

Treatment of People Displaced by Conflict: A Cross-Case Comparison of Serbia, Hungary, and Poland¹

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Abstract:

Amidst the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, a significant refugee crisis has unfolded across Europe. This study examines the treatment of displaced individuals from Ukraine and Russia in Serbia, Hungary, and Poland, focusing on how each host country's stance on the conflict influences their reception and integration. Through comparative analysis, drawing on insights from geopolitical literature and migration research, the study seeks to explore the complex interactions between geopolitical dynamics, historical legacies, and humanitarian responses to displacement.

Observations and interviews provide valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by those affected by the crisis. While the analysis centers on Serbia, Hungary, and Poland, it aims to elucidate patterns and implications from geopolitical alignments, historical ties, domestic politics, and public attitudes relevant to migration dynamics.

In Serbia, a balanced stance fosters inclusivity for Ukrainian and Russian displaced persons, driven by cultural solidarity within the Orthodox Slavic community. Hungary's pragmatic neutrality results in primary support for Ukrainian displaced persons, while Russian displaced persons receive limited visibility. Conversely, Poland's pro-Ukrainian stance manifests in substantial support for Ukrainian displaced persons, amidst challenges and skepticism towards Russian displaced persons. This

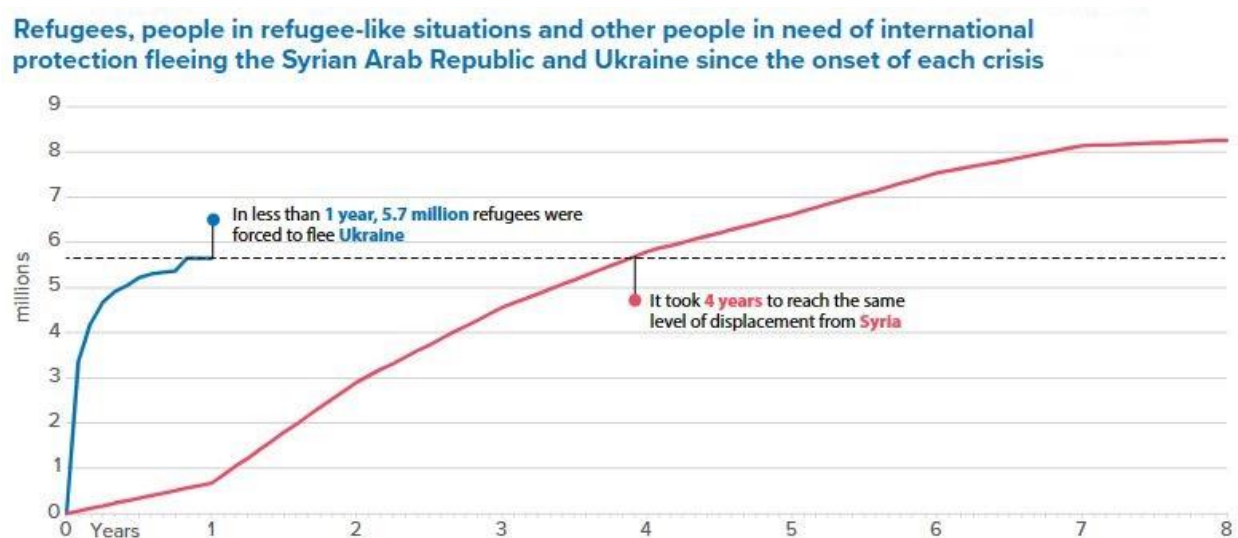
¹ The fieldwork for this research was funded by the Ulmer Fund for Russian, Central European, and Eurasian Studies administered by Grinnell College; the views and findings represented in the paper are author's and do not represent the views of Grinnell College

comparative analysis reveals the complex interplay between geopolitical dynamics and humanitarian responses, shedding light on the multifaceted treatment of displaced populations.

I. Introduction

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has unleashed a humanitarian crisis of unparalleled proportions in Europe, uprooting millions and sending shockwaves across Eastern Europe. Within just a year following the start of the war, UN estimates that over six million individuals fled Ukraine,² surpassing the staggering displacement figures that took four years to amass during the Syrian Civil War.³ This crisis has not only strained the capacities of affected states to accommodate and provide for those displaced by conflict but also stress-tested their political and social frameworks.

Figure 1:



Source: [UNHCR](#)

According to the UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe, the distribution of displaced individuals across Europe varies widely. While Germany and Russia have emerged as primary destinations for Ukrainian

² UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, "Ukraine Situation Flash Update #52."

³ UNHCR, "Review of Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022."

refugees, significant numbers have also sought refuge in Serbia, Hungary, and Poland. These countries serve as both destinations and transit points for those displaced by conflict, though the scale and nature of arrivals differ significantly. Poland, for instance, has absorbed the largest influx of Ukrainian refugees, with over a million individuals residing within its borders and peaking at over three million.⁴ The influx of displaced individuals into Poland highlights the profound impact of the crisis on the country's social fabric and resource availability.

Conversely, Hungary and Serbia have experienced smaller yet notable inflows of displaced persons. Hungary's challenges in resource allocation and integration underscore the complexities of managing refugee inflows. Serbia's unique position as a visa-free destination for Russians has led to a notable increase in temporary or permanent relocations of Russian citizens, adding further layers of complexity to the region's dynamics.⁵

Every country's approach to hosting and treating displaced individuals varies significantly, shaped by a complex interplay of historical ties, geopolitical alignments, domestic politics, and public attitudes. Despite their shared proximity to the conflict zone, Serbia, Hungary, and Poland exhibit distinct historical trajectories, geopolitical alliances, and public sentiments toward Russia and Ukraine. These nuanced stances not only affect the experiences of displaced individuals but also reflect broader geopolitical dynamics in Eastern Europe, a region historically marked by communist regimes and currently grappling with the aftermath of ongoing conflicts. By analyzing these cases, we can better understand the correlation between how individuals are treated and a state's positioning towards their country of origin.

The central question guiding this study is to explore how a host country's position on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict influences the treatment of displaced individuals from Ukraine and Russia. Through an examination of the experiences of Russian and Ukrainian displaced people in Serbia, Hungary, and Poland, this research seeks to illuminate how geopolitical perspectives intersect with migration policies,

⁴ EU Commission on Refugees, "Review of Refugee Flows from Ukraine."

⁵ "Visa Regime for Entering Serbia Russian Federation | Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

impacting the lived experiences and outcomes of displaced individuals. By doing so, this inquiry not only addresses the specific challenges faced by displaced persons in these countries but also contributes to a broader understanding of how geopolitical factors shape the treatment of refugees on a global scale.

To begin, I will provide context for this study by examining existing literature on migration and geopolitics. This will involve extracting relevant concepts, defining key terminology, and then grounding the geographical context for the reader. Next, I will outline the rationale behind selecting Serbia, Hungary, and Poland as focal points, elucidating the process of case selection. Subsequently, I will elucidate my methodology, which entails establishing a quantitative baseline comparison followed by a qualitative refinement. Finally, I will conduct a comparative analysis of these three countries, aiming to establish connections between geopolitics and migration. I will conclude by summarizing the main insights gleaned from the study.

