POLAND'S ROLE IN UKRAINE'S SECURITY AMID THE CHALLENGE OF MIGRATION

Humanitarian Responses, Civic Solidarities & Downstream Risks

Policy Brief

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Authors: Rafal Pankowski, Karolina Czerska-Shaw, Iavor Rangelov

PeaceRep: The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform
School of Law, The University of Edinburgh
Old College, South Bridge
Edinburgh EH8 9YL

Tel. +44 (0)131 651 4566
Fax. +44 (0)131 650 2005
E-mail: peacerep@ed.ac.uk

PeaceRep.org

Twitter: @Peace_Rep_
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PeaceRepResearch
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/peacerep/
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/peace_rep_/

The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) is a research consortium led by the University of Edinburgh Law School. Our research is rethinking peace and transition processes in the light of changing conflict dynamics in the 21st century.

PeaceRep's Ukraine programme

PeaceRep's Ukraine programme is a multi-partner initiative that provides evidence, insight, academic research and policy analysis from Ukraine and the wider region to support Ukrainian sovereignty, territorial integrity and democracy in the face of the Russian invasion. PeaceRep's Ukraine programme is led by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) partnering with the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) in Ukraine, the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) in Germany, the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM) in Austria and Jagiellonian University in Poland. Through our collaboration with KSE we work closely with researchers, educationalists and civic activists in Ukraine to ensure that policy solutions are grounded in robust evidence and are calibrated to support democratic outcomes.

Background

On 10ᵗʰ March 2023 PeaceRep's Ukraine team hosted a seminar discussion at the London School of Economics and Political Science on the topic, 'Poland's Response to the War Against Ukraine - Political Situation, Migration Challenge and Civil Society'. This readout contains a non-verbatim summary of key points made by panellists in their presentations.

About the Authors

Rafal Pankowski is a Professor at the Institute of Sociology of Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. He has published widely on racism, nationalism, populism, xenophobia and other issues including the books 'Neo-Fascism in Western Europe: A study in ideology' (Polish Academy of Sciences, 1998), 'Racism and Popular Culture' (Trio, 2006), and 'The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots' (Routledge, 2010). He has served as deputy editor of 'Nigdy Wiecej' (Never Again) magazine since 1996 and he is a co-founder of the 'Never Again' Association.

Karolina Czerska-Shaw is an Assistant Professor in the Institute of European Studies at Jagiellonian University and the coordinator of Erasmus Mundus MA in Euroculture Programme: Society, Politics and Culture in a Global Context. She is a member of PeaceRep's Ukraine team, and the lead investigator and coordinator of the project, "Ukrainian civicness abroad: the refugee population and their relationship to the war in Ukraine".

Iavor Rangelov is a Research Fellow at the Conflict and Civicness Research Group, based at LSE IDEAS, the in-house foreign policy think tank of the London School of Economics and Political Science, and co-founder of the Civic Ecosystems Initiative.

Introduction

PeaceRep's Ukraine team recently convened a seminar to discuss Poland's response to the war against Ukraine. The seminar drew together members of PeaceRep's regional network in Ukraine's neighbouring countries, along with our academic staff at the LSE. The discussion identified some of the ways in which civic mobilisations by Ukrainian activists in Poland's are shaping Ukraine's domestic security needs, and the downstream risks that may lie ahead:

- In response to the full-scale Russian invasion, a form of networked, post-Fordist civic ecosystem has mobilised to support Ukrainian migrants in Poland and respond to the humanitarian crises facing Ukraine. These civic networks are contributing directly to Ukraine's security by mobilising resources for humanitarian *and* military needs. They are highly informal, un-institutionalised, often based on personal connections and are held together by radical interpersonal trust. Their support for the armed forces has also blurred the traditional distinction between military and humanitarian relief.

- This 'mobilisation of help' has been strikingly successful. Yet, it is not clear how sustainable these mobilisations are over the longer-term. They will now move through a process of institutionalisation that seeks to maintain their longevity.

