

Anna Kobierecka, Martin Riegl

Introduction

The culmination of the large-scale influx of migrants in the European area in 2015 and 2016 has not only led to severe pressure on the affected countries – transit countries as well as countries of destination –, but also to the questioning of fundamental achievements of the European Union such as the freedom of movement. The migrant crisis also shed light on pressing issues still in need of satisfying responses reflecting reality, such as the case of the revision of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees and the Dublin III Regulation setting forth that an asylum application needs to be filed in the first country of entry. Not only did the crisis reveal already existing ruptures between Western and Eastern Europe, but it also showed that the European Union as such is incapable of taking firm and swift decisions regarding the protection of its own borders and citizens against an unprecedented influx of irregular migrants – many of them without official documents.

The migrants crisis also led to a paradigmatic shift associated mainly with the significance of political territoriality in the European political space. This shift was primarily a result of the clash between the V4 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and the European “core” regarding what the correct solutions for the migration crisis are. For the V4 countries the problem of integration deficit among several groups of immigrants in Western Europe and the societal, economic and security challenges and consequences thereof has also functioned as a warning signal against large-scale irregular migration from countries, significantly differing from the Judeo-Christian European societies in terms of culture, religion and demography. According to official data from European Asylum Support Office (EASO) more than 1,2 million asylum applications were lodged during 2016, which is purely a 9% decrease compared to the record year of 2015, when around 1,4 million persons applied for asylum in the EU+ countries (including Norway and Switzerland).¹ The minor decrease is merely a symbolic development regarding all the efforts taken during 2016 to stem the continuing flow of irregular migrants towards a European Union (eg. enhanced border controls, the EU-Turkey agreement, strengthening of Frontex).

¹ EASO, “Latest Asylum Trends – 2016 Overview”, available at: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Latest%20Asylum%20Trends%20Overview%202016%20final.pdf> [accessed: 15.02.2017],

A survey carried out by the Spring 2015 Standard Eurobarometer has also demonstrated the negative potential of the lack of efficient border management related to the illegal migration: "...citizens see immigration as the major challenge facing the EU currently."² These findings came well before the actual culmination of the migration crisis. The gradual increase in migration and the deepening of the crisis further exacerbated the disagreements between the V4 countries (which placed great emphasis on the security approach, i.e. threat to public order and security, the welfare state as well as the identity of the host society) and the European "core" (especially Germany and the European Commission, which placed emphasis on the positivist humanitarian approach). The traditional Western European host countries tended to initially disregard from the V4 approach and have clearly considered the opinion of the V4 as irrelevant to EU decision making. This approach resulted in a serious underestimation of the driving forces emerging from the sense of external threat leading to an attempt, or aiming at stopping contact with an undesirable or dangerous neighbor.³ In this case aiming at intersection of the post-modern world (or Barnett's Functioning Core) with the pre-modern world (or Barnett's Non-Integrating Gap) where non-state threats are coming from. Theoretically it has been a conflict between the realistic paradigm with the liberal one according to which: "the primary function of state borders is to ensure contacts between the neighboring countries and facilitate their interaction."⁴

The dynamics of illegal migration in 2015 questions the very concept and practice of the 1951 Refugee Convention which lies at the core of the EU's neo-liberal immigration and asylum policy. The related loss of control over territorial jurisdiction (effective border management), borders and both internal and external security created a condition of chaos under which authorities were unable to responsibly evaluate which individuals are fleeing from conflict zones and thus qualifying for the refugee status and which are cases of economic migrants seeking economic privileges.

Despite the fact that asylum law is a national competence of the Member States of the European Union, several Member States felt the aching lack of responses to efficiently protect the external borders of the Union. Hence, several

² "Eurobarometr Spring 2015 Standard Eurobarometer: Citizens See Immigration as Top Challenge for EU to Tackle. Europe Should See Refugees as a Boon, Not a Burden", 18 September 2015, *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/19/opinion/europe-should-see-refugees-as-a-boon-not-a-burden.html?_r=0 [accessed: 15.02.2017].

³ V. Kolossov, "Theoretical Approaches in the Study of Border", [in:] *Introduction to Border Studies*, eds S.V. Sevastianov, J.P. Liane, A.A. Kireev, Vladivostok 2015, p. 45.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

countries – such as Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria at a later stage – felt forced to unilaterally adopt own security measures to protect their territory and citizens. This is also the case of the V4 countries, who do not question the purpose and true intent of the 1951 Geneva Convention, but who refuse to provide any form of protection to irregular migrants claiming to have the right to freely choose the country of final destination (so called “asylum-shopping”) and who do not respecting the sancticity of state borders, nor the laws of the country they are in. This has been in a sharp contrast with the pseudo-humanitarian approach ignoring a state’s responsibility to control and protect borders, to provide a public order and security but also to provide its citizens with a basic facts on the background of the persons entering the country. Even F. Crépeau (Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, UNHCR) when urging “Europe” to open its borders because it was claimed to be a moral imperative to save lives,⁵ ignored basic facts that this would probably only function as a tacit invitation to more people to reach the EU. Still the EU is stuck in a moral dilemma and is unable to acknowledge the fact that many of these migrants end up in less pleasant situations due to their own behaviour. This concerns both the those entitled to refugee protection as well as the economic migrants. The inability of the EU put a working plan on the table to cope with the migrant crisis reflects the large gap between policy and reality, as the introduction of the borderless EU (removal of internal borders) still does not walk hand in hand with a proper border management of external Schengen borders.

