

Push-Pull Factors of Migration amidst Domestic Resistance of the Visegrad Group Countries

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Abstract

This research presents the push-pull factors of refugees and asylum seekers towards European countries during strong domestic resistance by The Visegrad Group, consisting of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. These factors were examined using the push-pull migration theory, and the results are presented qualitatively. The data and information presented in this paper came from secondary sources. The findings revealed two significant facts. Firstly, the negative conditions in the home countries of refugees and asylum seekers act as migration drivers, including prolonged conflicts, economic crises, and limited job opportunities; secondly, the attractiveness of Europe as a region characterized by safety, a stable economy, availability of resources, and sufficient job opportunities.

Keywords: Migration, Rejection, Push-pull, Conflict, Economic Stability

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menyajikan faktor pendorong-penarik pengungsi dan pencari suaka menuju di tengah resistensi domestik oleh negara-negara Eropa yang tergabung ke dalam The Visegrad Group yang terdiri dari negara Hungaria, Polandia, Slovakia, dan Republik Ceko. Faktor-faktor itu dikaji menggunakan push-pull theory of migration dan hasilnya disajikan secara kualitatif. Data dan informasi yang disajikan dalam tulisan ini diperoleh dari sumber sekunder. Hasil dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada dua fakta penting yang ditemukan. Pertama, kondisi negatif negara asal pengungsi dan pencari suaka sebagai faktor pendorong migrasi, yakni konflik berkepanjangan, krisis ekonomi dan minimnya lapangan kerja. Kedua, daya tarik Eropa sebagai negara yang tergolong aman, ekonomi yang mapan dan tersedianya lahan persenjataan serta lapangan pekerjaan yang mencukupi.

Kata Kunci: Migrasi, Penolakan, Dorong-Tarik, Konflik, Stabilitas Ekonomi

Introduction

From 2015 to 2016, Europe experienced its most severe migration crisis in history due to the massive influx of asylum seekers and refugees, primarily originating from Africa and the Middle East (Kotyrlo, 2017). Destabilized conditions in their countries of origin compelled thousands of individuals to abandon their homes, seeking protection and security within the European region. The European territory became both a transit route and a destination for refugees and asylum seekers. Among European nations, Germany recorded the highest number of asylum applications during 2015-2016,

receiving nearly half (45%) of these applications, followed by Hungary (8%), Italy (8%), and Sweden (7%) (Connor, 2017). As reported by the UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency, 84% of refugees originated from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Iraq. The prolonged conflict and civil war in Syria since 2011 have triggered the largest wave of refugees from that country (Reid, 2022). These countries of origin generally experience protracted conflicts, widespread violence, insecurity, and highly repressive governance (Zalmaï, 2015).

The European migration crisis has intensified cooperation complexity in addressing migration issues among European Union (EU) members (Borowicz, 2017). Amidst the large-scale refugee crisis, the rejection by certain EU members, particularly from the Visegrad Group countries, has coincided with an upsurge in xenophobic tendencies, racism, and violence against refugees and asylum seekers (Bakkara, 2018). Refugees and asylum seekers have been perceived as economic and social burdens by those country's leaders (Roynanda, 2019), as reflected in the resistance towards responsibility-sharing concerning asylum from the Visegrad Group countries composed of Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia (Niemann & Zaun, 2018; Sugito, 2021). For instance, Hungary, as a member of the Visegrad Group, vehemently opposed the entry of refugees into its territory (Haliza & Pujiyono, 2019). Conversely, Hungary also served as a transit nation for asylum seekers and refugees from Syria, with a total of 64,587 individuals in 2015 (IOM, 2017). Under the leadership of Viktor Orban, the Hungarian government implemented an openly "anti-immigration policy." The Orban government engaged in anti-asylum seeker battles not only at the border but also within Brussels. Under the EU burden-sharing scheme, Hungary was supposed to have received 1,294 refugees (Goździak, 2019). Additionally, other Visegrad Group countries, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, similarly rejected the influx of migrants (Sugito, 2017).