- A political climate that was previously hostile to migrants has been, at least partly, transformed – though with a sharp distinction drawn between Ukrainian migrants and the non-Europeans that have arrived via the Polish-Belarusian border. Some Polish cities have undergone dramatic levels of demographic change overnight – which will have a clear, lasting impact on Poland. But there are sadly signs of a backlash in public opinion and anti-migrant xenophobia represent a key downstream threat to the polity's cohesion and (by extension) Ukraine's own security needs.

This readout is published as part of the programme of work undertaken by PeaceRep's Ukraine team to assess the medium-term security challenges facing the region in light of the full-scale Russian invasion.

Luke Cooper is an Associate Professorial Research Fellow in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science and the Director of PeaceRep's Ukraine programme.

Rafal Pankowski: 'We Are Only Slowly Grasping the True Significance of this Transformation'

This is one of the largest refugee movements seen in modern history. Paradoxically, this has been presided over by a political party, Law and Justice, which lead what was until recently one of the most anti-refugee and anti-migration governments in the whole of Europe. This movement of people has transformed Poland in a way that is difficult to overestimate. Poland was historically one of the most multicultural societies in Europe – a status that was destroyed by the Holocaust, mass deportations and the ethnically-motivated redrawing of state borders. Following these tragedies in the twentieth century, Poland became one of the most monocultural countries in Europe. In the space of just a few weeks in late February and March 2022, it has transformed again, becoming a multicultural society.

On a personal note, I have spent my whole life talking about diversity as a good thing and saying that 'one day' Poland might be a multicultural society again. And this suddenly just happened in a dramatically short space of time. We are only slowly grasping the true significance of this, a transformation of Polish society that is not just a question of numbers.

On the numbers, while there is some uncertainty in the figures, it's something in the region of 1 to 2 million refugees from Ukraine who are now living in Poland (plus many Ukrainian migrants who had been present in Poland before the outbreak of the war). My hypothesis and assessment is that many of these refugees will ultimately stay in Poland – and that the landscape for Poland's demography, culture and politics will be altered in a major way.

This is already evident on a city-level. Studies have shown that in a few weeks the population of Warsaw increased by 15 per cent by April 2022. In Gdansk, the increase was 34 per cent and in Rzeszow, a Polish city near to the Ukrainian border, the increase was 52 per cent[1]. So, you can imagine the scale of the phenomenon that is hugely significant by any account. What is also significant is that Polish society by and large behaved in a very decent way. An impressive grassroots mobilization in support of the refugees occurred. This may be surprising given the levels of xenophobia seen since 2015 – when 'refugee' became a dirty word. This is no longer the case – 'refugee' is no longer a pejorative insult.

I rarely say positive things about the Law and Justice government, but they were in charge when the crisis broke and they responded positively – they have to be given some credit (sadly, this stands in stark contrast with the treatment of the refugees on the Polish-Belarusian border). Significantly, the crisis of 2022 has also led them to break the alliance with the Hungarian ruling party rather openly – and I suspect this rupture will be permanent, that it is not at all salvageable.

The Anti-Ukrainian Refugee Far Right

There is a political party in the Polish Parliament called Confederation. This is the party that is to the right of Law and Justice. There is a legitimate discussion around whether Law and Justice are themselves best described as far right. But it is important to note

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[1] Centrum Analiz i Badan, Unia Metropolii Polskich im. Pawla Adamowicza, 'Miejska goscinnosc: wielki wzrost, wyzwania i szanse. Raport o uchodzcach z Ukrainy w najwiekszych polskich miastach'. https://metropolie.pl/fileadmin/news/2022/04/Ump_Ukraina_RAPORT_final_2.pdf

that there is a significant party in the parliament to the right of them. They are the only party that voted against the legislation, in March last year, which gave Ukrainian refugees social rights in Poland – broadly, this means that Ukrainians in Poland enjoy almost all the rights of Polish citizens except the right to vote in elections. It was a significant piece of progressive legislation that was backed overwhelmingly in the Parliament – an unusual consensus.

