Migration and EU migration crisis seen from a Visegrad Group country

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Introduction

- 2015 migration crisis
- 3 groups of EU countries:
  - The South: affected with influx of migrants/refugees
  - The North-West: attractive (economic opportunities, welfare, *Wilkommenskultur*).
  - The East: less affected (reluctant)
- Dublin rules expecting competence (i.e. burden) in the first country
- Reallocation quotas adopted as decisions by the EU Council in 2015.
Judicial proceedings and their plausible result

- Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia opposed, but unable to veto (qualified majority sufficient after the Lisbon treaty).
- Court of Justice: confirmation of decisions
- The Commission filed lawsuit against Czechia, Hungary and Poland.
- Condemnation could be expected.
- No feasible argumentation in EU law for defence.
- However, crash course (at least) in case of Czechia...
- Staunch opposition against „refugees“.
Attitudes in the Visegrad Group countries

- Staunch rejection of such immigration.
- 2017 Parliamentary and 2018 presidential election
- Consensus of relevant political parties
- Genuinely positive attitude (Greens) failed
- Tactically positive attitude scored poorly (Social democrats, Cristian democrats, TOP09)
- Calm refusal (ODS, ANO, KSČM – communists – conservative contrary to their western partners). However, anti-immigration extremism (SPD) limited.
- Small groups of „welcomers“ (universities, NGOs)
Seeking for explanation

- Different phase of development?
- Different attitudes towards other trends and tendencies (LGBT issues etc.)
- 14 years in the European Union? Teenage age?
- Widespread Czech euro-scepticism (if compared with most other central, Baltic and Balkans countries): for example, national currency retained.
- 2015 migration crisis sparked criticism of EU elites + elites of some West European countries: German chancellor Angela Merkel become most criticised global statesman.
Immigration to the Visegrad Group countries

- Definitely, at least some Visegrad Group countries have experience with immigrants!
- Czechia is among the most attractive
- Immigration from other EU member states
- Immigration from other Balkans countries
- Immigration from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and other post-soviet republics
- Immigration from Mongolia and Vietnam (former non-European allies of socialist Czechoslovakia)
Reluctance and fear – anti-Islamism

- 1/10 of population in big cities (Prague, Brno) will be soon migrants or people with migratory origins.
- Immigrants with different socio-economic integration.
- Experience with immigrants (different groups of immigrants): their habits, culture, religion
- Czechs are generally irreligious, if not anti-religious (nevertheless, there are minority religious communities, which differentiate sharply now on the issue).
- Islam is suspect! Even without direct experience in contemporary interconnected world. Certainly, people hardly distinguish.
Partial truth in lower development

- Less developed: in many cases somewhere behind.
- Significant technologic modernisation
- Social differentiation (Czechia A, B, C...?)
- Insensitiveness for social and cultural problems.
- Incapability to manage own problems: economically and socially marginalized Roma minority.
- Incapability to organize complex projects (motorways, high-speed railway is dream).
- Capability to absorb refugees? Wir schaffen das nicht!
Refugee laws and policies

- Necessary reaction at tragedies in WWI.
- Refugees from the Soviet Bloc (1945-1990):
  - Defectors? Word now used in South Korea only.
- Growing immigration from Asia, Africa, Latin America to developed countries.
- No defectors, mixture of migrants from instability, lack of perspective, poor socio-economic conditions... (but surely not the poorest ones). Mixed together with genuine refugees fleeing persecution and war.
Gradual turnover in the West

- Gradual development of refugee law.
- Cementing with fundamental rights.
- Activism is rare (and frequently rejected).
- With recent migrant crises:
  - EU mainstream politicians try to keep migrants outside benefits resulting from EU+CoE standards.
  - EU + CoE refugee law becomes unsustainable.
  - Climate change and population growth (taboo in recent discourse): could easily result into instability, was, persecution and thus generate genuine refugees.
(How) Can poorer and selfish countries teach?

In 2015, I signed an electronic petition of academicians and scientists calling for more profound consideration of ongoing migrant influx: become icon of idle academic idealism. Paper written in English for collection of papers organized Europe-wide: criticised for inflammatory and racist remarks and rejected finally. Now I rewrite it again for one Polish journal (and want to finalize it).

I am glad being here „in central Europe“ where extremes are taken with suspiciousness. Poorer and distance observers are hardly listened, but can have sometimes brighter insight.
Migration is sensitive

... even in the European Union with its unique free movement of persons (500 million people).

Brexit as outcome of excessive acceptance of migration (both from Poland, Romania etc. And outside – Pakistan, India, Africa, the Commonwealth...)

Including those naturalized, i.e. formally no immigrants anymore, but mentally?!

Even tourists can face discontent if coming in excessive numbers(Venice, Barcelona)

Even Slovak students in Czechia could spark discontent.