The refusal to accept refugees and immigrants has also transpired in Poland, which is partly influenced by concerns about the potential negative impacts that may arise from the entry of immigrants on the culture and traditions of the country. Apprehensions regarding cultural and traditional impacts should be regarded as a viewpoint underscored by the Polish government, which contends that the European Union, as a united entity, should respect differences and not compel nations to adhere to collective rules that might not align with their historical backgrounds. Differing historical backgrounds, as observed in Poland, which lacks a colonial history like Germany, is

why Poland does not perceive a moral responsibility toward its former colonies (Makhroja, 2020). Poland's rejection of Muslim immigrants has emerged as a significant component of its response to the refugee crisis of 2015. Following the 2015 election, the government increasingly adopted a hostile stance toward immigrants, evident in its decision to close its borders to Muslim refugees. This stance was reinforced by right-wing media depicting Muslims as a threat. The escalation of anti-refugee sentiments, combined with a simultaneous rise in racial sentiments, has contributed to Poland's pre-existing nationalist political climate, characterized by resistance to external influences. The refugee figure has become emblematic of broader conflicts within Poland (Narkowicz, 2018).

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Czech Republic, which declined to offer protection to refugees, as evident in the views of Czech President Miloš Zeman, who is considered to harbor xenophobic attitudes towards refugees. Zeman rejects immigrants, believing that their entry could bring Sharia law and pose a threat to Czech society (Sugito, 2017). Zeman's central role in cultivating anti-refugee sentiments is reflected in his controversial actions and statements, particularly concerning Muslim refugees. Since the refugee crisis in Europe, Zeman has constructed an anti-refugee narrative using selectively tailored facts, particularly those aligned with anti-Muslim and anti-refugee perspectives. Statements that demean refugees and claim that many of them are economic migrants have deepened these negative perceptions.

Consequently, the majority of Czech society holds unfavorable attitudes towards refugees and Muslims, manifesting in support for anti-Islam groups and anti-immigration demonstrations. Czech media also reinforce these perspectives through false narratives opposing refugees. While the majority of the Czech population does not consider the refugee issue a primary concern, the media consistently presents negative views of refugees and Muslims through sustained reporting (Culik, 2017). Conversely, Zeman places Islam at the

forefront within the context of security, associating it with issues such as immigration, Islamism, and terrorism. Zeman portrays Islam as an inherently rooted threat, expressing incongruence with European culture and values. This security threat is linked to recommendations for actions against Islamic organizations or preventing immigrants from entering Europe. This approach legitimizes Islamophobic views within Czech society, garnering support from influential political actors (Naxera & Krčál, 2018).

The government of Slovakia has also participated in refusing refugees, citing the need to maintain the cohesion of their society and prevent discrimination. Most of Slovakia's population has a Christian religious background, and the government deems it important to preserve the existing social reality. Concerns over the Islamic religion also play a role in the rejection of refugees, particularly those with Muslim backgrounds (Sugito, 2017). Slovakia's rejection of Muslim immigrants is also grounded in the dominance of a security discourse that focuses on national security interests and security measures within the framework of migration policies and relevant administrative procedures. Within this perspective, immigrants are viewed as potential threats to Slovak society. The main policies and administrative procedures concerning the residence of immigrants in Slovakia tend to be restrictive. The institutionalized concept of securitization, based on the idea of risks, is reflected in daily practices in the treatment of immigrants and has become a distinctive characteristic of Slovakia's migration policy since the beginning of the study period in 2004. However, until the outbreak of the refugee crisis in 2015, migration issues were considered relatively insignificant by politicians, the public, and the media. The use of "enemy-seeking" strategies by certain politicians towards immigrants and refugees has been driven by pre-existing policy practices to address specific demographic categories. A widespread consensus among political elites that migration is a security issue, coupled with the adoption of anti-immigration rhetoric similar to right-wing perspectives, has been observed. These political

efforts aim to evoke a sense of danger among the population and persuade voters that they are the ones best capable of protecting the country from existing threats (Androvičová, 2017).

Syria became the primary country of origin for refugees applying to the EU in 2015, accounting for 28%, followed by Afghanistan at 15% and Iraq at 10% of the total 2.5 million applications received (Connor, 2017). However, refugees and asylum seekers' efforts to seek protection have been met with resistance due to concerns about the threat of integration of Hungary's native culture with immigrant communities (Rothwell et al., 2016). In Hungary, there has even been a resurgence of xenophobia and nationalism (Setiabudi, 2021). The government tends to hold traditional xenophobic views and utilize memories of the anti-Muslims in the context of political communication. Visual representations such as "Hungary, Fortress of Christianity" and "Fortress of Europe" have a significant influence in shaping Hungary's rejection of immigrants (Glied & Pap, 2016).