II. Contextualizing the Politics of Welcomeness

People Displaced by Conflict

In this study I will be using the term "people displaced by conflict" (PDC) which encompasses all individuals who have been forced to leave their homes due to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. This displacement can occur for various reasons, ranging from direct threats to personal safety to indirect consequences such as economic sanctions, political persecution, or fear of mobilization.

Utilizing PDC as a descriptor for all individuals leaving Ukraine and Russia acknowledges the limitations and complexities surrounding terms like "refugee," "migrant," or "asylum seeker." Legal developments in the European Union, particularly legislation granting automatic asylum to Ukrainians while complicating asylum processes for Russians, render traditional "asylum seeker" designation inadequate.⁶ Moreover, the

⁶ Government of the Netherlands | Temporary Protection Directive for Refugees from Ukraine Extended until 4 March 2025

UN Geneva Convention's definition of "refugee" predominantly applies to Ukrainians in or near conflict zones,⁷ excluding many affected individuals. Similarly, the term "migrant" lacks specificity and encompasses students, workers, and others without capturing the specific experience of displacement due to conflict.⁸ By using PDC, my study embraces the shared experience of displacement while capturing the different backgrounds and motivations of Ukrainian and Russian individuals. This inclusive definition provides a strong foundation for a more comprehensive analysis of the treatment of displaced persons across different host countries.

Public attitudes toward migrants and media narratives about them significantly influence perceptions and responses to displacement. Media framing often portrays migrants in specific ways, shaping public discourse and policy outcomes. As a result, the term "refugee" today carries a sensitive meaning, extending beyond its legal definition. Therefore, just like in the 2015 refugee crisis, European countries hesitate to accept certain groups of refugees, creating narratives that divide people into "real refugees" and opportunistic migrants.⁹

Understanding the distinction between direct and indirect threats is crucial in determining the experiences of displaced individuals and their perceived eligibility as "real refugees." Direct displacement refers to individuals facing immediate and explicit threats to their safety, such as violence or war, compelling them to flee their homes. In contrast, indirect displacement encompasses individuals whose displacement is driven by broader consequences of the conflict, such as economic or political hardship, which may not pose an immediate threat but still force them to seek refuge elsewhere. This distinction is pivotal in shaping public attitudes toward migrants and influencing policy outcomes. Ukrainians fleeing the conflict often align more closely with the "real refugee" narrative, particularly those directly threatened by

⁷ UNHCR. "The 1951 Refugee Convention."

⁸ United Nations. 2016. "Definitions." Refugees and Migrants

⁹ Hargrave, K. with Homel K. and Dražanová L. (2022) Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile.

violence in conflict zones. Their demographic profile, including women and children, further reinforces this perception, leading to greater acceptance institutionally and societally.¹⁰

Conversely, perceptions of Russians seeking refuge may differ due to various factors. While some may face direct threats to their safety, such as political persecution,¹¹ others may be displaced indirectly due to economic hardship or fear of mobilization. This diversity within the Russian displaced population complicates the narrative surrounding their eligibility as "real refugees" and may contribute to varying degrees of acceptance within host countries. We have already seen various European leaders telling Russians to stay at home and "fight against the regime" and proclaiming that they are just running from responsibility.¹²

Moreover, media narratives exploit the "us versus them" concept to shape public attitudes toward displacement. Ukrainians are frequently portrayed as part of the "us" group, united against the common enemy—the Russians. This narrative reinforces solidarity and empathy toward Ukrainian refugees, particularly in countries with historical ties to Ukraine. On the other hand, Russians may be perceived as part of the "them" group, particularly in countries with strained political relations with Russia. This perception can influence public attitudes and policy responses, leading to greater scrutiny and skepticism toward Russian displaced individuals.

Challenges to Migration

Understanding migratory pathways from conflict zones requires acknowledging the pivotal influence of geographical context, shaping both the accessibility of destinations and the composition of displaced populations. Poland and Hungary share borders with Ukraine, positioning them as natural first-choice

¹⁰ McCann, K., M. Sienkiewicz and M. Zard, 2023. The role of media narratives in shaping public opinion toward refugees: A comparative analysis.

Gilodi, Amalia, Isabelle Albert, and Birte Nienaber. 2022. "Vulnerability in the Context of Migration: A Critical Overview and a New Conceptual Model."

¹¹ Sergeeva, I., Kamalov, E. (2024, January 15). A Year and a Half in Exile: Progress and Obstacles in the Integration of Russian Migrants.

¹² "Would Europe Open Its Borders to Russians Seeking Asylum?" Shankar, "Should Europe Shelter Russians Fleeing Mobilisation?"

destinations for Ukrainian PDC seeking safety and shelter. These geographical proximities dictate the accessibility of different migration routes and contribute to the composition and distribution of PDC populations across the region. For example, Moscow is approximately the same distance from Belgrade as London,¹³ making Belgrade not an accessible destination for all individuals fleeing from Russia.

Understanding these migration patterns allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the varied experiences of displaced individuals and the complexities of the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Ethical Dilemmas and Treatment

Ethical dilemmas in migration involve a complex web of considerations across multiple levels, including the treatment of PDC, balancing justice and security, and safeguarding human rights. At the international level, scholars like Bauböck, Permoser, and Ruhs emphasize the ethical tensions inherent in migration governance, urging states to navigate trade-offs between national interests and humanitarian obligations.¹⁴ This balancing act can lead to difficult decisions regarding border control measures, refugee resettlement quotas, and the provision of support to asylum seekers, with implications both domestically and internationally. For instance, stringent border control measures may serve to protect national security but may also hinder PDC from accessing safe haven. Conversely, more lenient policies may allow for greater human rights protections but could raise concerns about the impact on local resources and integration capacities, both domestically and withing regional alliances.

On the other hand, Aleinikoff and Owen explore the ethical challenges states face in providing protection to PDC, particularly regarding regional and global responsibility sharing.¹⁵ Their work underscores the importance of principled policy-making that considers PDC's rights and preferences while fulfilling state obligations under international law. Examples include equitable burden sharing among countries, ensuring

¹³ The flight distance between the nearest airports Belgrade and Moscow is 1,070.07 mi (1,722.12 km). This corresponds to an approximate flight time of 2h 31min. Similarly, the flight distance between Belgrade and London is 1060 mi (1706 km). This corresponds to an approximate flight time of 2h 30 min.

¹⁴ Bauböck, Rainer, Julia Mourão Permoser, and Martin Ruhs. 2022. "The Ethics of Migration Policy Dilemmas."

¹⁵ Aleinikoff, T. A., Owen, D. (2022) "Refugee protection: 'Here' or 'there'?"

access to fair and efficient asylum procedures, and providing adequate support for PDC in line with international standards, all of which require coordination and cooperation across multiple states.

