

The 2015 European Refugee Crisis vs. the 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Crisis: Why Poland Adopted Double Standards in Refugee Policies?

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Abstract. Since the escalation of the Ukraine crisis in February 2022, there have been quite a few studies related to the war in Ukraine, centering around its causes and effects. However, few studies have focused on the Ukrainian refugee crisis associated with the war, and even fewer have compared the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis with the European refugee crisis in 2015. It can be found that Poland's double standard in its refugee policies was obvious during the two refugee crises, and this paper aims to clarify the reasons behind it. By analyzing the differences between the two crises from the aspect of countries of origin and destination, cultures, and religions, this paper finds that the 2015 and 2022 refugee crises differ in many ways. This paper further examines the manifestations of double standards in its refugee policies from the aspect of its legal structure, admission policies, and material assistance policies. Compared with 2015, refugees in 2022 (mostly Ukrainians) could apply for protection in a simpler, less time-consuming way with more chances to enjoy a more comprehensive treatment in terms of medical assistance and accommodation. Based on these observations, this paper finds that the reasons why Poland adopted double standards can be analyzed from the perspective of national attributes including material, historical and cultural attributes.

Keywords: Refugee policy; Ukrainian crisis; Poland; National attributes.

1. Introduction

Since the Crimean Crisis began in 2014, the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine has been the scene of conflict due to the failure of reaching a consensus. The Russia-Ukraine situation completely deteriorated when Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized a special military operation in the Donbas region on February 24. This in turn led to Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II (WWII) and caused more than 7.7 million recorded refugees to flee from Ukraine to other European countries [1]. Sharing a 535km long borderline, Poland has a deep historical, cultural, and material connection with Ukraine. Until 25th October, Poland has granted temporary protection to 1,469,032 refugees, which accounts for a third of the total temporary protections granted to Ukrainian refugees in the European Union (EU) [2,3], highlighting Poland as the coordination center for Ukrainian refugees seeking to enter Europe [4].

However, Poland's policies were totally different in 2015 from current refugee policies. After its right-wing party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) came to power in October 2015, Poland was extremely resistant to accepting refugees and even publicly opposed the EU's refugee allocation plan. So Poland's double standard feature in its refugee policies in the two crises is obvious, which indicates the particularity of its state institutions, social composition, geopolitics, and so forth. Therefore, this paper delineates the basic information about the 2015 and 2022 refugee crisis, and compares the differences embedded in the legal structure and details of Poland's refugee policies. In so doing, the paper tries to clarify why Poland adopted double standards in its 2015 and 2022 refugee policies by analyzing the reasons behind them.

Though the 2015 refugee crisis and issues of Ukrainian refugees have drawn much attention from the public, politics, and the media, there have been few academic studies focusing on the Ukrainian refugee crisis or the comparison of the 2022 and 2015 crises. This paper might be of some significance to filling the gap in refugee research here. At the same time, as a relatively new member of the EU in Central and Eastern Europe, the double standard of Poland's policy attitude also represents the difference between the old and new EU members' positions on the refugee issue. Therefore, hopefully, the research could provide a new direction for the research of refugee policies not only for individual countries but also for regions.

2. Basic Information of the 2015 and 2022 Refugee Crises

The 2015 European refugee crisis, also known as the European migrant crisis, refers to the surge in the number of refugees or economic migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, via the Mediterranean and the Balkans, seeking residence in EU countries following the Arab Spring in late 2010 [5-7]. The number of people illegally entering the territory of EU countries fell to 200,000 in 2017 from 1.8 million in 2015 [8]. In March 2019, the European Commission declared that the migrant crisis was coming to an end [9]. Since the migration wave reached its peak in 2015 [10], in this paper, for the convenience of writing, we use "the 2015 Crisis" to indicate this crisis. *The 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis* refers to the ongoing crisis that began in Europe in late February 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine. Until October 2022, more than 7.7 million refugees fleeing Ukraine have been recorded across Europe [1]. The invasion caused Europe's largest refugee crisis since WWII and its aftermath [11], is the first of its kind in Europe since the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, and is the largest refugee crisis of the 21st century, with the highest refugee flight rate globally [12,13]. For the convenience of writing, we use "the 2022 Crisis" to indicate this crisis. What is more, in this paper, key concepts concerning refugee policies such as *refugees*, *asylum seekers*, *international protection*, etc. are all adopted by the definition determined by the European Parliament and the Sejm of Poland [14-16].