Literature Review

The study of the refugee crisis in Europe can be examined through several writings. First, Angga Nurdin Rachmat's article titled "Faktor Domestik Dalam Kebijakan Pemerintah Hungaria Terhadap Pengungsi dan Migran dari Timur Tengah Periode Tahun 2015-2019" (2021) can be referenced. This article discusses the policy of the Hungarian Prime Minister in handling refugees and asylum seekers, influenced by domestic factors such as notions of national identity. The political dynamics in Hungary, coupled with the rise of right-wing populism championed by the Fidesz Party, have contributed to strengthening identity sentiments and nationalism (Rachmat, 2021). Concerns over these issues are perceived as threats to Hungary's state and national identity. Other factors are related to the political dynamics in Hungary, particularly regarding the perceived threat of diversification through refugees and asylum seekers and efforts to enhance the position and legitimacy of the ruling party and government as a strategy to secure government

policies and win future elections (Rachmat, 2021).

Second, the article titled "The 'Christian Fortress of Hungary' – The Anatomy of the Migration Crisis in Hungary," written by Glied and Pap (2016), can serve as a reference in studying the European migration crisis. This article delves into the role of the Hungarian government in managing the migration crisis in Europe, undertaken to prevent the far-right from seizing power and utilizing immigration for political gain, leveraging the immigration issue as a political tool. These measures are supported by a significant portion of the Hungarian population that adheres to traditional xenophobic views and draws upon memories of anti-Muslim conflicts in their political communication, which plays a pivotal role in the development of Hungary's national identity (Glied & Pap, 2016).

Third, the article titled "Realisme Dalam Kebijakan Penolakan Pengungsi dan Migran oleh Hungaria," written by Angga Nurdin Rachmat, sheds light on Hungary's policy approach to the influx of refugees and migrants from the Middle East. The article explains that Hungary's actions are grounded in a realist approach to upholding and safeguarding national interests. These interests encompass counterterrorism and transnational crime efforts, economic access, and preserving the country's Christian identity domestically and on regional and international levels (Rachmat, 2020).

Fourth, a study titled "Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Hungary" by Zsuzsanna Vidra (2017) provides valuable insights. This article examines the Islamophobia narrative identified in Hungary's political discourse and media. Vidra's article analyzes how the mass media in Hungary plays a significant role in disseminating the Islamophobia narrative. Through the use of demeaning language and imagery, the mass media has managed to create negative stereotypes against Muslim immigrants and reinforce xenophobia in Hungarian society. Vidra explains that this Islamophobia narrative is exploited by the government and right-wing groups in Hungary to bolster national identity and reject social and cultural convergence. The

article also highlights the repercussions of the government's and society's attitudes in exacerbating discrimination and violence (Vidra, 2017).

Fifth, the article titled "Kebijakan Open Door Policy Oleh Angela Merkel dalam Kerangka Common European Asylum System (CEAS) Studi Kasus: Krisis Pengungsi Suriah di Jerman" authored by Haliza and Pujiyono (2019) focuses on the Syrian refugee crisis and their search for protection in Germany. The Open Door Policy aimed to provide fair and humane treatment to refugees, ensuring they receive the protection and services they need. However, this policy also generated controversy and criticism from other EU member states. The article explicates the significance of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) framework in addressing the European refugee crisis as a framework involving coordination among EU member states to ensure that refugees are fairly and effectively received and protected (Haliza & Pujiyono, 2019).

Sixth, the article authored by Makhroja (2020) titled "Sekuritisasi Isu Migrasi di Polandia Pasca Krisis Pengungsi di Uni Eropa" examines how Poland responded to and managed migration issues following the EU refugee crisis of 2015-2016. This article discusses how the country adapted and reinforced immigration control measures and how migration issues influenced domestic politics and relations with the European Union. The journal explores the tightening of immigration policies by the Polish government, including increased coordination with neighboring countries, strengthened border patrols, and enhanced mechanisms for monitoring immigrants, including rejecting the expansion of EU migration quotas. With the domestic policies launched by Poland, its foreign relations with the European Union have been relatively less harmonious, including how the country maintains a conservative political stance regarding migration (Makhroja, 2020).