Migration has profound implications for the well-being of individuals and communities, yet migrants often face unique challenges in adapting to new environments and social contexts. Hendriks examines the relationship between migration and well-being, emphasizing the importance of considering subjective experiences alongside objective indicators.¹⁶ His research explores complexities such as social networks, cultural identity, and economic opportunities shaping migrants' happiness and life satisfaction. For example, migrants who establish strong social connections and find stable employment in their host country tend to report higher levels of well-being. Conversely, those facing discrimination or isolation may struggle to integrate and experience lower satisfaction. This nuanced understanding challenges simplistic narratives of migration as either inherently positive or negative and highlights the need for tailored support mechanisms that address migrants' psychosocial needs and aspirations.

While scholarly attention to displacement crises has grown globally, a notable gap persists in understanding the geopolitical dimensions of migration governance. Existing research often overlooks the intricate interplay between geopolitical factors and responses to displacement, leading to a limited comprehension of migration dynamics. Geopolitical considerations profoundly influence migration governance, yet their role remains underexplored in current literature. Factors such as national security imperatives, historical alliances, and regional power dynamics shape countries' responses to displacement crises and the treatment of displaced populations, necessitating analysis at both domestic and international levels. However, the nuanced interactions between these geopolitical forces and domestic policies have received insufficient scholarly scrutiny, hindering a comprehensive understanding of migration governance worldwide.

¹⁶ Hendriks, M. 2015. "The Happiness of International Migrants: A Review of Research Findings."

Moreover, while some studies acknowledge the influence of geopolitical factors on migration dynamics, few undertake comprehensive comparative analyses across diverse regions. This lack of comparative research limits our ability to discern patterns and variations in countries' responses to displacement crises, impeding the development of effective policy interventions. By addressing these gaps and delving into the geopolitical dimensions of migration governance more broadly, I try to illuminate the complexities inherent in the treatment of displaced populations. Such analyses offer valuable insights into how geopolitical considerations intersect with domestic policies and historical legacies to shape countries' responses to displacement crises. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of these dynamics is essential for crafting more nuanced and effective policy responses to displacement crises and advancing our collective knowledge of migration as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by geopolitical realities.

Geopolitical factors

Geopolitical factors play a central role in shaping migration patterns and countries' responses to migration challenges. The intricate interplay between international relations, regional alliances, and power dynamics influences migration flows and the treatment of migrants and displaced persons in distinct ways. First, geopolitical alliances and alignments significantly shape the allocation of resources for humanitarian assistance and support for displaced populations. Countries with historical or strategic ties to conflict regions may prioritize assistance to refugees from those areas, thereby influencing migration routes and refugee settlement patterns. Second, large-scale refugee influxes can strain diplomatic relationships between neighboring states, particularly when migration flows are perceived as security threats. The resulting geopolitical tensions can make international cooperation and coordinated responses more challenging. For example, the influx of refugees into Greece and Italy in recent years strained relations within the EU, as frontline states felt overburdened and sought greater support from other member countries.¹⁷

¹⁷ Kyriakopoulos, Irene. 2019. "Europe's Responses to the Migration Crisis: Implications for European."

The European Union provides a clear example of the complexities involved in balancing regional and international approaches to migration governance. Differing geopolitical interests, historical experiences, and national priorities among EU member states challenge the harmonization of migration policies. These complexities were evident during the 2015 refugee crisis, when countries like Germany and Sweden welcomed refugees, while others, such as Hungary and Poland, resisted EU proposals for quota-based refugee distribution.¹⁸ The EU's internal divisions over refugee distribution have led to varying approaches to migration management within the union, creating tension and highlighting the need for stronger collaboration and consensus-building. For instance, the Visegrád Group (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) has pursued more restrictive migration policies, contrasting with other EU member states' openness to resettlement.¹⁹

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict serves as a compelling case study of how geopolitical events can prompt large-scale migration and displacement. As refugees, asylum seekers, and people avoiding conflict within Russia seek safety in neighboring countries, these states' responses are influenced by historical ties, strategic interests, and regional alliances. Consequently, each country's approach to the influx of migrants and refugees is shaped by its unique geopolitical context.²⁰ These differences underscore how geopolitical factors deeply influence migration patterns and policy responses, with the divergent approaches seen within the EU and beyond demonstrating how historical relationships, regional alliances, and strategic interests intersect with migration challenges, resulting in a complex and multifaceted landscape.

Peters, Linda, Peter-Jan Engelen, and Danny Cassimon. 2023. "Explaining Refugee Flows. Understanding the 2015 European Refugee Crisis through a Real Options Lens."

¹⁸ Scholten, Peter, ed. 2022. *Introduction to Migration Studies : An Interactive Guide to the Literatures*. Pages 169-344.

Tucker, J. (2018). Why here? Factors influencing Palestinian refugees from Syria in choosing Germany or Sweden as asylum destinations.

Letki, Natalia, Dawid Walentek, Peter Thisted Dinesen, and Ulf Liebe. 2024. "Has the War in Ukraine Changed Europeans' Preferences on Refugee Policy? Evidence from a Panel Experiment in Germany, Hungary and Poland."

¹⁹ Hokovsky, Radko. "Visegrad Group and Prevention of Mass Irregular Immigration to Europe."

²⁰ Hungary and Poland are both in EU and NATO, while Serbia is in neither

Balancing geopolitical priorities in the face of a migration crisis is inherently complex, with additional challenges arising from the pervasive use of social media by both state and non-state actors to promote their agendas. Geissler et al. delve into the repercussions of the War in Ukraine on migration narratives.²¹ Through the dissemination of misinformation and biased narratives, these actors can fuel polarized opinions and prejudice against migrants, exacerbating societal divisions. This manipulation often involves oversimplifying complex situations, framing displaced individuals in negative or threatening ways, or casting them as victims in need of help. Such framing mechanisms flatten the discourse and can facilitate more of an outgroup mentality. Consequently, both strategies can impact policy-making, leading to either overly restrictive or excessively lenient approaches that fail to address the true needs and challenges faced by displaced persons. The narratives surrounding migrants are multifaceted, shaped by historical, political, and social factors. Narratives framing migrants as threats to national security or economic stability may lead to exclusionary attitudes and policies. In contrast, narratives emphasizing shared humanity and resilience can foster empathy and support for migrants.

III. Research Question and Hypotheses

The central question of this study is “How does a country's stance on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict influence the treatment of people displaced by conflict from Ukraine and Russia?”. This inquiry aims to explore how different geopolitical positions and relationships impact the lived experiences and outcomes of displaced individuals in various countries. In particular, the study investigates the relationship between a country's political orientation and the tangible support and social acceptance extended to Ukrainian and Russian PDC.

²¹ Geissler, Dominique, Dominik Bär, Nicolas Pröllochs, and Stefan Feuerriegel. 2023. “Russian Propaganda on Social Media during the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine.”