2.1 Countries of Origin

In 2015, the Syrian civil war and the Crimea issue played a major part in causing the humanitarian crisis. In 2022, it was Russia's military action. The statistics on the refugees' countries of origin have a close connection with the causes of the crises. Table 1 shows the data collected respectively by Eurostat and Poland's Office for Foreigners, demonstrating the number of applicants for international protection in the EU and Poland, and their countries of origin in 2015. It can be observed that despite the geographical elements, Syrian and Ukrainian applicants played two major parts of the total applicants in the EU and Poland. The statistics on the refugees' countries of origin in 2022 also have a connection with the cause of the Ukraine crisis. In 2022, Ukrainians created a massive inflow of asylum seekers. Until October 11th, 2022, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has recorded 7,678,757 Ukrainians crossing the border of the EU, 4,350,995 people filed applications for international protection, among which 6,782,275 (88% of the total) times border crossing was recorded and 1,436,558 applications (33% of the total) were filed in the territory of Poland [1].

Table 1. Number of foreigners who applied for International Protection in 2015 [17]

Country of Origin	Number of Applicants for International Protection	
	EU (% of the total)	Poland (% of the total)
Syria	359,925 (29.6%)	295 (2.3%)
Afghanistan	175,440 (11.4%)	19 (0.1%)
Iraq	118,935 (9.7%)	62 (0.5%)
Ukraine	20,565 (1.7%)	2305 (18.8%)
Total	1,216,860 (100%)	12,325 (100%)

2.2 Ethnicity, Language, and Religion

The cultural features of the two massive inflows can be described by their ethnical, linguistic, and religious preferences. The two main countries of origin of the two crises, Syria and Ukraine, and Poland as a country of destination, are analyzed here as examples respectively.

By analyzing the ethnic compositions of Poland, Ukraine, and Syria, it is clear that Ukraine and Poland have more resemblance. Poland has a relatively more homogeneous ethnic group. Until 2016, 97.1% of the population are Poles. The Ukrainian group is the main ethnic group in Ukraine, taking up 77% of the total population. Poles and Ukrainians are both Slavic peoples. Compared to Poland and Ukraine, Syria has a different ethnic group. The dominating ethnic group, Arabian, only constitutes about 50% of the Syrian population, others are mostly Alawites, Kurds, and Levantines, which are called Semites [18].

As for the official languages, Polish is the official language of Poland [19]. The official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian; in addition, there are parts of Poland where Russian is used as the main language. Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian are also part of the Indo-European language family belonging to the Slavic language group. Unlike Poland and Ukraine, the official language of Syria is Arabic, which belongs to the Semitic Branch and is significantly different from the Indo-European language in both writing and grammar.

In addition to ethnic and linguistic differences, there are also religious differences. From the following Table 2, it can be observed that the majority of the Poland population is Catholic. And one of the main religions of Ukraine is Orthodox, both of which are a branch of Christianity. Meanwhile, as shown in Figure 1, the Middle East, with Islam being the main religion, is very different from the other two aforementioned European countries [20].

Table 2. Religious affiliation in % of persons aged 16 and over in Poland [21]

Religious affiliation	2015	2018
Total	94.2	93.5
Roman Catholic Church	92.8	91.9
Orthodox Church	0.7	0.9
Protestant Churches	0.2*	0.3*
Jehovah's Witnesses	0.3*	0.2*
Greek Catholic Church	0.1*	0.1*
other churches and religious associations	0.1*	0.2*
Not belonging to any religion	3.1	3.1
Unable to categorize	0.5	0.5*
Refusal to respond	2.2	2.9

*based on the answer to the question: "which religious denomination (church or religious association) do you belong to?"