Seventh, the article authored by Ramadhani, Sari, and Azmi, titled "European Union Cross-Border Refugees Securitization toward Freedom of Movement Regime 2015-2020" (2022), brings to the forefront the intricate dynamics of

the securitization of the European Union's refugee issue and its profound implications on the framework of freedom of movement. The article sheds light on how the securitization process, undertaken to address perceived threats posed by refugees, has resulted in significant consequences for the freedom of movement regime within the European Union. This phenomenon has manifested through the amplification of border control policies, effectively modifying the essence of the freedom of movement principle that has been a cornerstone of the EU's integration efforts. Consequently, the securitization initiatives have introduced an element of uncertainty for refugees in their quest for asylum within the European Union, as their mobility and access to refuge have become increasingly constrained by intensified border security measures. The study by Ramadhani, Sari, and Azmi underscores the intricate interplay between security concerns and the foundational principles of the European Union, ultimately highlighting the challenging balance that needs to be struck between ensuring security and upholding the ethos of open borders and harmonious integration (Ramadhani et al., 2022).

Eighth, another study titled "Narasi Anti-Imigran Dalam Krisis Pengungsi Eropa Tahun 2015 Sebagai Refleksi atas Krisis Identitas Eropa," written by Yunazwardi, elaborates on how anti-immigrant narratives have influenced public attitudes towards immigrants and contributed to the ongoing identity crisis in Europe. The identity crisis has emerged from differing opinions among EU member states regarding how to address the refugee crisis, with countries like Hungary and Poland closing their doors to refugees while others like Germany and Sweden express a willingness to welcome them. This study delves into the intricate interplay between narratives, public sentiments, and the broader context of Europe's evolving identity dynamics in the face of the refugee crisis, emphasizing how divergent responses to immigration have underscored deeper issues concerning shared values, cultural cohesion, and the future of the European project (Yunazwardi, 2021).

Based on several preceding studies, most writings have focused on policies, state responses, and European Union policies concerning the refugee crisis. This paper aims to examine the push and pull factors that attract refugees from conflict zones such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to Europe amidst strong resistance from the Visegrad Group countries, comprised of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia by asking the question what causes refugees to continue to seek refuge in Europe amidst the rejection from the Visegrad Group countries?

Theoretical Framework

Migration is broadly understood as the permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. It can be defined as a form of relocation diffusion encompassing the dispersal of people, ideas, innovations, and behaviors from one place to another (Lee, 1966). The reasons why people migrate are determined by push and pull factors, which either compel individuals to move to new locations or necessitate their departure from their previous residence. These push and pull factors encompass economic, political, cultural, and environmental considerations.

In this context, push factors of migration address the research question of what drives the high influx of migration to Europe amid significant restrictions imposed by the Visegrad Group (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia). Push factors refer to conditions compelling individuals to leave their place of origin and are linked to the country where the individuals are migrating. These factors encompass inadequate employment opportunities, poverty, rapid population growth surpassing available resources, unemployment, drought and famine, fear of political persecution, poor health conditions, loss of wealth, and natural disasters (Lee, 1966).

On the other hand, pull factors pertain to the elements that attract individuals to specific locations. These factors encompass job opportunities, improved living conditions, accessible land for settlement and agriculture, political and or religious freedoms, better educational and welfare systems, enhanced

transportation and communication facilities, superior healthcare systems, stress-free environments, and security. Pull factors are influenced by decisions based on positive or negative considerations (Lee, 1966). However, Lee's theory has elicited discussions from other scholars.

The article "Push-pull plus: reconsidering the drivers of migration" by Van Hear et al. (2018), for instance, criticizes the previously developed "push and pull" theory by Everett S. Lee, asserting that this theory is overly deterministic and has limitations in addressing the complexity of migration. The primary critique Hear et al. (2015) put forth is that the "push and pull" theory tends to be static and cannot bridge the interconnected factors within a coherent framework. This theory's inability to integrate the multifaceted factors involved in the migration process impacts its ability to depict the evolution of migration patterns over time and the interactions among various migration drivers.

