire fence along the southern border. The average 'emigrant' in the communication of the government was a man from a Middle Eastern country, possibly Asian, mostly young, representing a completely different culture, mostly Muslim but certainly not Christian, speaking a different language, and from whom women and girls had to be rescued, and whom 'Brussels' wanted to impose on us. The majority of those fleeing to Hungary spoke Hungarian and came from Transcarpathia. As the country borders Ukraine, the civilians had to be prepared for the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees, who would need to be provided with food and clothing, as they often arrived with everything they had. People whose houses had been destroyed, people who needed shelter, people who needed medical care, psychological counselling, children who needed nursery care, schooling, perhaps help to earn a living, but above all, people with whom it was needed to communicate in some language.

It was in contrast with the problem solving of the refugee crisis of 2015 and the government campaign to exploit the crisis to the full changed this situation fundamentally. Not only has the social rejection of refugees and migrants reached record highs, but the debate on refugees has largely moved from the calm, professional to the inductivist political arena.

The refugee crisis was the glue that could hold again the Visegrad Group after the multiple crises in the first decade of 2000s. After the Euro Atlantic integration, this cooperation started to orientate towards various sectoral political issues, among others the infrastructure, and the security issues, the physical security, and the energy security. The 2009 energy crisis demonstrated the gas dependency of the member states. These countries' home production falls far short of the volume needed for sufficient consumer supplies and their gas and other energy imports rely primarily on one country: Russia. That was one of the most crucial issues in the relationship with Russia, while the priorities of each V4 presidency have, thus included collaboration on energy, the Eastern Partnership project, with Ukraine in this group, defence cooperation and the development of digital economy. The crisis in Ukraine in 2014 and the acceptance of the embargo against Russia have shown that member states' interests may vary. While Polish foreign policy has tried to ensure Poland avoids all cooperation with Russia, Hungary has made moves to strengthen ties through economic cooperation. Hungary's position on the question facing the new Ukrainian government about whether to give "full collective rights" and dual citizenship to Hungarians living in the Zakarpattia Oblast has also impeded the chances of agreement among the Visegrad Group member states and Ukraine. Although Hungarian diplomats co-authored both the Visegrad Group and EU declarations which condemned the annexation of Crimea by Russia and supported Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Hungarian prime minister has emphasised Hungary's neutrality as regards the Ukrainian–Russian conflicts and tried to avoid any friction in relations with Russia since Hungary is in the process of building closer cooperation with the energy sector. This is the Hungarian standpoint that usually identified with pragmatic foreign policy. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 Visegrad Group members have accepted this restriction ambivalently given the effects on energy security: after all, all these states were dependent on gas supplies from Russia and a huge share of their export activity focused on the Russian market.

The refugee crisis has led to a renaissance of the Visegrad Group as the threat of an increasing number of migrants from the south-east has required a coordinated reaction. The Hungarian prime minister was the first to argue for prioritising national interests, and this standpoint was soon taken up by the three member states. In February 2016, the states made a joint declaration concerning a common security policy, closer cooperation with Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia and the plan to stop the refugees at Greece's borders. A so-called line of defence was to be set up under this agreement.

If the response to the embargo against Russia divided the member states, then the fear of the growing number of immigrants helped them to strengthen and deepen their cooperation. Public opinion and politicians' standpoints were quite closely aligned within the Visegrad member states. Anti-migrant sentiment, thus, unified the Visegrad Group of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Hungary's Viktor Orbán had already demonstrated the position of himself and his government in the late summer of 2015, and in an October 2016 referendum, he hoped to win the support of Hungarian voters as well. Since 2015 Hungary harshly criticised the German „Wilkommenskultur” that was a reaction of Germans to the arrival of thousands of Syrian refugees in September 2015.

In Hungary the opposite reaction was initiated by the government. In 2015 National Consultation was organised with the following questions mixing Brussels' responsibility in refugee policy and the „migrant crisis”. With the migration crisis, a new social problem has emerged at Hungary's borders. The problem of migrants was strongly connected with the political communication of the Hungarian government by emphasizing (that time still in cooperation with the Polish Law and Justice led government) the role of Hungary (and Poland) as the „antemurale Christianitatis” (Christian defence wall). In 2015, the government asked people about this in a questionnaire on "Immigration and terrorism", which also included questions about the European Union. This national consultation played an important role in shaping a coherent Hungarian immigration policy. By the end of 2016, the Hungarian asylum system was in crisis, partly due to the refugee crisis that hit Hungary in 2015, and even more so due to the government's response to it. The Hungarian government's response to the unprecedented increase in the number of refugees in the country for two decades was to consciously dismantle the asylum system and exploit the issue to the maximum political advantage.

There are views that suggest that what matters is not the size of the minority group, but rather the extent to which members of the majority society feel reassured and secure about their own situation, and the extent to which they feel their own status or identity is threatened. In Hungary the government's communication focused on the frightening of citizens with the threat of “bad migrants” that developed to hysteria. The contradiction between „migrant”, who was different in culture, face, language increased the fear among citizens backed up by the government's communication that resulted the increase of xenophobia among citizens.

In 2022, however, instead of the enforced migrant crisis the real war started in Ukraine resulting masses of refugees, asylum seekers. The masses of people that crossed the border were not different by religion, culture, features. They were seeking asylum, and the government was not

prepared for this task. The first assistance came with the help of the ostracized or attacked NGOs and the civil society. As the fate of the refugees reached the threshold of EU politicians' pendulum and the government began to turn to them for financial support. The civil organisations were left without financial basis while the transparency of the financial support transferred by the EU to the Hungarian government was missing.

In this paper after the theoretical introduction and the conceptualisation of the problem, it is our intention to explain the meaning of the different phenomena and to give a comparative analysis of how the Visegrad Group states were facing the problem if the masses of refugees. We would like to follow the approach of critical refugee studies (CRS) and the multidimensional approach focusing to the following questions by using Hungary as a reference point.

- the problem of the war in Ukraine as a geopolitical issue
- the conceptual frames of critical migration studies
- the number of refugees, their legal status – here we would use the terms implemented by the EU, we would rely on the reports of UNHCR and the reports of national governments
- the changes in political communication
- the reaction of the recipient countries' society, based on public opinion polls
- the institutional framework of the refugee policy, the challenges
- the division among V4 group states, the populist approach and the standpoint towards Ukraine

If we use the terms of the interdisciplinary field of critical refugee studies, we must emphasize the problem as sites of social, political, and historical critiques such as the problem of the processes of colonialism, war, and displacement. The case of Hungarian approach is unique as until now, Hungary is playing an opposite role that makes its position pending within the European Union and creates an extra cleavage within the Visegrad Group adding an extra reason of its instability.

Through the analysis of the reaction to the war and the refugees we would also like to link this issue with the future of this integration model. We are searching for the answer whether the cohesion in Visegrad Group can be threatened by the “real” refugees. Taking Hungary in the middle of our investigation, it is also the part of the analysis, how the refugee policy had to be institutionalised and what kind of challenges accompanied the masses of refugees. Hungary also had dichotomy in communication by dividing people of Hungarian origin from the

Zakarpattia region and the rest of people. Analysing the Hungarian case, we would like to point the similarities and differences the Visegrad Group states had to face. As an additional layer, as the agreement on the support to Ukraine from the European Union is hampered by Hungarian government at this moment, we would also like to give some suggestions about the potential outcomes of the Hungarian – EU debate.

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