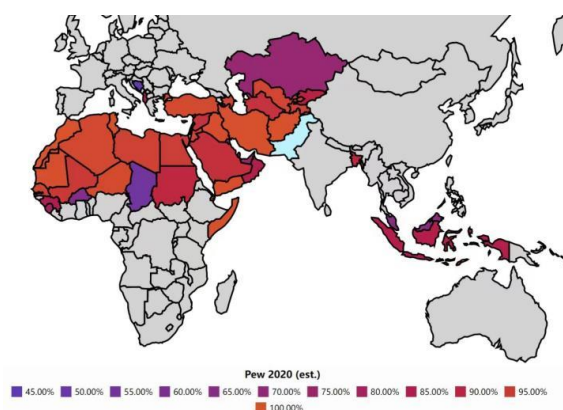


Fig 1. Muslim Majority Countries 2022 [22]

2.3 Countries of Destination

Another factor that could describe the inflow of asylum seekers is their countries of destination, namely the countries where they finally settle instead of the countries of their first entry. The present regulation concerning this field at the EU level is the Dublin Regulation [23], which specified the relocation and resettlement mechanism within the EU. For any asylum seekers entering the EU, they have to stay in their countries of first entry before their applications are completely processed and their refugee status is confirmed. Once asylum seekers are confirmed with any form of protection, they will be entitled to the right to move freely across the Schengen area within a certain period.

In the case of Poland, the role of merely a country of first entry or the refugee's country of destination obviously would affect how Poland's government chose to respond to the specific refugee crisis. In 2015, according to the communication report between the European Commission and European Parliament, France, Norway, and the UK, respectively received 1739, 2635, and 2200 resettled refugees, making them the top 3 countries in terms of the reception of resettled refugees [24]. As is shown in Figure 2, in 2022, Poland was one of the three countries that experienced a massive inflow of Ukrainians. Until April 2022, with more than a million people granted temporary protection in Poland, only a third of them chose to leave and move further to western Europe [25]. Combined with the statistics provided in Table 1, it can be observed that Poland's role switched from a country of first entry to the country of destination.



Fig 2. 2022 Ukrainian refugee situation [1]

3. Manifestation of the Double Standard Feature in Poland's Refugee Policies

There are several similarities between the two refugee crises. Both crises bring massive inflows of third-country nationals (TCNs) into Europe. Both crises develop in an environment in which Poland plays a unique role. However, Poland applies drastically different attitudes in response to the two crises. It originally chose to refuse the acceptance of asylum seekers along with other member states of the Visegrad Group, then later voted in favor of the EU's resolution on the assignment of refugee relocation and resettlement quota in 2015. Shortly afterward, the newly elected administration of Poland resumed its original ground in the same year. In sharp contrast, the present welcoming attitude toward Ukrainian asylum seekers indicates that the Polish government's official attitude towards asylum seekers has once again made a turn. This part examines the changes in refugee policies between the 2015 and 2022 crises. By categorizing the changes into three subsections, namely legal structure, application policies, and the implementation of policies, this part provides evidence of Poland's double standards manifested in its response to the two crises, the bullet points of which are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Poland's refugee policies during the 2015 and 2022 crises

	during the 2015 Crisis	during the 2022 Crisis
Main Legal Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Law on Foreigners · Law on Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Law on Foreigners · Law on Protection · Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens · Temporary Protection Directive
Eligibility for Admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Restricted access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>Automatically</i> authorized
Requirement for Granting Refugee Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Having <i>justified fear of persecution</i> and keep constituting a threat to human rights · A real risk of being seriously harmed if they are returned to their country of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Having <i>identity documents</i> certifying Ukrainian citizenship, or being a close family member of a Ukrainian citizen or one with a Pole's Card. · International Protection and Subsidiary Protection were not applied to Ukrainian refugees.
Confirmation waiting time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 months on average 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately confirmed
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reception Centers · Applicants who seek accommodation outside shall be supported with a modest amount of złotych (PLN). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reception Centers · Private Housing willingly provided by Polish citizens via the government's online platform
Medical Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Private Provider · Limited access to medical specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · State Foundation · Same medical services as Polish citizens.

3.1 Legal Structure

In Poland, the legislature tries to resolve the issue of migration and asylum by developing primary and supplementary laws. So far, the two primary legal acts in force to regulate these issues have been The Law on Foreigners, which was passed on December 12th, 2013, and The Law on Granting Protection in the Territory of Poland, which was passed on June 13th, 2003 [15,16]. These two main legal acts, along with other supplementary regulations, establish the basic system to process the inflow of migrants and grant their specific status based on individual conditions. After Poland joined the EU in 2004, its refugee policies were reformed to meet the EU requirements. However, studies also reveal that the process of transforming EU regulations into Polish laws was only conducted to meet the minimal requirement [26].