Hanley, Hans W. A., Deepak Kumar, and Zakir Durumeric. 2023. “‘A Special Operation’: A Quantitative Approach to Dissecting and Comparing Different Media Ecosystems’ Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War.”

There are three hypotheses designed to guide the analysis:

H1: Countries with less anti-Russian positioning will treat Russian PDC better or at least equally as well as Ukrainian PDC. This hypothesis suggests that a country's more favorable stance towards Russia could lead to more supportive treatment of Russian PDC.

H2: Countries with more anti-Russian positioning will treat Ukrainian PDC better than Russian PDC. This hypothesis proposes that a country's unfavorable stance towards Russia could result in preferential treatment for Ukrainian PDC.

H3: Country's stance does not significantly impact the treatment of Russian and Ukrainian PDC. This hypothesis posits that geopolitical positions may not have a substantial effect on the treatment of displaced individuals from either country.

Case Selection

To test the hypotheses, I selected three country cases that provide variation on the key variable of interest, a state's position on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Serbia's pro-Russian stance is deeply rooted in historical ties, cultural affinities, and political cooperation between the two countries. Historically, Serbia and Russia have shared a long-standing relationship dating back to the 19th century. During this time, both countries fought simultaneous wars against the Ottoman Empire, solidifying their alliance.

Furthermore, in the First World War, the Russian Empire provided crucial support to Serbia. Then, when the Red Army marched through Yugoslavia (a country that Serbia was a part of), it set up a communist regime. These ties have persisted through periods of political change and upheaval, contributing to a sense of affinity between the two states.

Economically, Serbia has greatly benefited from Russian investment and assistance, particularly in critical sectors such as energy and infrastructure. Russian companies have been actively involved in major

projects within Serbia,²² contributing significantly to the country's economic development and stability, albeit sometimes accompanied by concerns about corruption. This economic partnership intertwines with Serbia's alignment with Russia on numerous international issues, notably evident in diplomatic forums like the United Nations, where Russia consistently supports Serbia's stance against the independence of Kosovo and Metohija, a breakaway region recognized by Western-aligned countries. Such alignment underscores the depth of cooperation and shared interests between Serbia and Russia on matters of geopolitical significance. Moreover, culturally and religiously, Serbia and Russia share commonalities, with both nations predominantly adhering to Orthodox Christianity, fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding among their citizens, strengthening their bond beyond political and economic realms. These factors made Serbia a compelling case for understanding how pro-Russian countries treat displaced individuals from both Ukraine and Russia.

Hungary's relationship with Russia is marked by a pragmatic and nuanced approach, navigating between cooperation with Russia and its ties with the European Union, shaped by historical, economic, and geopolitical factors. Historically, Hungary has had periods of both cooperation and conflict with Russia.²³ Economically, Hungary has forged partnerships with Russia, particularly in the energy sector, relying on Russian natural gas imports and participating in joint energy projects.²⁴ These economic ties influence Hungary's diplomatic stance towards Russia, aiming to maintain stable energy supplies and foster economic cooperation. However, Hungary's membership in the European Union and NATO also influences its relationship with Russia. Committed to upholding Western values and security interests, Hungary participates in NATO exercises and supports EU sanctions against Russia, aligning with Western policies on certain issues. This balancing act positions Hungary in a unique middle ground between

²² For example, GAZPROM has the majority stake in Serbia's national oil company: "Russia's Gazprom Acquires Majority Interest in Serbian NIS | Hart Energy." 2024

²³ Hungary has voted against Russian invasion of Ukraine 5 times in the UN, however it has not sanctioned Russia's oil and gas industry.

²⁴ AP. "Hungary Concludes New Energy Agreements with Russia."

Russia and the West, making it an intriguing subject for studying how neutral nations address individuals displaced by conflict from both Ukraine and Russia.

Poland's relationship with Russia has been marked by historical tensions, geopolitical rivalries, and conflicting interests. These tensions date back centuries and are rooted in territorial disputes, wars, and geopolitical competition in Eastern Europe.²⁵ Historically, Poland and Russia have been adversaries. The partitions of Poland in the late 18th century by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, followed by periods of Russian dominance over Polish territories, have left a legacy of animosity and mistrust. In the modern era, Poland's alignment with Western powers, particularly the European Union and NATO, has further strained its relationship with Russia. Poland views Russia as a security threat, citing concerns about Russia's actions in Ukraine, its military build-up in the region, and its perceived revisionist agenda in Eastern Europe.

Poland's strong alignment with Western institutions shapes its foreign policy towards Russia, including its support for EU sanctions against Russia following the annexation of Crimea and its military presence in Eastern Europe as part of NATO's deterrence measures. Additionally, Poland has been vocal in advocating for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, positioning itself as a staunch supporter of Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. This anti-Russian position allows for an examination of how a country with clear political opposition to Russia handles the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine and Russia.

IV. Methodology

Indicators of Treatment:

My research delves into a comparative analysis of three countries, aiming to discern how their treatment of displaced individuals varies based on their geopolitical positioning. However, measuring welcomeness

²⁵ To name a few examples: The Polish-Russian War of 1605, The Second Partition of Poland, The Polish-Soviet War, World War Two and its Aftermath

and treatment presents a significant challenge due to the absence of established metrics and the multifaceted nature of these concepts. Despite these obstacles, understanding these variations is essential for developing effective strategies to address the needs of displaced populations. Traditional definitions of treatment, such as those provided by the UN Geneva Convention on the treatment of refugees, focus on legal protections and human rights standards. While these guidelines are crucial for safeguarding the rights of displaced individuals, they often lack specificity in terms of measurable outcomes and indicators of well-being. They may not adequately account for the nuances of everyday experiences or the variations in support and resources available to different groups. Therefore, a more tailored approach is necessary to accurately assess the treatment of PDC across various host countries. Hence, my advisor and I developed the idea of creating two "welcomeness" indicators, inspired by the statistical concept of Bayesian inference.²⁶ These include establishing a quantitative baseline, followed by qualitative refinement to deepen the analysis.

To establish a quantitative baseline assessment, I gathered and compiled quantitative data from reputable institutions such as the United Nations, Statista, the European Union, non-governmental organizations, and national governments. These data include measures like policy and legal frameworks, demographic and humanitarian factors, and social and public opinion indicators. These objective metrics serve as an initial estimate of the resources and opportunities available to displaced individuals—a starting point akin to a Bayesian prior.