All parties in the parliament voted in favour, except Confederation on the far right. It was interesting and notable to see just how isolated they were, for a period, in terms of the general mood in society. As a general rule, the far right often like to present themselves as an expression of a 'silent majority' or the 'true peoples' voice'. But last year they were quite evidently not part of the majority. They were really very isolated as most Polish people wanted to welcome the Ukrainian refugees. But they made a choice at that time, which is politically logical from their point of view, to be the only voice in Polish society that is anti-Ukrainian – and sometimes even pro-Russia to some degree, albeit usually not in an open way. In the longer term, this might prove to be a smart strategy in terms of building public support.

The Never Again Association published a report in April 2022 which found that there were already emerging signs of a backlash among parts of society to the presence of Ukrainian refugees[2]. One strategy of the Polish far right in response to the migration wave was to single out and attack non-white refugees from Ukraine. They also invoked antisemitic tropes in discussing the war.

In fact, there may be a parallel with the COVID-19 pandemic when, in the first stage, it was all about solidarity, volunteer mobilisation, supporting one another, and so on. But overtime the far right attempted, with some degree of success, to influence the discourse, promote conspiracy theories and distrust. And while they have not been successful in breaking the overall consensus, support for providing sanctuary to Ukrainians has fallen from 88 per cent to around 67 per cent[3]. They clearly hope and expect to benefit politically from these shifts in public opinion.

Since the Never Again Association's report in April, we have published three further reports on the phenomenon of hate speech and conspiracies targeting refugees. Two of these reports were focused on big YouTube channels that promoted this message on a very wide scale – we are talking about hundreds of thousands of subscribers, so a major impact.[4] Our reports were successful. YouTube closed these channels down after we made front page news. The other report attempted to quantify anti-Ukrainian and anti-refugee sentiment on Polish social media.[5] We partnered with a technology company and found 500 million views of hate speech.

In this context, we have a general election coming up – which is sadly set to be one of the ugliest election campaigns in Polish history. The positive solidarity we have seen is waning, unfortunately, and the far right support is steadily growing – so I'm not very optimistic about the situation, there are clear risks that lie ahead.

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[2]NEVER AGAIN Association 'Let's Maintain Solidarity with Refugees. Report', https://nigdywiecej.org/docstation/com_docstation/172/lets_maintain_solidarity_with_refugees.pdf
[3]'Spada akceptacja Polakow dla uchodzcow z Ukrainy', https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/8662371,akceptacja-polakow-dla-uchodzcow-ukraina-badanie.html
[4] NEVER AGAIN Association, 'Hate Speech on Youtube Documented in a New Report', https://nigdywiecej.org/en/our-news/204-articles-from-2023/5036-hate-speech-on-youtube-documented-in-a-new-report
[5]Stowarzyszenie NIGDY WIECEJ, 'Jak policzyc nienawisc? Hejterzy o Ukraincach', https://nigdywiecej.org/komunikaty/rok-2023/5062-jak-policzy%C4%87-nienawi%C5%9B%C4%87-hejterzy-o-ukrai%C5%84cach

Karolina Czerska-Shaw: Informality and 'Radical Interpersonal Trust' has Characterised these Civic Networks

What I want to talk about is the 'mobilisation of help', which has mushroomed since 24th February 2022. Prior to joining the PeaceRep team, I was involved in a project to map the networks of aid that were developed in the city of Krakow, how they developed and how they operated, and how they interfaced with local and regional authorities and international actors. On the national level, I was involved in a report that was recently published called the *The Polish School of Assistance. The reception of Ukrainian refugees in Poland since 2022.*[6] This is a country-wide analysis on the mobilisation of help. This work has fed into the PeaceRep project where my project is focusing on Ukrainian civic movements in Poland, the kind of networks they are forming and how this is impacting Ukraine's war-effort 'at home.'