For the 2015 Crisis, no special legal acts or regulations were developed to resolve it. Except for Poland and some other countries' uncooperative attitudes towards the relocation scheme, most of the EU member states followed the previously established guidelines of the EU migration management policies. The case was quite different for 2022. Facing the tension caused by Russia's military action, not only EU vote unanimously in agreement to put the Temporary Protection Directive in action for the first time, but also Poland actively introduced a new act "Act of 12 March 2022, on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with an Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine" (Ustawa z dnia

12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa) to outline specific legal actions to assist Ukrainian refugees. The Act regulates the admission and verification of the legal status of refugees, as well as the duration of their stay. At the end of March, Poland amended the Act and the Law on Higher Education and Science (Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce), enabling Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Poland via another country to be protected by Polish law.

3.2 Refugee Admission Policies

Apart from the legal structure, which sets the basic tone for the specific policies executed in reality, Poland's double standards can be more prominently observed in the actual policy details. The following part will describe the details of Poland's refugee policies in 2015 and 2022 in terms of its eligibility for admission, refugee status requirement, and time of consideration, to clarify the double standard features embedded in Poland's policies.

3.2.1 Eligibility for admission

The exact regulations of the three aforementioned aspects are stipulated in the legal structure previously introduced. Thus in essence, the legal basis for policies in both 2015 and 2022 are similar. But in reality, they have different effects. In 2015, restricted access was observed when refugees tried to apply for international protection. This was mainly due to the dual role that the Poland Border Guard played in the border management mechanism at that time. In 2015, Poland Border Guard was in charge of both authorizing personnel's right to cross the border and giving access to the submission of international protection applications, which means people who apply for protection without government intervention might be intentionally screened out [27].

In 2022, due to the effect of the European Parliament's decision on applying the Temporary Protection Directive [28], the refugee admission process was greatly simplified. TCNs' eligibility for being granted temporary protection only depends on their ability to provide documents certifying Ukrainian citizenship, or being a close family member of a Ukrainian citizen or one with a Pole's Card [29]. What is interesting in this aspect is that in 2015, the Poland administration granted over 80,000 temporary residence permits to Ukrainians due to the Crimea crisis. Different from how regular refugees were processed, Ukrainians were granted asylum, a status that is different from international protection, subsidiary protection, and temporary protection. It's a status that used to be given to personnel that was considered to be an asset to Poland's national security. The government's action this time was interpreted as an official recognition that the stay of a certain group of people could be important to Poland's national interest [30].

3.2.2 Refugee status requirement

The confirmation of international protection is issued by the Office for Foreigners at the first level and the Refugee Board at the second level. When a decision can not be drawn by the Office for Foreigners, it will be referred to the Refugee Board by which the decision made will be final. For all refugees trying to apply for international protection in Poland, no matter when they enter the border, their applications shall be evaluated according to the Law on Protection. Article 13 of the Law on Protection states the exact terms for international protection: the applicant must prove they "have experienced a justified fear of persecution in the country of origin due to race, religion, nationality or political beliefs or belonging to a particular social group, and they cannot or do not want to benefit from the protection provided by the country of origin. the persecution cannot be a single action, but rather must involve an accumulation of activities constituting a threat to the person's human rights." And article 15 of the Law on Protection states that asylum seekers who are found not qualified for international protection but face a real risk of being seriously harmed if they return to their country of origin shall be granted subsidiary protection [31]. The processing of applications filed by the 2015 applicants was strictly evaluated in the terms above. The entire application process could take more than 6 months for applicants in 2015, during which they only had access to the most basic material aid and no permission to enter the labor market. However, for the Ukrainian refugees in 2022, they

would be automatically granted temporary protection as long as they successfully register their entry at the border crossing point.

3.3 Accommodation and Medical Services

Actions that have double standards can also be found in how Poland's government treats refugees with two of the most urgent assistance refugees need, which are accommodation and medical assistance.

In terms of accommodation policies, refugees should be either accommodated collectively in a designated reception facility that's under the control of the Office for Foreigners or offered modest financial support to help them find housing independently. However, refugees in 2015 were only offered money that wasn't even able to meet the most basic need to look for housing outside of the reception center [31]. In 2022, in addition to the previously established infrastructure, Poland's government opened a special section in the online platform designed specifically to provide information for incoming Ukrainian refugees and encouraged Polish citizens to put on advertisements for available private housing. Every house owner that provides housing and meals to Ukrainian refugees would be reimbursed 40 zlotych per person per day for the length of 120 days [32].