Although quantitative data provides essential insights into the support structures and resources available, it may not fully capture the complexities of PDC experiences, such as social context, cultural differences, and personal perspectives. To refine and enhance the quantitative baseline, I collected qualitative data

²⁶ In simple terms, the idea of a Bayesian prior and Bayesian update comes from a statistical approach known as Bayesian inference. It involves starting with an initial belief or estimate about something, which is called the prior. This initial belief is based on existing information or experience. As new data or evidence becomes available, you use it to update your initial belief. This process is known as a Bayesian update. Essentially, you adjust your initial belief to better reflect the new information, leading to a more refined and accurate understanding. In summary, you begin with an initial belief (prior), and as new data comes in, you update that belief to improve your understanding of the situation.

from various sources, including physical observations of spaces, officials' rhetoric, and interviews with PDC and locals, social integration, and media representation. This data enables me to adjust the initial assessment to better reflect the nuanced reality—a sort of Bayesian update. Qualitative insights provide a more complete perspective on the treatment of PDC by capturing their lived experiences and the social context in which they reside. These insights reveal subtleties enriching our understanding of the treatment of PDC.

By combining both quantitative and qualitative data, this approach offers a comprehensive and nuanced assessment of how different host countries manage the influx of PDC. It provides a robust understanding of the treatment of displaced individuals and the complexity of their experiences across different host countries. The indicators used are listed in table 1.

Table 1: Indicators of Welcomeness

Quantitative Baseline

Ukrainians in Refugee-like situation in the country(measured over time)
Proportion of PDC to the local population as of summer 2023
Financial assistance to PDC
Number of refugee camps and centers
Financial aid (state to state)
Military aid
UN General Assembly Vote
Polls
Number of local firms offering services in Russian/Ukrainian
Ukrainians in Refugee-like situation in the country(measured over time)
Proportion of PDC to the local population as of summer 2023
Financial assistance to PDC

Qualitative Refinement

Interviews
Local views on Russian/Ukrainian leaders
Facebook Groups
Visa regime
Integration into local societies
Rallies
Official's Rhetoric on the War
Official's Rhetoric on PDC
Media view of the host country for PDC from Russia/Ukraine

Data Collection:

The qualitative aspect of the study involved fieldwork carried out in six cities across the three target countries in summer of 2023 (see Appendix). The purpose of this fieldwork was to capture the complex treatment of PDC and to understand the prevailing attitudes towards the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The empirical foundation of the study consists of semi structured interviews and observations. Semi structured

interviews involved 39 respondents, including PDC from both Russia and Ukraine, as well as local residents. These interviews offered a perspective on participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and the challenges they face. They also shed light on the attitudes and perceptions of the host community towards displaced individuals.

Participant observation was conducted in various settings such as PDC community centers and public spaces. This ethnographic approach enabled firsthand understanding of the daily realities of PDC, their interactions with locals, and the support they receive. The selection of interview participants for this study was informed by an approach that aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives from both people displaced by conflict and local residents in Serbia, Hungary, and Poland. respondents were identified through their visible display of national symbols such as flags or badges, or through their participation in public rallies and events. While this approach has limitations, such as potential bias in the selection process, it provided valuable qualitative insights often overlooked in quantitative research, contributing to a richer understanding of the nuances of PDC treatment and attitudes towards the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

While this study does not claim to be comprehensive or definitive in its conclusions due to the complexity of the context and the limitations of sampling, it provides valuable qualitative insights that are often overlooked by relying solely on statistics. The interviews and observations add contextual depth to the broader narrative, revealing nuances and perspectives that contribute to a richer understanding of the challenges faced by PDC in these regions.

Figure 2: Pro-Ukraine Graffiti in Budapest, Hungary



Source: Author Photograph, July 2023


V. Quantitative Data Comparison

In this section, I aim to provide a quantitative data comparison between Serbia, Hungary, and Poland to assess the treatment and support available to people displaced by conflict from Ukraine and Russia. This comparison establishes a quantitative baseline that offers essential insights into the varying approaches these countries take towards PDC, laying the foundation for further analysis.

In presenting the quantitative data, trends begin to emerge that reflect each country's geopolitical stance and policy priorities. We can see that Serbia consistently has the least support for Ukrainians and Poland has the most. This is consistent with the expected result that more-anti Russian sentiment will result in better treatment for Ukrainians.

Table 2: Financial Assistance to PDC

Country	For Russians	for Ukrainians
Serbia	none	none
Hungary	none	60 euros/month
Poland	none	15 euros/month



Source: Statista

My analysis commences with an examination of the population of displaced individuals in each country. Serbia, with its lenient visa policies and pro-Russian stance, notably hosts a significant population of Russian PDC, upwards of 300,000.²⁷ This is very significant considering that Serbia's population is less than seven million. Conversely, according to the UNHCR Operational Data, the population of Ukrainian PDC is much smaller,²⁸ less than six thousand, potentially indicating a higher level of support towards Russian displaced individuals. Meanwhile, the same data estimates that Hungary houses a significant number of Ukrainian PDC, close to fifty thousand, due to its shared border with Ukraine. However, it holds close to no Russian PDC, reflecting Hungary's potential preference for Ukrainians. Furthermore, the data showcases that Poland stands out for hosting the largest population of Ukrainian PDC, close to 970,000, owing to its extensive border with Ukraine and robust support for the Ukrainian cause. Remarkably, Russian PDC numbers are non-existent, highlighting Poland's anti-Russian stance and its strong commitment to supporting Ukrainian displaced individuals.

Moving forward, another crucial aspect of my analysis pertains to the financial aid and support extended to displaced populations. This data was taken from Statista for all three countries.²⁹ Serbia offers no financial assistance to either Ukrainian or Russian displaced individuals, reflecting a potential discord

²⁷ "Russian Immigrants to Serbia Live in a Parallel Society"

²⁸ "Ukraine Refugee Situation" - UNHCR Operational Data Portal

²⁹ "Monthly Support per Ukrainian Refugee Europe by Country 2022." n.d. Statista.

between official policies and societal attitudes within the country. On the other hand, Hungary provides minimal financial aid to Ukrainian PDC while offering no assistance to Russian displaced individuals, indicating a slightly pro-Ukrainian approach towards Ukrainian PDC. Similarly, Poland demonstrates a significant commitment to supporting Ukrainian PDC by allocating substantial financial resources. However, Russian displaced individuals receive no financial aid, consistent with Poland's anti-Russian stance and its emphasis on supporting Ukrainian interests.

Finally, the trend becomes further evident upon scrutinizing the inter-state financial assistance landscape. While Serbia abstains from extending financial aid to Russia, it extends humanitarian support to Ukraine and has pledged around 30 million euros in aid.³⁰ Likewise, Hungary refrains from providing financial assistance to Russia, opting instead to allocate roughly 360 million euros to bolster Ukraine.³¹ Consistent with this pattern of direct support, Poland refrains from extending financial aid to Russia but has committed a substantial sum, approximately 5.52 billion euros, to bolster Ukraine.³²

VI. Comparative Analysis

My comparative analysis delves into the nuanced approaches of Serbia, Hungary, and Poland towards PDC from Ukraine and Russia. Serbia's stance, influenced by its alignment with Russia and aspirations for European Union integration, fosters a generally welcoming environment for both Ukrainian and Russian PDC. Despite challenges in integration, Serbia's neutrality and commitment to positive relations with all parties contribute to a hospitable atmosphere. Conversely, Hungary's pragmatic approach, driven by its complex diplomatic relationships and national interests, results in notable support for Ukrainian PDC, albeit with limited visibility for Russian displaced persons. Meanwhile, Poland's historical solidarity with Ukraine translates into comprehensive support for Ukrainian PDC, reflected in robust aid

³⁰ Zoria, Yuri. 2024. "Ukraine's First Lady and Foreign Minister Make Their First Visit to Serbia."