This political clash reached its climax at the beginning of 2016, when the V4 summit in Prague (15 February 2016) united the V4 countries around the criticism of the German immigration strategy and called for an alternative back-up plan to stop the migrants at the borders of Greece. The EU thus became engulfed in a double clash of ideas – on one hand, there was the issue of how to react to the “eastern threat”; on the other, an adequate reaction to the southern threat had to be found. This clash clearly showed the limits of the supra-national solution, while at the same time enabling reflections on the more complex processes taking place on global level – the very processes, which the post-modern EU long refused to consider. In fact, we are dealing with a fundamental paradigmatic shift stemming from the dichotomic nature of globalization. As S. Gradanos, Z. Murphy, K. Schaul and A. Faiola have recently no-

⁵ G. Jackson, “UN’s François Crépeau on the Refugee Crisis: Instead of Resisting Migration, Let’s Organise It”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/22/uns-francois-crepeau-on-the-refugee-crisis-instead-of-resisting-migration-lets-organise-it> [accessed: 12.02.2017].

ted in *The Washington Post*: “A generation ago, globalization shrank the world. Nations linked by trade and technology began to erase old boundaries. But now barriers are rising again, driven by waves of migration, spillover from wars and the growing threat of terrorism.”⁶ The authors, in their duly named article “A New Age of Walls”, identified and empirically researched a trend, which could be labelled *border hardening*, *re-bordering* (other fitting terminology could also be used), and which is becoming a more and more apparent element of the political process.

Root Causes of Migration towards Europe

As it has been held many times previously: migration is as old as mankind itself. The notion of migration covers all types of migratory movements: intra-state, international, voluntary or forced, regular and irregular. The causes of the present-day migration are complex and multicausal, as pointed by Robert Zetter. Zetter identifies the following drivers (or push factors) of migration, which interact with and reinforce each other: 1) intrastate conflicts, existence of violent non-state territorial actors such as Da’esh (VNSTA), 2) poor-governance, political instability, and repression, 3) environmental factors.⁷ What is important is that demographic pressure may also be added to the list. Intrastate conflicts lies at the core of migration from countries like Syria, Iraq or Libya, poor governance and political oppression in the case of Eritrea for instance, and environmental factors might explain driving forces behind the migration from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa. Although Somalia is currently not ranking among the top source countries of migration towards, it offers an empirical example of the country struck by all above mentioned factors: political instability since the end of 1980s, political oppression by various and competing VNSTA, environmental factors (resulting in famine and drought), the violent action of the terrorist organisation al-Shabaab and ongoing intrastate conflicts and etc. The last factor reflects broader geopolitical changes in the EU’s proximity (Libya, Syria). The year 2014 witnessed the highest number of conflicts reported since 1999, growing number of internationalized armed conflicts, the highest yearly death toll in the post-Cold War period.⁸

Pull factors might be coined as the other side of the coin including 1) secure environment, 2) liberal political system guaranteeing political rights and civic liberties, 3) economically developed including benefits of welfare states,

⁶ T. Benner, “Europe’s Lonely Liberal Hegemon”, *Politico*, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/merkel-shock-refugee-crisis-germany-policy-europe/> [accessed: 21.01.2017].

⁷ R. Zetter, *Protection in Crisis: Forced Migration and Protection in a Global Era*, Migration Policy Institute, Transatlantic Council of Migration 2015, p. 6.

⁸ T. Pettersson, P. Wallensteen, “Armed conflicts, 1946–2014”, *Journal of Peace Research* 2015.

4) open migration policies. For Oxford economics professor Paul Collier things are crystal clear: “Angela Merkel is responsible for the refugee crisis. Who else?”⁹ Although Angela Merkel might be attributed an authorship of Germany’s open doors policy, it can not itself explain all the underlying causes of the migrant crisis of 2015 which only has increased afterwards. Standard of living in the EU is an important pull factors for economic migrants coming from the global south. As F. Crépeau admits: “[t]hese people (economic migrants) know there are jobs... Migrants are not stupid, they would not go to places where there are no jobs.”¹⁰ However this assumption contradicts not only the unemployment rate in many EU Member States but also official data on the employment rate among migrants and refugees. “The survey of refugees’ employment status, educational background and values was conducted by the research department of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the IAB and DIW research institutes. It shows that of the refugees who arrived last year and in January 2016, 13 percent are in work.”¹¹ This reflects a sharp contrast with a situation in 1950’s when the major Western European economies were recovering from the aftermaths of the Second World War and needed (cheap) workforce.