As for medical assistance, preferences are based on the fact that different medical service providers were used in the two crises. In 2015, the provider was Petra Medica, a private medical company in Poland. In a research conducted by RESPOND, a project funded by the European Commission to research the refugee reception condition in the EU, scholars discovered that the service provided by Petra Medica was substandard compared with what the state's official facility provided before 2015 [31]. Refugees were also observed to have less chance to consult a medical specialist. In 2022, Poland made it clear that refugees can enjoy the same medical services just as Polish citizens. And the service will be provided by the national medical foundation [33].

4. Reasons for Poland Adopting Double Standards in Refugee Policies

National attributes can determine the differences between countries and affect their acts in the international community [34]. Just as human characters are multifaceted, so are national attributes. National attributes of a country can be classified as material attributes (e.g. the size of the country, its level of economic and technological development, its strength of military capabilities, its characteristics of geopolitics), cultural and ethical characteristics (e.g. national history and cultural values), and political attributes (e.g. political systems and ideologies). National attributes affect national identity and shape national leaders' perception of their country's role in the international community. A country's foreign policy can be regarded as the outward manifestation of national identity and national role. Different aspects of national attributes are variables that affect a country's foreign policy. Reasons for Poland adopting double standards in 2015 and 2022 refugee policies also conform to the rule. Put differently, the national attributes of Poland, including its material attributes, historical attributes, and cultural attributes account for different aspects of the reasons why Poland adopted double standards in refugee policies.

4.1 Material Attributes

From the perspective of Poland's material attributes, reasons can be analyzed in 2 aspects: geographic attributes and economic attributes. During the 2015 Crisis, compared to states like the UK, Greece, Cyprus, and other states along the warm peninsula (which are the main host countries for 2015 refugees), Poland is too far to go to and too cold to be a clement place to stay for refugees mainly from the Middle East. Another contributing factor is that Poland's economy has been sluggish from 2012 to 2016, with GDP growth consistently below 4%. At that time, Poland's new right-wing government was so focused on national interests that it openly disagreed with the EU and showed no willingness to accept refugees; What is more, Poland had little experience in dealing with large-scale refugee flows due to its special historical background (Poland regained its independence just after

WWII). So, during the 2015 Crisis, Poland neither had the capacity nor willingness nor was appealing to refugees. As a result, the entry demand for 2015 refugees is not high enough for Poland to improve its refugee policy system.

Things are completely different in the 2022 Crisis. This time, Poland's geographic attributes are no longer a disadvantage but a boost for refugees from Ukraine, its neighboring state. There have been 1,436,558 refugees from Ukraine registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes until 11 Oct 2022 [1]. It is obvious that the entry demand is very high. And it is worth noting that Poland's demand for refugees as labor is also very high. After Poland joined the EU, a large number of its labor force flowed to more developed countries in Western Europe, resulting in a shortage of labor, which left neighboring Ukraine and Belarus to fill. More than 250,000 Ukrainians already had residence permits in Poland before the special military operation, 80% of them on temporary permits (up to three years). The vast majority of them are younger than 40 [35]. It can be concluded that the 2022 Crisis is a unique opportunity for Poland to take in as much labor force as possible, and so it has done.

4.2 Historical Attributes

Historical attributes can act as a bond that strengthens cooperation between nations, but can also be a source of conflict and prejudice. This is perfectly demonstrated in the 2022 Crisis. For one thing, Poland has long maintained a close and friendly relationship with Ukraine, the origin country of the 2022 refugees. Poland deems the stability and security of Ukraine a vital national interest. For example, Poland mediated Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004. Poland's then-president Aleksander Kwasniewski even helped mediate and campaigned within the EU for Ukraine's bid for membership. In 2012, Poland and Ukraine co-hosted the Euro 2012 football tournament, which further narrowed the emotional distance between the two countries. Besides the cultural ties analyzed above, Poland's President Andrzej Duda publicly said, "We do not call them (Ukrainian refugees) 'refugees.' They are our guests, our brothers, our neighbors from Ukraine who today are in a very difficult situation where 12 million people have fled their houses by the war, by the Russian attacks [36]."