³¹ Kiel Institute for the World Economy. 2024. "Ukraine Support Tracker - a Database of Military, Financial and Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine."

³² Kiel Institute for the World Economy. 2024. "Ukraine Support Tracker - a Database of Military, Financial and Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine."

infrastructure and grassroots solidarity initiatives. However, tensions with Russia complicate the treatment of Russian displaced persons, despite anecdotal evidence suggesting their presence. My analysis sheds light on the complexities and challenges inherent in the treatment and integration of displaced persons within Europe.

A. Serbia

Serbia's treatment of people displaced by conflict is heavily influenced by its geopolitical stance, which is characterized by its alignment with Russia and aspirations towards European Union membership. This balance of alliances significantly impacts how the country receives and integrates PDC. Moreover, Serbia's openness towards Russians is intricately linked to its historical and cultural ties with Russia. This affinity, stemming from a shared Slavic and Orthodox Christian heritage, fosters a deep sense of solidarity with both Ukrainian and Russian PDC. This sense of kinship often translates into a pro-Russian sentiment among Serbians, yet it does not result in hostility towards Ukrainians. Instead, many Serbians perceive both Ukrainian and Russian PDC as integral members of their broader Orthodox Slavic community.

These connections are further illustrated by Serbia's diplomatic approach to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, defined by its neutral stance. I have analyzed five speeches by the current president Aleksandar Vučić. He has been careful in his rhetoric, acknowledging the importance of upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity while simultaneously refraining from openly criticizing Russia. This diplomatic balancing act allows Serbia to maintain its strategic partnerships without alienating any side, reflecting its commitment to maintaining positive relations with both Russia and the European Union. Neutrality aligns with Serbia's broader foreign policy strategy, which seeks to uphold its sovereignty and independence while pursuing its European integration goals.³³ Serbia's official stance is crucial in shaping public sentiment towards

³³ In 2013, Serbia signed the stabilization and association agreement – engraving European integrations as a strategic national goal. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-serbia.html>.

PDC, influencing how displaced individuals are perceived and treated within the country. Russians indicate that they are grateful that Serbia is one of the few countries in Europe that doesn't discriminate against them.

Figure 3: Graffiti symbolizing Russian-Serbian “alliance” against the West. Belgrade 2023



Source: Reuters

In my interviews, both Russian and Ukrainian PDC in Serbia indicate that they generally feel welcome, do not have much interest in Serbian politics, and have positive opinions for each other. For instance, a Ukrainian couple expressed their devastation about the war but maintained friendly interactions with Russians in Belgrade, showcasing a shared understanding and solidarity among displaced individuals. Russian PDC, such as a couple who relocated from Moscow, felt accepted in Serbia and focused on their work without expressing strong opinions on the conflict. Finally, a much smaller number of interviewed Ukrainians were unhappy with Serbia's lack of alignment against Russia. This mostly harmonious social dynamic is a testament to the open-mindedness and hospitality of Serbian society. However, the relationship between the different groups of PDC and the local Serbian population is not without its complexities.

Despite Serbia's generally welcoming stance towards displaced persons, challenges in integration persist, especially for those from Russia and Ukraine. Language barriers, cultural differences, and a tendency to rely on tight-knit displaced communities can hinder full integration into Serbian society, resulting in limited positive interactions with the broader local population. While the number of Ukrainians is relatively low and their presence isn't strongly felt, the significant number of Russians is very evident. Many Serbs express happiness at the presence of displaced persons in Serbia but also voice concerns about individual Russians who have been in the country for a considerable time yet haven't made efforts to learn the language or integrate, viewing their stay as temporary. Examples include interactions in public spaces like buses, cafes, traffic, and clubs, where tensions can arise. Additionally, the exclusive reliance on air travel from Russia to Serbia, coupled with biases in who can participate in migration and economic disparities between the two countries.³⁴ These discrepancies mean that many Russian displaced persons in Serbia enjoy a higher economic status than the average Serb, contributing to upward pressure on prices and the transformation of some community spaces into Russian-centric venues. The influx of Russian and Ukrainian displaced persons has had significant economic implications, particularly in major cities such as Belgrade and Novi Sad. The increased demand for housing has driven up property prices, negatively affecting local residents.³⁵ These factors have led a smaller number of interview respondents to voice a small but vocal pushback against Russians.

Physical observations and qualitative data reveal a notable presence of pro-Russian sentiments in Serbia, exemplified by a significant amount of pro-Russia graffiti advocating for figures like Wagner, Putin, and the letter "Z," which symbolizes support for Russian-backed forces. Additionally, pro-Russian stances are observable in the media landscape. This sentiment is further evidenced by public opinion data showing that 82% of Serbs are against sanctions targeting Russia, and approximately 95% view Russia as a true

³⁴ The World Bank estimates that the GDP Per Capita in Russia is \$15,646, while in Serbia it is \$9,537.

³⁵ Serbia Real Residential Property Price Index | Economic Indicators | CEIC

ally.³⁶ Such attitudes reflect a deep-seated affinity towards Russia within a sizable portion of the Serbian population, influencing perceptions and interactions with displaced persons from Russia. These sentiments contribute to the complexities of integration for displaced individuals, shaping social dynamics and interactions within Serbian society.

The prevalence of pro-Russia graffiti, media portrayals, and public opinion data indicating strong support for Putin and opposition to sanctions against Russia contribute to a socio-political environment where individuals from Russia may feel more welcomed and accepted compared to other displaced groups. This sense of affinity towards Russia can influence interactions, perceptions, and the overall hospitality extended towards Russian displaced persons, potentially shaping their experiences of integration and acceptance within Serbian communities. However, these sentiments may also contribute to tensions and complexities, particularly when it comes to interactions between displaced individuals from Russia and other groups, as well as the broader geopolitical landscape influencing Serbia's diplomatic relations.

Despite the prevalence of pro-Russian sentiments in Serbia, it's important to note that not all displaced individuals from Russia share the same views. While a significant portion of the Serbian population may hold positive opinions towards Putin and Russia, it's worth highlighting that many Russians residing in Serbia may hold dissenting views, including opposition to Putin's regime or certain Russian policies.³⁷ These nuances in individual perspectives among the displaced Russian community add complexity to the social dynamics and interactions within Serbian society, potentially influencing the reception and integration experiences of displaced individuals from Russia.

B. Hungary

Hungary's approach to people displaced by conflict is pragmatic and heavily influenced by its complex diplomatic relationships with both Russia and Ukraine. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has

³⁶ Hoxhaj, Andi. 2022. "Ukraine War: Serbia Is Shifting Closer to Russia – Here's Why."