Migration and the Process of Re-bordering in the European Area

Re-bordering is by far not a new phenomenon, but it was the migration wave of 2015 which brought to the EU: “[p]aradigmatic shifts: from drawing an optimistic perspective of a borderless world (or the ‘Europeanisation’ of national borders) to a focus on re-bordering, fencing and increasing securitization...”¹² V. Kolossov and J. Scott have pointed out already in 2013 “the renaissance of border studies”¹³, which in reality represents “counter-narratives to globalization discourses of the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a rather short but influential period, prophesies of ‘borderless worlds’ abounded in which global technologies, cyberspace, capital flows, East-West political convergence and interstate integration would make political borders obsolete.”¹⁴

This “backlash” with regard to the emphasis placed on political territoriality cannot be considered just as a reflection of the common cliché concerning the generally ever-worsening security environment. On the contrary, it should be

⁹ T. Benner, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ G. Jackson, *op. cit.*

¹¹ M. Martin, “Only 13 Percent of Recent Refugees in Germany Have Found Work: Survey”, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-survey-idUSKBN13A22F> [accessed: 12.01.2017].

¹² V. Kolossov, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

considered a belated reaction or the result of a lack of timely strategic analysis reflecting in an objective manner the various processes taking place in the geographic neighbourhood of Europe. Whether we deal with the ever-more assertive behaviour of the actors living in Cooper's modern world (something that the EU could witness first hand already in 2008 during the conflict in Georgia), or the geopolitical situation and threats associated with it (civil wars, human trafficking, illegal migration, international terrorism, acts of violent non-state actors) in many pre-modern world states, these issues have not appeared out of the blue in 2015. Rather, the EU has simply reacted belatedly to a prevailing global trend, which has left the discourse about the "borderless world' where walls and fences would become increasingly anachronistic"¹⁵ and is heading towards a completely opposite process, where we can clearly witness "the global trend toward hardened borders... by the massive development of barriers on international borders."¹⁶

The reinvented emphasis on the political significance of borders – "a process of re-bordering on a global scale has already been taking place after 9/11"¹⁷ – is thus a practical and specific reaction to different types of geopolitical threats originating from qualitatively and geographically different worlds – from the pre-modern (southern) and modern (eastern) worlds. The threats are also different with regards to their nature. However, the reaction on the supra-national and national level is, perhaps surprisingly, very much similar, and it consists of re-discovering the "traditional understanding of borders as markers of sovereignty."¹⁸ As Kolossov and Scott further point out, the "relationships between borders and national sovereignty remain important to research debate as these are at the heart of contemporary geopolitical orders."¹⁹

The ongoing crises in the European area have again initiated the debate about the erosion of a sovereign state, which was especially intensive in the academia at the very end of the 20th century. At this time, there was "the idea that political boundaries are being eroded by crises of state sovereignty and the new forms of 'globalized political authority' and the networked nature of the world system indicate a relative shift of political power away from the State."²⁰ The group of authors emphasizing the centrifugal impact on state sovereignty mainly stressed the economic aspect of globalization while overlooking the

¹⁵ S. Rosière, R. Jones, "Teichopolitics: Re-considering Globalisation through the Role of Walls and Fences", *Geopolitics*, 2012, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 217.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

¹⁷ V. Kolossov, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

political and security dimension. Consequently they wrongly assessed the impact of internationalization of economic life the diminishing role of states's borders and their role as noted by V. Kolossov.²¹

Especially the latter of these, however, has been coming to the fore since the 9/11 attacks. It was this shift in priorities which was manifested in the significance of borders: "...open and more flexible borders are vital for economic reasons, while tighter and more closed borders are seen as important security measures."²² É. Vallet a C.-P. David note that the "9/11 marked a watershed in international relations. One of the results has been the growing fortification of borders... September 11 sparked not only a quantitative surge in wall-building but also a qualitative break."²³

M. Carr has already in 2012 referred to this ongoing dichotomic process, which is especially closely tied with the phenomenon of migration: "This dual process of softening/hardening borders has been particularly striking in the European Union" (CARR referred 2012). At the same time, Carr also pointed out various factors, which are still the object of an expert and political discussion on the international level, leading to a renewed emphasis on the political territoriality and the political importance of borders. In the 1990s, "borders were studied as a laboratory of globalisation and mostly considered as a remainder of an old territoriality."²⁴