Furthermore, Hear (2018) also underscored that the "push and pull" theory tends to focus on the inequality of conditions between the origin and destination of migration while overlooking the role of structural factors, which also significantly impact migration decisions. Such factors include household decision-making processes, the role of social networks, and cultural influences. In summation, the article concludes that the "push and pull" theory, though valuable in comprehending the initiation and continuation of migration, requires refinement and further development to accommodate the complexity and multidimensional dimensions of migration drivers more holistically (Van Hear et al., 2018). Nonetheless, studying the "push and pull" theory can aid in understanding the underlying causes of population migration from conflict zones to countries deemed secure, irrespective of the restrictive policies imposed by authorities and specific segments of societies in nations such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

Research Method

This research design is based on explanatory research examining cause-and-effect relationships concerning a specific event or

phenomenon. According to Colin (2005), explanatory research is a method to reveal the causal relationships between the variables under investigation (Elman, 2005). Several scholars, such as Lisa M. Given (2008) and McNabb (2010), corroborate this view by affirming that this approach not only delves into characterizing a phenomenon but also seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying causes that contribute to the occurrence of specific events (Given, 2008). Although the topic of refugees in Europe and the rejection faced by Visegrad Group countries is not explicitly discussed by these scholars, the principles they put forth can be applied to gain a more profound understanding of the factors influencing such phenomena.

The data interpretation process within explanatory research involves in-depth analysis to comprehend the causal relationships and underlying factors behind the reasons underpinning the phenomenon under investigation. This process encompasses data categorization, narrative construction, factual description, consideration of alternative explanations, conclusion, and integration with relevant theory (McNabb, 2010). Meanwhile, answers to the research questions in this writing are derived through the excavation of secondary sources, including scholarly journals and official documents. Previous research report data is also employed to enrich the information while ensuring the validity and reliability of the references used. Information, data, and facts obtained through the exploration process will be explicated and qualitatively supported by numerical data and percentages.

Result and Explanation

Push Factor

The arrival of refugees and migrant workers creates complexity for the European Union (EU). Border closures and various forms of rejection by the Visegrad Group (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia) and local communities reflect the reality that the commitment to address the refugee crisis has not been fully realized. The Dublin Regulation the EU utilizes to govern migration issues is not

uniformly implemented across all European countries. European nations appear unprepared to confront this issue due to the relatively high mobility of refugees. Meanwhile, the President of the European Commission (EC), Jean-Claude Juncker, decided to redistribute refugees based on the economic capacity of each country in Europe, with a maximum capacity of 160,000 refugees (Haliza & Pujiyono, 2019).

Several EU member states, such as Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Austria, have participated in the allocation quotas imposed by the EU and formulated their policies regarding the arrival of refugees. However, countries within the Visegrad Group (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia) have objected to the EU regulations regarding mandatory refugee accommodation quotas. As a result, the Visegrad Group countries have tightened their borders to restrict the entry of refugees, with a tendency to reject them. Hungary, for instance, has even closed its borders and erected fences to prevent the entry of refugees, exacerbating the plight of refugees in their pursuit of safety (Rachmat, 2021). Nonetheless, this rejection phenomenon has not deterred individuals from conflict zones from persevering to find a suitable destination country in Europe. So, what motivates refugees to continue their journey to Europe despite the strong domestic resistance from the Visegrad Group?

The primary push factor for refugees' journey to Europe is the enduring conflicts and wars in specific regions of the Middle East and Africa. Armed conflicts, wars, and threats to the security and lives of refugees have led them to leave their homes and seek safer havens in other countries. Conflicts in countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are illustrative examples of influencing the influx of migration (UNHCR, 2018). States impacted by conflicts in the Middle East fall within the category of some of the least secure nations globally. Syria's status as the least secure nation in the world ranks at 162nd place (Global Peace Index, 2015).