For another, Poland has a long history of bad relations with Russia, the country which launched the attack, leaving many people displaced. As early as the late Middle Ages, Poland contested the frontier with the Grand Duchy of Moscow (predecessor of the Russian Empire). Poland began to decline in the mid-17th century, and the Russian Empire was involved in carving up Poland 3 times in the late 18th century. Finally, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe for 123 years from 1795 until its restoration in 1918. In August 1939, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact signed by the Soviet Union and Germany was regarded as the "fourth partition" of Poland. After the Cold War, Poland maintained normal relations with Russia, but doubts are far from gone. After the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, Poland felt unprecedented unease, and Russophobia (a strong dislike towards Russia and Russian things, especially the political system or customs of the former Soviet Union) was on the rise again [4]. The Ukraine crisis in 2014 and the escalating war in 2022 have further aggravated this wave of Russophobia.

Therefore, it is no surprise that Poland absorbed this influx of refugees in the 2022 Crisis. Firstly, it is natural for Poland to take in Ukrainian refugees as they have long maintained a close relationship; Secondly, the act of Poland embracing so many Ukrainian refugees can be seen as sending a clear anti-Russia message; Thirdly, Poland would expect Ukraine to do the same if Poland was the next Ukraine to be attacked by Russia. And there was nothing special about the 2015 Crisis from the perspective of historical attributes, as the relationship between Poland and the Middle East was ordinary in every way.

4.3 Cultural Attributes

Cultural attributes can be considered as a key that counts for the difference in Poland's refugee policies in the 2 crises. Once upon a time, Poland was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Poland was home not only to the majority of Poles but also to almost all

Belarusians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, several million Germans, and the world's major Jewish population, welcoming ethnic and religious minorities of all kinds [37]. But WWII radically reshaped Poland's population and society, combined with the Cold War, when Polish authorities made having a homogeneous population an official goal and tightly controlled the development of minority populations and cultures. Poland is now one of the most culturally homogeneous countries in Europe. This high level of homogeneity results in a very limited willingness of accepting refugees among Poles. Even at the peak of the 2015 Crisis, less than half of the Poles knew about foreigners living in Poland, as is shown in Figure 3 [38].

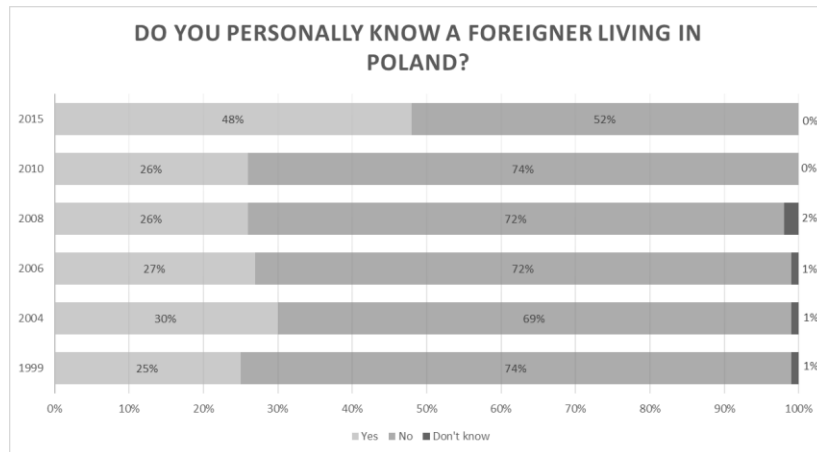


Fig 3. Do you personally know a foreigner living in Poland? [38]

This in turn increased the fear of Islam culture among devout Polish Catholics. At the same time, due to the failure of the Common Asylum System in EU (CEAS) -- the first destination countries such as Greece and Italy did not perform their screening and verification responsibilities well, a large number of terrorists infiltrated the system, which led to a series of terrorist attacks, such as attacks happened in Paris in 2015 and Brussels in 2016. It has created an opportunity for populists and mainstream right-wing party to use fear of Islams to gain support. Before the European refugee crisis, only 21 percent of Poles opposed accepting any refugees. But under the guidance of PiS, attitudes among ordinary Poles towards refugees changed dramatically. According to a CBOS survey, the proportion of Poles opposed to accepting refugees doubled from 21% in May 2015 to 43% in October 2015. In the following year, the opposition remained above 50%, as shown in Figure.4 [39]. The proportion of Poles who disagreed with receiving part of refugees from the Middle East and Africa was even higher, as is shown in Figure.5 [39]. PiS and electoral politics helped to change the Poles' attitude towards refugees, and also directly caused the Polish government to reverse its position on the EU refugee settlement.