D.B. Carter and P. Poast, for example, by using political-economic theory, reject the claim that this process is a reaction to the migration wave, and they state: "However, we do not find any support for the idea that a higher number of refugees flows are associated with building walls."²⁵ Processes taking place in the political space, especially the construction of border fences – D.B. Carter and P. Poast talking about "...the most aggressive strategies being the construction of physical barriers..."²⁶ – yet have a clearly traceable linkage to the migration crisis. "The new political prioritisation of borders has been shaped by various factors, from economic insecurity and anxieties about national identity to law enforcement and security concerns. But the overriding priority behind the new border regimes, from the Rio Grande and the Sinai to the Greek-Turkish border, is the prevention of 'illegal migration' – a category that generally refers

²¹ *Ibidem.*

²² *Ibidem.*

²³ D.B. Carter, P. Poast, "Why Do States Build Walls? Political Economy, Security, and Border Stability", *Journal of Conflict Research*, 2015, published online before print September 2015.

²⁴ E. Vallet, C.-P. David, "Introduction: The (Re)Building of the Wall in International Relations", *Journal of Borderland Studies*, 2012, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 111–119.

²⁵ D.B. Carter, P. Poast, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

to undocumented migrants from the global south, whether defined as, economic migrants or refugees and asylum seekers.” The developments inside the Schengen Area and on the external borders (e.g. to keep non-OCED illegal migrants out of the Spanish exclaves in Morocco) have testified to this well before the developments of 2015. J.B. Cannon also argues that one of the reasons that states erect border fences “is to keep undesirable elements such as migrants or terrorists out of their territory,”²⁷ and he lists specific examples that would fall into this category: “Completed in 2014, the three-metre high border wall separating Bulgaria and the European Union (EU) from Turkey is an extension of the border wall built between Greece and Turkey and completed in 2012. Bulgaria built the wall in response to refugees moving north from Greece and crossing into Bulgaria, and by extension the EU, after Greece erected its wall.”²⁸

EU in the New Era of Globalisation

The above-mentioned process, which has been since the 2010s also taking place in Europe, was labelled by S. Ballif and S. Rosière in 2019 as teichopolitics. S. Rosière and R. Jones then further argue that in the teichopolitics era: “...(the politics of building barriers on borders for various security purposes)... the purpose of borders has shifted again to become a sire where privilege is protected and undesirable movements are prevented. Indeed, most of the new border barriers are erected to fight against illegal migrations, even if this dimension is often mixed with other concerns such as terrorism and security, it is primarily linked with controlling migrations.”²⁹ They also mention explicitly the “next era of globalisation... characterized by a coercive turn towards hard power”,³⁰ with the emphasis shifting steadily towards security issues.

Both the migration crisis and the crisis in Ukraine have, somewhat paradoxically, proven that the basic element of even the most advanced integration project – the EU – remain the sovereign states, which are now rediscovering the meaning of political territoriality. The crisis in Ukraine has demonstrated the limits of the EU to adapt to the current trend of turning towards hard power. This had a clearly measurable impact in Estonia, which reacted to the Russian behaviour by erecting a border fence in an attempt to clearly mark its state borders. In the case of Ukraine, the same process or trend led even to the revisiting of the original military function of the border, with the borders

²⁷ B.J. Cannon, “Terrorists, Geopolitics and Kenya’s Proposed Border Wall with Somalia”, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 23–37.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ S. Rosière, R. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

de facto being raised inside the state territory. On the other hand, the migration crisis has then shown the limits of liberal paradigm and inability to enforce an effective border management on the supra-national level, when the EU had encountered e.g. the resistance from Greece to deploy military forces from other countries on its territory or when it had been forced to cooperate with NATO, a military alliance. In Europe, the uncontrolled migration wave has accelerated the securitarian discourse through 2015. The existence of this discourse in other parts of the world, on the other hand, can be empirically proven already in the previous decades. “Securitization discourses have been accompanied by the construction of physical barriers to movement of people and goods which can take a form of concrete walls, barbed wires, virtual fence or even mined fields.”³¹

The EU is now entering a new era characterized by unilateral and aggressive border management. S. Rosière and R. Jones³² call this era the next era of globalisation, in which priority is given to security and attempts are made to physically separate the privileged and unprivileged worlds. At the same time, the awareness of how people in the privileged world live increases in the unprivileged world. The teichopolitics phenomenon can thus be seen also as the most visible aspect of “a confrontation between geopolitical black holes and bright spots.”³³ S. Gradanos et al point out that: “In 2015, work started on more new barriers around the world than at any other point in modern history. There are now 63 borders where walls or fences separate neighbouring countries.”³⁴ This trend has already picked up pace in the previous decades. D.B. Carter and D. Poast conclude “that over 50% of border walls built in the last two centuries were built in the post-Cold War era.”³⁵ It is essential here to consider both the quantitative and the qualitative factors. “A quantitative analysis suggests that walls are, indeed, a global phenomenon that merits further attention... Between 1945 and 1991, 19 walls and barriers were built..., between 1991 and 2001, only 7 walls were added to the 13 that survived the Cold War... As of 2012, there were nearly 45 border walls (soon to be 48) totalling more than 29,000 km².”³⁶ Analysis in *The Washington Post* has shown that more than dozen other walls were constructed in the following four years.