³⁷ Sergeeva, I., Kamalov, E. (2024, January 15). A Year and a Half in Exile: Progress and Obstacles in the Integration of Russian Migrants.

maintained a cautious stance, balancing the country's relationships with its Eastern neighbor and its Western allies. This neutrality is rooted in Hungary's national interests, including its reliance on Russian energy and its membership in the European Union. Hungary's support for Ukrainian PDC has been notable, as it has opened its borders to allow a significant influx of individuals seeking refuge. However, many Ukrainian PDC perceive Hungary as a transit point to Western Europe, rather than a long-term settlement destination. This perception is often influenced by the language barrier, economic opportunities elsewhere, and a perceived lack of substantial support beyond basic needs in Hungary. In contrast, Russian displaced persons are virtually invisible in Hungary, with limited data or fieldwork identifying significant Russian displacement into the country. This absence may be attributed to Hungary's diplomatic approach of not openly opposing Russia, while also avoiding direct support for its actions or citizens. Hungary's geopolitical stance, marked by its neutral and cautious approach, affects its treatment of displaced persons.

While Hungary supports Ukrainian PDC, it simultaneously seeks to avoid antagonizing Russia. This nuanced position has led to Hungary and Orbán being unfairly labeled as pro-Russian,³⁸ whereas in reality, they are being anti-Russian,³⁹ albeit less vocal than other EU countries. This perception has left some Ukrainian PDC feeling unwelcome and prompted them to rapidly seek transit through the country. Hungary's approach to displaced persons from Ukraine primarily centers on offering essential aid, such as access to help centers and limited financial assistance, healthcare, education, and housing. The country's neutral stance on the conflict shapes its support infrastructure. Unlike Serbia or Poland, where pro-Ukraine or Pro-Russia sentiments are more visibly expressed through activities like rallies and political symbols, physical manifestations of support, such as graffiti or political paraphernalia, are minimal in Hungary. Such stance is also observed among Hungarian locals and service workers, who hold a generally

³⁸ “US Envoy Slams Orbán as a Leader Who ‘Embraces Putin.’” 2023. POLITICO.

McGee, Luke. 2024. “Analysis: How Orbán’s Ties to Putin Are Putting European Aid to Ukraine at Risk.” CNN.

“EU Shrugs as Pro-Russia Pals Orbán and Fico Troll the West after Putin Handshake.” 2023. POLITICO.

Coakley, Amanda. 2022. “Putin’s Trojan Horse inside the European Union.” Foreign Policy.

³⁹ As evidenced with their votes in the UN, joining of sanctions, and a large amount of aid given to Ukraine.

neutral attitude towards both Russian and Ukrainian PDC. Many locals express indifference as long as PDC adhere to the rule of law and do not disrupt the existing social fabric.

Figure 4. One of the Budapest Helps! Centers.



Source: Photograph taken by the author in July 2023.

C. Poland

Poland's approach to individuals displaced by conflict is deeply entrenched in its historical narratives and geopolitical alignments, notably marked by a steadfast pro-Ukrainian stance. Over the centuries, Poland has shared a complex and often tumultuous relationship with Russia, shaped by territorial disputes, political tensions, and military conflicts. This historical backdrop, coupled with Poland's geographical

proximity to Ukraine and its shared cultural and linguistic ties, has engendered a profound sense of solidarity and empathy towards Ukrainian displaced persons within Polish society.

Central to Poland's support for Ukrainian displaced individuals is a recognition of their contributions and presence within Polish society long before the outbreak of conflict. For decades, millions of Ukrainians have sought employment opportunities in Poland, drawn by the promise of economic prosperity and stability. Their labor has played an integral role in various sectors of the Polish economy, ranging from agriculture and construction to healthcare and hospitality.⁴⁰ This longstanding presence of Ukrainian migrants has fostered deep-rooted connections and relationships between the two nations, further strengthening Poland's commitment to assisting Ukrainian displaced persons in their time of need.

Amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis precipitated by the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, Poland has mobilized its resources and expertise to provide comprehensive support and assistance to Ukrainian displaced individuals. The Polish government has allocated a significant portion of its aid budget towards addressing the urgent needs of those fleeing conflict in Ukraine, encompassing essential services such as healthcare, education, housing, and employment opportunities.⁴¹ Furthermore, Poland has actively engaged in diplomatic efforts within international forums, including the European Union and NATO, to champion the cause of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, reflecting its broader geopolitical aspirations and commitment to European security and stability.

⁴⁰ Scholten, Peter, ed. 2022. *Introduction to Migration Studies: An Interactive Guide to the Literatures*. Chapter on Poland.

⁴¹ Pędziwiatr, Konrad, Jan Brzozowski, and Olena Nahorniuk. 2022. *Review of Refugees from Ukraine in Kraków*. Poland: Multiculturalism & Migration Observatory.

Figure 5: Collage of photos taken in Krakow and Warsaw, Poland.



Source: Photographs taken by the author in July 2023

This pro-Ukrainian stance resonates deeply among the Polish populace, where expressions of solidarity and support for Ukrainian displaced persons abound. From grassroots initiatives to organized humanitarian efforts, Polish locals have demonstrated remarkable compassion and generosity towards their Ukrainian neighbors in need. Beyond official channels, ordinary citizens have extended acts of kindness and assistance, embodying the spirit of solidarity and camaraderie.

In stark contrast, the integration prospects for Russian displaced persons in Poland are fraught with challenges and complexities. Historical animosities and geopolitical tensions between Poland and Russia have created a less hospitable environment for Russians seeking refuge within Polish borders. Despite the absence of official data or fieldwork observations documenting the presence of Russian displaced persons in Poland, anecdotal evidence suggests a pervasive sense of skepticism and wariness towards individuals of Russian descent, reflecting deep-seated mistrust and apprehension rooted in historical grievances and contemporary geopolitical realities.

Public sentiment in Poland overwhelmingly favors Ukrainian displaced persons, as evidenced by widespread displays of support such as pro-Ukrainian graffiti, flags, and clothing. While the majority of Polish locals exhibit a strong willingness to assist Ukrainian displaced individuals, concerns linger regarding the long-term implications of accommodating a large influx of displaced persons, including potential strains on resources, social services, and community cohesion. These concerns underscore the delicate balance between compassion and pragmatism that characterizes Poland's response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis stemming from the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

To support the integration and well-being of Ukrainian displaced persons, Poland has developed a robust infrastructure encompassing a range of support services and initiatives.⁴² From dedicated help centers and language classes to job placement programs and healthcare services, Poland has endeavored to provide comprehensive assistance to Ukrainian displaced individuals navigating the challenges of displacement and resettlement.