Many individuals in Syria have experienced displacement from conflict zones as a result of the ongoing civil war. The destruction of settlements and the environment has prompted many peoples to seek safer and more habitable

locations. In Syria, deliberate and indiscriminate attacks continue to be carried out by government forces and pro-government militias on civilian areas, including the use of high-explosive barrel bombs. Arbitrary actions such as arrests, enforced disappearances, and torture of individuals are perceived as opponents have been executed by government forces, resulting in many deaths during detention. Meanwhile, non-state armed groups opposing the government also bear responsibility for war crimes and other serious violations, including deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, recruitment of children as soldiers, kidnappings, and torture in detention. In interviews with Syrian refugees conducted by Human Rights Watch (2015), "Syria has become a devastated country; I left out of fear of being arrested and beaten" (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

In Afghanistan, the post-intervention period by the United States in 2001 and the escalating conflict between Afghan forces and Taliban insurgents, particularly since 2015, have contributed to social, political, and security instability (Simamora, 2019). A refugee stated that in their country, "rockets fall every day, there are no electricity, water, and security checkpoints everywhere" (The Guardian Interview, 2016). Such conditions have prompted them to seek refuge in countries deemed more advanced and capable of providing security and protection. The escalating conflict and prolonged warfare have led to a crisis and limited economic opportunities. The impacts of this conflict have ravaged various facilities and quality-of-life amenities, hindering residents' ability to secure jobs and meet daily needs. The scarcity of economic prospects in conflict and war-affected areas has created unfavorable conditions, propelling refugees from the Middle East to seek better opportunities in Europe (Simamora, 2019).

The political instability and security crises in conflict-ridden regions such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria have been the primary drivers of migration to Europe. Groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have instilled a sense of insecurity and hopelessness among civilians. Crimes such as murder and

torture also pose significant concerns in Syria and Iraq. The protracted conflict in Syria stands out as a major cause of migration to Europe, evident from the large number of asylum applications received by the European Union. Syrian citizens fleeing political turmoil seek refuge in refugee camps in neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. However, the situation in these neighboring countries is also far from stable. Refugee camps there face financial constraints and difficulties in accommodating incoming refugees. Amid the uncertainty of their futures, many refugees opt to continue their journey to Europe in search of better lives (Avisa, 2017).

Wars and conflicts, particularly those transpiring in regions like Syria, played a profoundly significant role in the surge of individuals entering Europe in 2015. Political violence and civil war factors have been the primary triggers of forced migration. The majority of refugees and asylum seekers chose to leave their home countries due to intolerable levels of violence and perceived threats to personal and familial safety. Many originating from Syria faced ongoing threats, including bomb attacks, sniper fire, and various forms of aggression nearly every day. Cities like Homs, Damascus, and Aleppo were specifically identified as areas where life had become difficult and unsafe. Large-scale conflicts, particularly in nations like Syria, are the main catalyst for forced migration and the impetus to seek safer and more stable living conditions elsewhere (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017).

Not only have Middle Eastern countries affected by conflicts contributed to the influx of migrants to Europe, but also African nations like Eritrea have played a role in the refugee flow towards Europe. In 2015, Eritrea faced significant economic challenges. Adverse weather conditions and a lack of infrastructure investment impacted Eritrea's agricultural sector. Furthermore, the country's industrial landscape had limited scope and was largely dominated by small sectors such as food processing, textiles, and construction. Factors like limited natural resources and restricted access to the sea also influenced the country's economic growth (CIA, 2023).

On the other hand, in Eritrea, thousands of Eritreans have been driven to leave their country each month since 2014 due to the country's dire economic situation and widespread human rights violations. The unending national service requirement exacerbates these factors. Those fleeing Eritrea are motivated by a range of abuses that are prevalent in the country. These include indefinite national service and forced labor during military service, arbitrary arrest, detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and degrading treatment in detention, restrictions on freedom of expression, conscience, and movement, as well as repression of religious freedom. In this context, individuals from the Afar and Kunama ethnic groups also flee as a result of land confiscation and government-led discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 2015). These circumstances also prompted some individuals from East African nations to migrate to Europe.