³¹ V. Kolosov, *op. cit.*

³² S. Rosière, R. Jones, *op. cit.*

³³ M. Naim, “Broken Borders, International Smuggling”, *Newsweek*, 2005, pp. 56–52.

³⁴ S. Granados, Z. Murphy, K. Schaul, A. Faiola, “A New Age of Walls. Episode 1”, *The Washington Post*, 2016, No. 121.

³⁵ D.B. Carter, P. Poast, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–32.

³⁶ E. Vallet, C.-P. David, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–119.

The paradigmatic shift concerning the issue of re-bordering was initially rejected by the European institutions, because it has been standing in a sharp contrast with the dominant discourse about borderless Europe and with the humanitarian approach towards migration. “First, even as those across a wide political spectrum neoliberals, cosmopolitans, humanitarians, and left activists fantasize a world without borders (whether consequent to global entrepreneurship, global markets, global citizenship, or global governance), nation-states, rich and poor, exhibit a passion for wall building.”³⁷ Disintegration potential of the migration crisis was reflecting the ongoing conflict between the liberal paradigm preferred by the European institutions and EU’s member states’ societies showing as observed already in 2010 by Brown: „The striking popular desire for walling³⁸ and resulting from “The sense of external threat gives rise to a desire to minimize or stop contact with an undesirable or dangerous neighbor.”³⁹”

G. Friedman has pointed out the transformation of the paradigm and has argued that the Europe of today is a continent of borders. It is the national borders that are at the centre of the main crises engulfing Europe at the moment – especially the crisis in Ukraine and the migration crisis.⁴⁰ The role of borders became the focal point of the clash between the V4 countries and the European institutions, which were, according to G. Friedman, on the hand unable to provide protection for the Schengen Area and, on the other, to ensure that “the borders could lose their significance.”⁴¹ In fact, the issue at stake here was related to a wider discussion about the meaning and significance of the national state, where “...the Union lacked the power to abolish the nation-state – it was too fundamental to the Europeans’ sense of identity... The idea of borders being archaic is meaningful only if the nation-state is archaic. There is no evidence that this is true in Europe... The European crisis, taken as a whole, is rooted in borders.”⁴² The EU has been experiencing a radical geopolitical turn-around from the questioning of the importance of the geographic factor in geopolitics in the golden era of globalization with the emphasis on “a new international landscape ushered in an era of globalization in which states appeared irrevocably condemned to obsolence, a world without borders... in which the state was relegated to secondary importance in international relations, coupled with the disappearance of physical borders.”⁴³ The pressure stemming from the crisis of

³⁷ W. Brown, *Walled States. Waning Sovereignty*, New York 2015.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ V. Kolossov, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ G. Friedman, “What Borders Mean to Europe”, *Geopolitical Weekly*, 23 June 2015.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ E. Vallet, C.-P. David, *op. cit.*

borders forces the EU to accept that it is no longer possible to perceive the outside environment through its own moral imperative; it is this pressure exerted by the external environment which forces it to accept the function of “the security barriers that shield rich economies from the rest of the world have been described as a great wall of globalization”⁴⁴ and the need to react to the political, economic and societal incompatibility between the individual worlds as defined by R. Cooper, or to the dichotomic division of the world between the Functioning Core a Non-Integrating Gap according to T. Barnett. Migration crisis indirectly steers European states towards realization that: “The discourse about a borderless world concerns only ‘integrated’, open borders, mainly in Europe and North America. They constitute no more than 5% of state land borders.”⁴⁵ Thus it’s necessary to apply the same logic to critical analysis of the post-modern paradigm, which continues to criticize: “barrier functions, are not only ineffective, but harmful to the economy and society.”⁴⁶ On the contrary it’s inevitable to understand that effective fight against non-state threats requires effective border management, enforcing the existing rules (visa regime, entry conditions, etc.), but this is far remote to the complete closure or isolation as post-modernist assert. The border-hardening process within the EU is a late reaction to the changing international environment, including the rising intersection of the state failure process and other non-state threats as noted by W. Brown: „These walls target nonstate transnational actors – individuals, groups, movements, organizations, and industries. They react to transnational, rather than international relations and respond to persistent, but often informal or subterranean powers, rather than to military undertakings... barriers that divide richer from poorer parts of the globe. This landscape signifies the ungovernability by law and politics of many powers unleashed by globalization and late modern colonialization.”⁴⁷ The general trend of rebordering and securitization in Europe is especially visible when discussing the the clash between the V4 countries and the European institutions, concerning different visions of handling the phenomenon of current migration crisis.