Lastly, I want to note a specific discrepancy identified in Poland. While all available datasets paint a picture of zero Russians in Poland,⁴³ some interviewed Ukrainian PDC conveyed that there is a vast

⁴² Including help centers, companies offering their services in Ukrainian, many volunteer groups, and large number of Facebook pages

⁴³ I was unable to find any data on the number of Russians in Poland.

amount of them. This poses a question for further research, are Russians somehow slipping under the radar, or do some Ukrainians perceive other Ukrainian citizens as Russians?

VII. Discussion

The comparative analysis of Serbia, Hungary, and Poland provides nuanced insights into how each country's geopolitical stance influences the treatment of people displaced by conflict. The assessment reveals distinct approaches to integrating and supporting both Russian and Ukrainian displaced populations, influenced by each country's historical ties, political context, and cultural attitudes.

Serbia's treatment of displaced individuals is heavily influenced by its geopolitical stance and historical ties to Russia, fostering a generally welcoming environment for both Ukrainian and Russian displaced persons. The shared Slavic and Orthodox Christian heritage between them have cultivated a deep sense of solidarity and kinship, shaping public sentiment and integration dynamics. Despite this pro-Russian sentiment, Serbia maintains a neutral stance in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and isn't anti-Ukrainian. This nuanced support for Russian displaced persons underscores Serbia's commitment to maintaining positive relations with both Russia and the European Union. Thus, while Serbia lends more support for Ukrainian PDC, I conclude that Russian PDC would generally feel more welcome.

Hungary's treatment of displaced individuals is characterized by a pragmatic approach influenced by complex diplomatic relationships with Russia and Ukraine. While Hungary has opened its borders to allow a significant influx of Ukrainian displaced persons, its treatment of Russian PDC is lacking. The limited visibility of Russian displaced individuals in Hungary suggests a prioritization of support towards Ukrainian displaced persons, aligning with Hungary's diplomatic balancing act between Russia and Ukraine. In sum, Hungary lends more support for Ukrainian PDC and they would feel more welcome than Russian PDC.

Poland's treatment of displaced individuals is deeply entrenched in historical narratives and geopolitical alignments, marked by a steadfast pro-Ukrainian stance. Historical grievances against Russia, coupled with shared cultural and linguistic ties with Ukraine, foster a profound sense of solidarity and empathy towards Ukrainian displaced persons. The robust support infrastructure in Poland reflects its commitment to assisting Ukrainian displaced individuals, with dedicated aid programs aimed at addressing their urgent needs. In contrast, challenges in integration for Russian displaced individuals highlight historical animosities and geopolitical tensions between Poland and Russia. Despite anecdotal evidence suggesting the presence of Russian displaced individuals in Poland, public sentiment overwhelmingly favors Ukrainian displaced persons, reflecting deep-rooted cultural and political affinities. Therefore, Ukrainian PDC get more support and would feel more welcome in Poland.

This study serves as a bridge between the fields of geopolitics and migration, exploring how geopolitical interests and alignments shape the treatment of people displaced by conflict from the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The analysis demonstrates that host countries' responses to Russian and Ukrainian PDC are not uniform, reflecting the intricate interplay between international relations, domestic politics, and cultural dynamics. The interplay between geopolitics and migration is a multifaceted phenomenon with significant implications for host countries' treatment of PDC. One key dimension is the influence of geopolitical interests and alliances on PDC treatment. Countries' foreign policy positions regarding the Russo-Ukrainian conflict directly impact their approach to displaced individuals. For instance, Poland's strong pro-Ukrainian stance, driven by historical grievances against Russia and strategic alliances with Western nations, results in more favorable treatment of Ukrainian PDC. This alignment reflects Poland's commitment to supporting its ally and upholding regional stability, as evidenced by its robust aid infrastructure and public expressions of solidarity with Ukrainian displaced persons.

Another crucial factor shaping PDC treatment is cultural affinities and historical legacies between host countries and the countries of origin. Serbia's close ties with Russia and shared Orthodox Slavic identity with both Russia and Ukraine lead to a more nuanced approach to treating displaced individuals. The

cultural affinity influences integration dynamics and public sentiment, fostering solidarity with both Russian and Ukrainian displaced persons. In contrast, the lack of significant cultural affinity or ethnic ties between Hungary and displaced populations from other regions may impact integration efforts differently. This highlights the importance of recognizing the cultural and historical context in understanding host countries' responses to displacement.

Furthermore, security concerns and domestic pressures play a pivotal role in shaping host countries' capacity and willingness to support PDC. Geopolitical tensions arising from the conflict can exacerbate security concerns and influence domestic political climates, impacting countries' responses to displacement. Host nations may face pressure to balance humanitarian assistance with national security and economic priorities, necessitating proactive measures to address the multifaceted challenges of displacement within the context of geopolitical conflicts.

The data offer partial support for H1 (that countries with less anti-Russian positions treat Russian PDC better or equally as well as Ukrainian PDC) illustrated by Serbia, and strong evidence for H2 (that countries with more anti-Russian positions treat Ukrainian PDC better than Russian PDC) illustrated by Poland, while rejecting H3 (the notion of neutral treatment). This variation in treatment underscores how a country's geopolitical stance can significantly influence its PDC policies and practices. Exploring the ethnic dimension presents an intriguing avenue for further research. While Serbia, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia share Slavic ethnic roots, Hungary stands apart. Interestingly, Serbia and Poland seem to support their hypotheses expressing preferences, whereas Hungary notably doesn't support its neutrality hypothesis. Investigating whether shared ethnic ties influence attitudes could yield valuable insights for future studies on migration dynamics.

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the divergent experiences of Russian and Ukrainian PDC in Serbia, Hungary, and Poland underscore the profound influence of geopolitical dynamics on humanitarian responses within Eastern Europe. Through my comparative analysis, I've illuminated the nuanced interplay between political interests, cultural affinities, and state policies, which significantly shape the experiences and integration prospects of displaced populations in the region.

State policies and stances play a pivotal role in balancing political interests and alliances with humanitarian obligations, highlighting the need for careful consideration of the impact on displaced populations and broader regional relations. My findings reveal that differing geopolitical stances, such as Serbia's pro-Russian sentiment and Poland's pro-Ukrainian stance, directly influence the treatment of PDC, manifesting in varying levels of support, discrimination, or hostility experienced by displaced individuals.

As the conflict continues to unfold, addressing the needs and challenges faced by displaced populations remains a pressing issue with far-reaching implications. By examining the treatment of Russian and Ukrainian PDC through a comparative lens, my study underscores the importance of ongoing attention and action to foster regional cooperation, support displaced populations, and promote stability in Eastern Europe. This necessitates a concerted effort to navigate the complex intersection of political, social, and economic factors shaping the experiences of PDC, with strongly preferring one group having potential negative outcomes.

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Appendix

Cities Visited

Location	Russians	Ukrainians	Locals
Belgrade	4	3	13
Vranje (+camp)	0	0	2
Budapest	0	1	3
Krakow	0	3	2
Warsaw	0	3	2
Gdanjsk	0	2	1
Sum:	4	12	23