In Eritrea, independent media or local non-governmental organizations do not exist. Many detention facilities, both official and secret, are utilized by the government to hold thousands of individuals without trial or charges. Many are detained for attempting to evade unlimited national service or fleeing the country (Human Rights Watch, 2015). As quoted from an interview by Human Rights Watch (2015), an Eritrean immigrant stated, "Many people think that we, migrants, come to Europe to find jobs. However, they don't realize that in Eritrea, we are required to be soldiers for life, with a monthly salary of around 450 Nafka, equivalent to about 10 euros. This wage is like that of an enslaved person, not enough to meet our basic needs. As soldiers, we cannot earn extra income. We must be soldiers to support our starving families. Therefore, we must find a way to escape this horrific situation." Geographically, Europe and Africa are separated only by the Mediterranean Sea, which makes this proximity convenient for migrants to undertake their journey to Europe. Although prolonged conflicts in Middle Eastern countries and several African regions are the main driving factors for population displacement to Europe, other underlying reasons exist for this migration. One of these reasons is the high economic hardship,

lack of job opportunities, and poverty afflicting these nations. Many people migrate to Europe hoping to attain a better life. Consequently, Europe is often seen as a continent of hope for immigrants, perceived as a prosperous, secure, and relatively accessible region (Avisia, 2017).

Pull Factor

The reasons why certain European countries are chosen as transit or destination countries by migrants can be examined based on several factors. As stated by Lee (1966), the availability of job opportunities, sufficient land for settlement and agriculture, stable living conditions, political freedom, superior education and welfare systems, transportation and communication facilities, better healthcare services, a stress-free environment, and adequate amenities are some of the factors that attract migrants. The security level is one of the driving factors for refugees. In line with this, Europe is a strategically located geographical region with a stable economy, democratic political order, and adequate welfare levels (Simamora, 2019).

This situation contrasts with the negative conditions prevailing in many refugee countries of origin. These factors significantly influence the decisions of refugees and migrants to undertake migration to other regions, as seen in the large numbers of refugees and migrants choosing to settle in European countries each year (Craddock, 2020). Data indicates a surge in the number of refugees during the crisis in 2015, particularly when Germany implemented its open-door policy in August. Despite a decrease compared to the previous year, the number of refugees arriving in Europe in 2016 was still substantially higher than in other regions. Despite the decrease in the number of refugees, Europe remains one of the primary destinations for refugees and migrants (Connor, 2016).

Hungary became the second-largest destination country for refugees after Germany. However, Hungary was not the final destination for refugees in 2015, as during their journey, refugees transited through Hungary en route to countries such as Austria, Germany, and Sweden. Hungary was chosen as a destination by refugees due to being perceived as one of the convenient entry points to the European Union

from the Balkans and the Middle East regions. Initially, the Hungarian government welcomed refugees and provided temporary shelter facilities. However, this approach shifted as the number of incoming refugees increased, and the government began to implement stricter policies toward refugees, particularly in border control measures (Purwono & Aliyatuz, 2022).

As a country in Central Europe, Hungary is strategically positioned on the main migration route for refugees and migrants moving from the Middle East and Asia to Western and Northern Europe. Hungary shares land borders with Serbia and Croatia, two countries often used as transit points by refugees aiming to reach Western European countries such as Germany, Austria, and Sweden (Hartocollis, 2017). Furthermore, being a pivotal transit point in the migration journey towards the gateway of Europe, Hungary has become an important destination for refugees. However, the Hungarian government has implemented stricter border control policies. These policies have led to many refugees and migrants becoming trapped within Hungary's borders, unable to continue their journey to their final destinations. Consequently, many refugees and migrants have sought protection in Hungary (Hartocollis, 2017).

However, the journey of refugees and migrants to Europe is far from easy. They must face perilous routes and serious challenges to reach their desired destination countries. At the very least, refugees are required to traverse eight main winding paths to Europe, with two routes being the most commonly utilized: the Eastern Mediterranean route through Turkey and the Western Balkans route. These routes not only significantly impact the journey of refugees and migrants but also demand an extraordinary level of vigilance and caution as they navigate these risky pathways (Frontex, 2017). Additionally, obstacles like increasing resistance in transit and destination countries fail to deter their determination to migrate and leave their home nations.

Furthermore, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) regime attracts refugees heading to Europe. This system comprises common rules and procedures to safeguard the

rights of refugees and migrants, ensuring their fair and dignified treatment in EU member states. CEAS also facilitates cooperation among EU member states to address refugee and migrant issues and to ensure their fair and dignified reception within the EU (Ayoub, 2019). With the existence of CEAS, refugees and migrants find a sense of security, viewing Europe as their destination after enduring a long journey in search of protection. However, in practice, the effectiveness of the CEAS program has been hindered by uneven refugee distribution and resistance from certain EU member states (Ahmad, 2018).