Migration Crisis

Migration crisis which struck Europe in recent years is of great importance for the European Union as a whole, but to the V4 region as well. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are all sceptical towards the idea of po-

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ V. Kolossov, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ W. Brown, *op. cit.*

sivist humanitarian approach towards migrations and introducing limits on accepting refugees for each EU state. Such reluctance derives from many different aspects, from political and geopolitical to social and cultural. What is more, dynamically changing international situation and recognition of new security threats additionally result in desire for increasing safety measures. Even Germany and Sweden, which were the most open countries in response to the growing refugee crisis are changing their internal policies. The migration crisis together with repeating terrorist attacks in Europe sparked a debate on migration, migration and integration policy and distribution of responsibility for refugees among European states.

Populations of V4 countries are one of the most homogenous ethnically in European Union and the percentage of immigrants and native-born offspring of immigrants is below 10%. In Czech Republic it was around 8% in 2013, in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia less than 5%. According to Eurostat, only 1% of Polish population has been born abroad. Until now, all V4 states has been classified as countries with immigrant population shaped by border changes or by national minorities. It means that until recent migration crisis, those states has not faced more critical or grave threats resulting from ethnic diversity. Such low proportion of immigrant populations results in lower tolerance towards foreigners and any signs of distinctiveness. Tolerance of ethnic minorities is in general decline in Europe since 2007. In the period of 2007 and 2012 in Poland the positive attitude declined by 10%, in Czech Republic more than 5%, Slovakia by 5% and Hungary by approximately 4%.

The migration crisis can result in change in those proportions, influencing the V4 states in terms of their internal stability and security. It also highlights the lack of efficient mechanisms of dealing with such intensive migration flows, both in the field of migration, asylum and integration policies.

V4 and Migration Crisis – Factors Determining the Attitude towards Migration

The effectiveness of Visegrad Group is based on selection of common goals and aims. Owing to this, they can more efficiently advocate their national and regional interests.⁴⁸ It is evident in case of migration crisis, which is cause of many concerns in V4 region. All the V4 states' governments voice their anxiety, additionally deepened by latest terrorist attacks (Charlie Hebdo attack, Paris attacks, Niece attacks, Brussels attacks). What is more, such closeness of common goals and interests has been elaborated in spite of many historical

⁴⁸ T. Strážay, "Neither Beautiful nor Ugly, but Functional: A Pragmatic View on the Visegrad Group", *Contemporary European Studies*, 2014, 2.

territorial disputes.⁴⁹ However, cultural closeness of those states, considered as Slavian (except Hungary) made a cooperation possible, at least to some extent. What is more, common past as a client states of USSR, then transition proces and at last, the EU accession proces made natural circumstances for cooperation.

The aspect of common past deserves more attention as the shared heritage of over 40 years of communist rule left an imprint on all V4 states. Their governments constructed restrictive migration policies which made their boundaries almost airtight.⁵⁰ This is one of the reasons, why populations of Czech Republik, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are that homogenous, with mostly national minorities of historical origin. Migration patterns initiated at the end of World War II, which encompassed returns of prisoners and fugitives of war and involuntary population movements. It meant, that in case of Poland, most of German population has been forced to leave the country. The emergence of Cold War interrupted all those pcesses and the communist rule concentrated its efforts on safeguarding the homogeneousness of the populations in the Soviet Block.⁵¹ Inclusion of V4 states into the area of Soviet control and influence also resulted in introducing and implanting in the societies certain patterns of behaviour, like fear of unknown, hesitancy towards foreign people, feeling of distinctiveness from the rest of Western European countries and societies. What is more, communist rule contributed to poor economic condition and the need to make an extreme effort of meeting Western standards.

The economy condition of V4 states has a significant meaning. Owing to their communist past and late integration with Western Europe and its organisational structures, post-soviet states have to chase after more prosperous Western countries until present times. Both political and market transformation were a burden, resulting in many difficulties, inter alia high unemployment rate. This is one of the reasons for reluctance towards foreign labour force. In 2012 quarter of host-countries population in Europe considered immigration as having negative impact on economy. Mostly Southern and Central European countries' populations views were most negative. Polish population until now seemed to be the most favorable of all V4 states in case of economic impact of immigration – only 18% of population perceived immigration to have bad impact on economy, while in Hungary 44%. In the survey from 2015, conducted by IPSOS for International Organisation for Migration situation changed and 40% of Polish respondents stated that they thought the

⁴⁹ A. Piskozub, A.-R. Kozłowski, "A Distant Mirror: Poland between the Visegrad Group and the Eastern Alliance", *Politické Vedy*, 1 April 2016.