I want to raise three points on the mobilisation of help and what we've been saying. The first point is the range of social actors; the second is about the characteristics of the networks that have been formed; and the third is about the role of Ukrainian organisations, movements and activists operating in Poland.

The scale of the refugee flows (as Rafal has rightly emphasised) was unprecedented and, reflecting this, the scale of civil society mobilisation was also without any precedent in Poland. Part of the reason for this unprecedented civic response is due to the multitude of different social actors that were involved. We wanted to map out whether these networks had a rhyme or reason to them, and to consider the types of networks involved. We developed a five-part typology of the networks operating in Polish civic space:

- **The underground.** These are individuals and informal groups, the IT workers, the bakers, the volunteers, that mobilised efforts around specific purposes. What is interesting about this network is different social actors began to work together, including across political divides. They often have high social capital, skills and they generally had a high degree of motivation. 'If we don't do it, no one will' was a dominant ethos, which reflected a scepticism towards the ability of the state to respond effectively and quickly to the sheer scale of the crisis that had erupted.

- **Neighbourhood.** This occurred at a local, i.e., neighbourhood, level with groups of residents getting together to see what capacity was available at the base, from spare bedrooms for hosting, apartment vacancies. Interestingly, these bottom-up responses went beyond the provision of accommodation and extended to identifying social needs of the refugee population and how they could be addressed. They started to think very holistically; for example, there was long-term thinking about integration and a focus on the agency and needs of refugees themselves. Some of these networks formalised themselves into neighbourhood associations – and were attractive for international donors due to their inclusivity and local base.

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[6] Jarosz, S., Klaus, W. (Eds). 2023. The Polish School of Assistance. The Reception of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland since 2022. Konsorcjum Migracyjne, Ośrodek Badań and Migracjami UW, Centrum Badań Migracyjnych UAM: Warszawa:chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://konsorcjum.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Polska-Szkola-Pomagania-raport.pdf

- **Star entrepreneurs/privatised philanthropists.** This group came from the business world as private individuals with relevant private sector connections. They have social, cultural but also financial capital. They were quickly able to mobilise a large amount of aid, including through business connections abroad. These networks were very well resourced and moblised very quickly, even though they were informal – it was not necessary for them to constitute themselves as NGOs. In one example, a network of private individuals set up a warehouse and quickly filled it with humanitarian aid going to Ukraine. The interviewee described how they adjusted their business model from a 'warehouse-to-warehouse' approach to one called 'warehouse-to-recipient', i.e., inside Ukraine they targeted individuals and groups through their own networks. This could be seen as the emergence of a post-Fordist conception of humanitarian aid – something we are discussing as part of our work in analysing these networks.

- **Mainstream, formalised NGOs.** These are organisations that have been around a long time, and have established bases in big Polish cities. While these organisations have not specialised in humanitarian relief prior to the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion, and instead were focused on issues such as integration, they had established institutional capacity that they were able to mobilise to address the migration challenge. Due to their established nature, they were also well connected with local and regional authorities. This meant that they were often blamed when things went wrong, i.e., coordination failed in some form.

- **International parachutists.** These were the international aid organisations, e.g., UNHCR, UNICEF, and all the international aid organisations and charities. They come with a lot of knowhow about humanitarian aid but a general lack of contextual knowledge about the situation on the ground. They also had resources which were and are very much needed. In Krakow, we could see these tensions play out, as these organisations had particular templates and strategies for giving out their aid which tended to clash with the local context – and this approach for international donors really needs to be re-thought, as this is obviously a perennial problem.

  With the exception of the 'International parachutists', what characterised the other four networks was a sense of radical, interpersonal trust. A lot of money and resources was getting passed through networks with high levels of informality, reflecting their ad hoc nature and a low faith in official, established institutions to 'get the job done'. At the local authority and regional level, there was also a sense of flexibility in the engagement with these networks – which is dissipating now but present at the high point of the crisis.