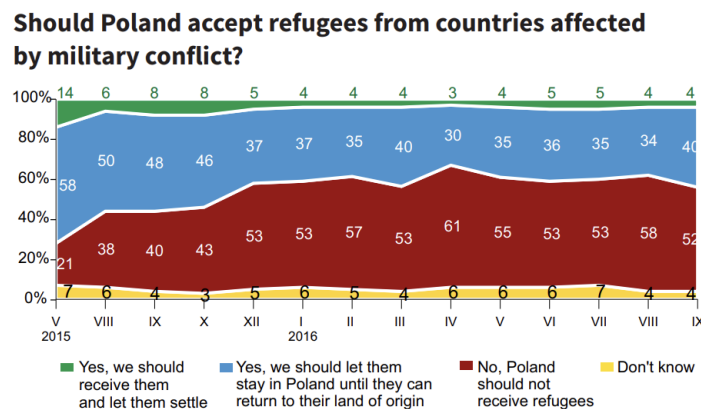


Fig 4. Should Poland accept refugees from countries affected by military conflict? [39]

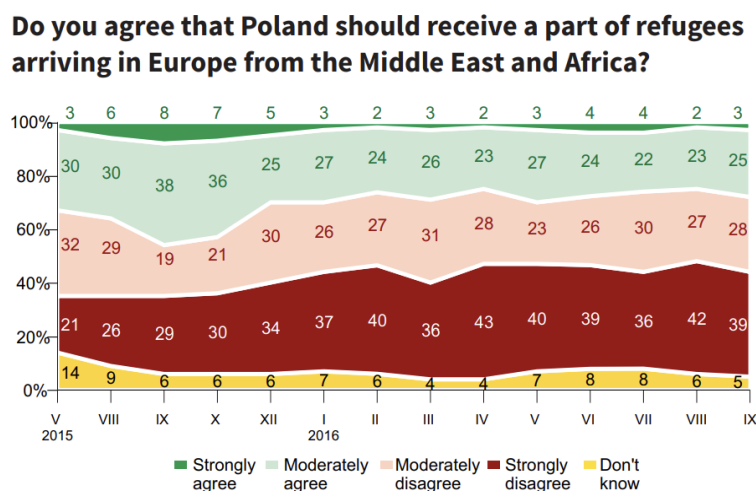


Fig 5. Do you agree that Poland should receive a part of refugees arriving in Europe from the Middle East and Africa? [39]

In 2022, things are different. The cultural attributes of Poland and Ukraine do have a lot in common: they are both Slavic, both Christian countries, and both former socialist countries under the hegemony of the Soviet Union. They share similar languages and cultures, and even similar histories that might contribute to the hostility against Russia. These similarities have led to close political relations between the countries and friendly relations among the peoples. As a result, in recent years, about 2 million Ukrainians have been working in Poland every year [40]. In the view of the public, Ukrainians' religion and culture are more closely aligned with Poles' and easier to assimilate. On the other hand, most circular migrants from Ukraine have settled in Poland and established their social networks, which helped refugees become better integrated into Poland's society. In the view of western racist politicians, compared with refugees from the Middle East and Africa, Ukrainian refugees not only have no reason to be rejected but also greatly save the naturalization cost of western countries. They are a tool for politicians to maintain ethnic culture and hedge against current and future refugees from the Middle East and Africa. Therefore, Ukrainian refugees are welcomed by both politicians and the public and they are willing to stay in Poland for cultural and practical reasons.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, by comparing the two inflows of asylum seekers from the perspectives of their countries of origin, countries of destination, and their ethnicity, language, and religion, it was found that the 2015 and 2022 refugee crises differ in many ways. Then, by describing and comparing the differences embedded in the legal structure and details of Poland's refugee policies, it was proved that policies Poland adopted to treat refugees in 2015 and 2022 showed double standards in the aspects of legal structure, refugee admission, and some welfare conditions. Finally, based on the aforementioned differences, we found that the national attributes of Poland, including its material attributes, historical attributes, and cultural attributes account for different aspects of the reasons why Poland adopted double standards in refugee policies.

However, the paper only analyzes the reasons for Poland's double standard from the perspective of national attributes. Since the two refugee crises were very complex, and the reasons for Poland's policy change were also varied, it can be improved by adopting more theoretical perspectives. In addition, though the authors only selected Poland's refugee policies as the object of analysis, studies of the response policies of more countries, and regional organizations such as the EU and the International Organization for Migration are essential for a deeper understanding of the two refugee crises.

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