⁵⁰ *European Immigrations: Trends, Structures and Policy Implications*, ed. M. Okólski, Amsterdam 2012.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

migrants impact on labour market was negative, while 29% claimed it was positive. In the same survey conducted one year later, the outcomes were even less positive – 45% of respondents evaluated the migrants impact as negative while only 25% stated it was positive. It is then evident, that migration crises has radicalised the attitudes of Poles. What is more, in Poland only 48.9% perceived their area as a good place for migrants to settle in comparison to Czech Republic where 58.7% found their city as good for migrants from other countries to live in. Another aspect of hesitancy among V4 states towards migrants in regard to economy is the unemployment rate within foreign born. The unemployment rate among foreign-born population in V4 states is not blatantly high – in 2012 it was 8.6% in Czech Republic, 9.47% in Hungary, 9.84% in Poland and in Slovak Republic 11.11%. The total percentage for EU was 15.85%.

Threats to V4 Region

Does V4 region is in fact threatened by migration crisis? It is evident, that Hungary being the transit state can face significant threats. However, none of those states have the status of settlement countries or longstanding destinations. The most popular states among refugees until recently has been Germany and Sweden, owing to their prosperous economies, good social care, the range of state's welfare support and relatively high rate of tolerance towards migrants and ethnic diversification.

In 2015 nearly 1,300,000 asylum applications in EU member states have been registered. In Hungary for example the number of immigrants grew from 22,600 in 2007 to 26,000 in 2014, which is a 15% growth. In Poland it is 40,600 to 60,000 respectively (48% growth). On the other hand, in Slovakia and Czech Republic the number of immigrants decreased. Growing numbers of asylum seekers, since vast of them come from Syrian Arab Republic (47% of all sea arrivals to Greece in 2016 and 28% of all sea arrivals in 2016), Afghanistan (25%), Iraq (15%), Pakistan (5%), Iran (3%) and only 5% from other states are equal with even more growing ethnical diversity in Europe.

However, refugees reaching especially Poland do not come from a culturally distant states. Traditionally, the highest number of refugees come from Russia – 86% with Chechen nationality. Since the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of Ukrainians seeking protection in Poland as well.⁵² Syrians who are the most numerous group of refugees reaching Europe seem to be less interested in V4 states as their destination. According to data from Eurostat, only 16% of asylum seekers

⁵² J. Segeš-Frelak, "Poland as a Country of Migrants?", *New Eastern Europe*, 1 November 2015.

in 2014 in Poland were granted protection, whereas the EU average is 40%.⁵³ It is evidence for more restrictive migration and asylum policy in Poland. In 2015 Poland received only 285 asylum applications from Syria, Czech Republic 130, in Slovakia no applications from Syria were registered but 170 from Afghanistan. The worst situation is in Hungary, where 64,080 applications from Syrian citizens were registered. It should then be no surprise, that Hungarian attitude is the most negative towards migration crisis and migrants themselves. However, owing to strict internal policy towards refugees, the number of asylum applications in Hungary dropped from 30,500 in September 2015 to less than 1,000 at the end of 2015.

It is important to note, that late transformation and former communist rule left V4 states with nearly no migration or integration policies. Accession to EU meant the necessity of gradual adjustments of migration policies (especially visa and asylum regulations). However, the integration policies stayed neglected, mostly due to already mentioned low percentage of foreign-born population within receiving societies of V4 states. Another aspect of the problem is the temporary character of migrations, mostly aimed at seasonal work. This is the main legal gap that should be completed by V4 states' governments in the light of ongoing migration crisis and introduced EU's refugee quotas. What is more, the problem of illegal immigration and undeclared workforce of foreign origin should be solved as well. This is the problem that has its roots in the communist rule in the V4 states, which introduced wide tolerance of informal business practices. Both legal problems should be solved, as full isolation from immigration is rather impossible. Most of the European countries face the problem of ageing societies – fertility levels are decreasing and life expectancy is growing. In such conditions, most of the economic research and reports underline the importance of labour migration. Both mechanisms of integrating foreigners and counteracting illegal migration will allow better protection of each state's security, stability and interests, as well as the whole V4 region.

The Quota Compromise and V4's Response

The intensified inflow of refugees to Europe, mostly Greece, Italy and Hungary, resulted in proposal of temporary derogation from the Dublin Regulation, determining responsibility for the examination of asylum applications. Such high number of applications could result in the standstill of the asylum system. Therefore, relocation of refugees from the most burdened states has been planned, together with establishing the so-called hot spots facilitating early identification of those in need of protection. The EU's agreement reached

⁵³ *Ibidem.*

in September 2015 meant relocation of 160,000 of refugees in total. However, the appointed quotas brought many doubts and concerns, especially within V4 region and the whole proces of relocation is undergoing slowly. Until May 2016 only 1,500 refugees from Italy and Greece has been relocated. The migration crisis cause a vivid reaction within V4 area, which is most sceptical towards welcoming refugees mostly from Syria. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are mostly concerned about their internal security and stability. Since the V4 states seem to be less tolerant and open towards migration and cultural diversity, according to most of OECD data, political leaders of those states are trying to seek for alternative ways of facing the challenges deriving from migration crisis.