  There was also (again, with the exception of the 'international parachutists') a high level of informality – not only between the civic networks, but also through their interface with local governments. This meant that civil servants at a local and regional level, were willing to cut a lot of red tape through working with civil society actors – and saw civic activism as a means of rapid, effective delivery, which avoided the bureaucracy of institutional processes. Civil servants were also often simultaneously participating in the relief mobilisation as private citizens – as well as agents of a larger bureaucracy. While this was positive, it did mean that the question of 'who was responsible for what' became very much blurred.

  The last point to emphasise – linking to my wider research for PeaceRep – is that amongst these organisations and networks are also *Ukrainian* civil society organisations and movements. They have a lot of political clout now – especially in relation to the local and municipal levels of government. Even as some of the energy subsides, they are now established as key players.

There are three fault lines and questions at play in their future development:

1. **Language.** We see a real rift among different parts of Ukrainian civil society over whether use of the Russian language is acceptable or not.

2. **Resources.** As civil society networks become institutionalised and formalised to secure their longevity and establish institutional roots, which groups and networks have access to and effectively marshal resources will be a critical question.

3. **Visions and values.** There are competing visions for the future of Ukraine and its democracy, these involves different conceptions of freedom and reflect left/right divisions over resource allocation. There are also different conceptions for how integration into Polish society should be pursued and effectively managed.

Iavor Rangelov: 'The Value of Diversity is About its Potential to Unlock Complementarity'

I will discuss the concept of 'civic ecosystems' pioneered by the Civic Ecosystems Initiative, [7] which fits very well with the framework that Karolina has developed to analyse the social mobilisation around the migration challenge in Poland. Civic ecosystems are self-organising, informal patterns of social relations that emerge organically to address specific social problems. Their main characteristics are diversity, interdependence, and civicness.

What Karolina describes as a "range" of networks involved in the humanitarian response in Poland, each comprised of a multiplicity of social actors, is what we call the 'diversity' of civic ecosystems. Because civic ecosystems are not sectorally bounded, they make visible the range of civic-minded people across civil society, the public and private sectors, who become involved in addressing complex social problems in a variety of different ways. In the ecosystem model of social change, the value of diversity is about its potential to unlock complementarity – diverse social actors tackling the multiple facets of the problem at stake with a host of different tools and ideas, approaches and theories of change.

Whereas the logic of networks is about communication and its value is in enabling collaboration among a set of social actors, the logic of ecosystems is diversity and interdependence – and its value is in enabling complementarity. In fact, what can be seen as competing logics of action or strategies at one level – say, principle vs pragmatism, 'top-down' vs 'bottom-up' – can be complementary and mutually reinforcing at the ecosystem level, when one considers carefully their distinctive ecosystem roles and contributions. We can see that in the case of Poland – the different types of civic networks identified in Karolina's research can be interpreted as different components of the civic ecosystems that have generated the overall crisis response through complementarity.

What are the implications of this approach for thinking about social change in Poland? Analytically, it enables us to generate a kind of real-time map of civicness. The arrival of Ukrainians fleeing the war has served as a catalytic event that activated, and made visible, Poland's civic resources and openings across different sectors and sections of society – countless civic-minded people in local communities, municipalities, businesses, etc. In practical terms, these are critical openings and resources for social change if they can be harnessed and mobilised to tackle other social problems. In other words, mapping and analysing Poland's civic ecosystems, which have emerged organically since the start of the war in Ukraine, opens up pathways for activating and catalysing them again in the future.

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[7] See the definition and dimensions of civic ecosystems at the website of the Civic Ecosystems Initiative https://civicecosystems.org/

Cover Image: Ukrainian Children fleeing Russian aggression. Przemyśl, Poland. Mirek Pruchnicki 2022