Although the Visegrad Group demonstrates resistance to the influx of immigrants, the determination of migrants to reach Europe remains strong and unwavering due to the understanding that the countries within The Visegrad Group are not their ultimate destinations. Furthermore, several member states with historical influence in EU asylum policies, such as Germany, Austria, and Sweden, have accommodated significant numbers of immigrants and encouraged other member states to share the responsibility for handling immigration (Sugito, 2021).

The main pull factor that attracted immigrants to Europe between 2015 and 2017 was the efforts of asylum seekers to find safety and protection in European countries. In the context of instability and danger in their home countries, many individuals were forced to leave and seek refuge in safer environments. European countries that became destinations for refugees, including Germany and Austria, were ranked among the top 30 safest countries in the world in 2015, and Sweden was also considered a relatively safe country (Global Peace Index, 2015). Additionally, economic opportunities played a significant role as a consideration for immigrants. Europe is known for its economic stability, better living standards, and high levels of prosperity. The continent also offers various opportunities and wealth that immigrants hope to exploit. Therefore, factors such as security, protection, and the aspiration to improve their quality of life in Europe were the primary attractions for many immigrants.

Immigrants' Challenges and Obstacles

During the European migration crisis from 2015 to 2017, refugees encountered various challenges, from their journey to Europe to their adaptation to destination countries. In the initial stages, they had to confront a difficult journey. Unsafe borders and treacherous seas posed serious obstacles they had to overcome, navigating through various physical barriers to reach Europe (Avisia, 2017). Upon arrival in Europe, refugees faced complex psychosocial challenges. They encountered discrimination and xenophobia from the local communities in some European countries, leading to negative impacts on their mental well-being (Sugito, 2017). The challenges persisted with slow and convoluted case processing procedures, creating legal uncertainty and identity issues for many refugees. These conditions hindered their integration and disrupted adaptation (Ramadhani et al., 2022).

Furthermore, differences in regulations across various European countries give rise to legal ambiguities that bewilder refugees. Some face the risk of deportation, while others struggle to attain recognition as legitimate refugees (Ramadhani et al., 2022). The traumatic experiences from their home countries and arduous journeys, coupled with uncertainty in Europe, have a detrimental impact on the mental and emotional well-being of refugees (Frontex, 2017). Despite these extraordinary challenges, their determination to seek a better life in Europe remains steadfast.

From a more specific perspective, the views of The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) depict the complex challenges immigrants face in different European countries. In Hungary, for example, immigrants confront serious issues such as human smuggling, which becomes a grave threat involving illicit networks exploiting the needs and vulnerabilities of immigrants. Xenophobic attitudes among the local community have complicated integration and social cohesion, creating an unwelcoming environment for them. Moreover, restrictions in transit zones also affect the individual rights of immigrant travelers and their asylum-seeking processes. Therefore, these challenges highlight

the complexity of immigrants' experiences, encompassing social and legal aspects that significantly impact their journey (FRA, 2018).

Conclusion

The rejection and stringent restrictions on immigrants by the Visegrad Group serve as barriers to the mobility of asylum seekers toward Europe. However, this rejection does not significantly deter the determination of refugees and asylum seekers to reach European countries. Factors such as poverty play a significant role in driving asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa to European countries. Conflict factors also contribute greatly to the decisions of Syrian asylum seekers to leave their country. The ongoing civil war in Syria since 2011 has led to the migration of millions of people, many of whom seek refuge in European countries. Another contributing factor is the lack of economic opportunities.

The push factors for refugees heading toward Europe include economic stability, availability of land and job opportunities, and significantly better security than their home countries. These factors undoubtedly influence the considerations of refugees and asylum seekers in meeting their livelihood needs in the future. However, the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers results in rejection, discrimination, and the strengthening of xenophobia. This study is limited to analyzing migration push and pull factors amidst the growing resistance among the Visegrad Group. As previously stated, why the European Union has not been able to pressure some members who effectively reject refugee crisis handling agreements and uphold the right to freedom of mobility could be a topic for further research. A further question to be considered for the study is why the EU has not been able to effectively pressure members who violate the agreement on handling the refugee crisis.

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