Those alternative methods are mostly connected with strenghtening the borders. The V4's proposal from February 2016 affects Macedonia and Bulgaria and it should lead to better control over Western Balkans migration route (Visegrad 4 Call for EU "Back-up Plan" to Block Migrants). Any ideas concerning sealing borders in the South of Europe are not receiving a warm welcome in therest of EU's member states due to main assault of leading to exclusion of Greece from Schengen Area. What is more, most reluctant Hungary decided on building fences on its borders with Serbia and Croatia and recently has conducted referendum concerning on rejecting EU's plan to settle refugees in the country. Orban's allies state, that such firm and decided standpoint of Hungary will contribute to other states, also having growing doubts about intensive inflows of migrants.⁵⁴

International Developments – Most Significant Research Results

Main concerns deriving from migration crisis are associated with economic and cultural aspects. V4's population fears mostly of taking over jobs by migrants or of poor qualified refugees inflow. Michal Vaščka, working in the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture in Bratislava during a Visegrad Group debate on migrations voiced such concerns: "In many Western European countries, and in all Visegrad countries, there have been entire sectors of the economy gradually taken over by particular ethnic groups. This is going to be characteristic for our countries as well. We can see it with the Vietnamese and the Chinese, but gradually there will be other people arriving from other Asian countries."⁵⁵

This statement pictures some of the V4 states' worries. However, even stronger fears seem to be tied with the increase of unemployment rates, especially within foreign-born population. Such worries are the aftermath of already

⁵⁴ A. Lebor, "Quota approval", *Newsweek*, 30 September 2016.

⁵⁵ "Visegrad Group Joint Statement on Migration", 15 February 2016. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-on> [accessed 13.01.2017].

evoked communist rule and worse economic condition of V4 states in comparison to old EU's member states. For several years we can observe the tendency of growing unemployment among foreigners in European countries, especially among newly arrived migrants. In spite of this fact, most of the empirical studies do not show a negative impact of immigration on the labour market. According to some research, immigrants increase the labour force and consumer demand, enhancing growth at the same time. What is more, immigrants seem to pay more in taxes than they claim in government benefits. They are also often taking jobs hard to fill by native-born population, mostly in child care, nursery and other occupations not needing high qualifications (Europe should see refugees...). Immigrants seem to be the most important for the countries with growing old nations and low birthrates.

What is more, owing to increasing cultural diversity of European societies, culturally based worries also grow. They are additionally fueled by frequent terrorist attacks in Europe and others expressions of violence. In Poland the indicators associated with tolerance are dangerously changing – Poles negatively evaluate foreign-born population's impact on labour market, economy in general and perceive migration as a cultural threat. The same process is happening in Hungary, where already 76% of respondents claim that refugees increase likelihood of terrorist attacks and 69% perceive refugees from Syria as a major, general threat (PEW Research Centre). Human Rights Watch highlights the risks deriving from such radicalisation of European and V4 states' societies. In World Report 2016 it is said: "(...) the uncontrolled and at times chaotic refugee flow had sparked deep concern throughout Europe even before ISIS attacked Paris in November, using at least two attackers who may have entered Europe with the refugees. That attack intensified the EU's reaction: new wire-razor fences were erected, border restrictions mushroomed, fear-mongering and Islamophobia mounted, and the EU promised Turkey €3 billion in aid with the understanding that Turkey would curtail the flow. These steps reflect the EU's longstanding effort to push responsibility for refugees (...)"

All this shows that European Union as a whole and the Visegrad Group as a vulnerable area, facing many problems deriving from its historical past and geopolitical factors, need to take serious steps aimed at counteracting the challenges of migration crisis. It seems that main obstacles in finding consistent solutions lies in legal, cultural and socio-political aspects. Natural hesitancy towards foreign-born, caused by substantially high level of homogeneousness of the V4 states' societies and strong attachment to traditional and religious values, is additionally increased by political and specific rhetoric using emotio-

nal narrative. Such processes are visible not only within Visegrad Group but in most of European states. This may result in definite change in European discourse – V4 may not be the only area afraid of negative results of migration crisis. Great Britain, even before Brexit, did not support the quota proposal. French society is reluctant towards new flows of refugees as well. Even most open societies of Germany and Sweden are showing growing tendencies of intolerance.

Since change in general worldview of V4 states' populations would be the hardest strategy to reach and fulfill, it would not solve potential threats within security and economy fields. However, identification, development and then implementation of best possible legal solutions and mechanisms of cooperating within the field of softening the negative effects of migration crisis may be the answer.