G7 – The Group of 7

Topic A: The Growing Refugee Issue as a Result of the Russia-Ukraine War

1. Committee Background

The Group of 7 (G7) is an intergovernmental political and economic forum consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. These countries are the capitalist world's major industrialized countries. This forum was first held on March 25, 1973, instigated by the 1973 oil crisis, and was initially a small gathering of finance ministers.

At first, only the United States of America, West Germany, France, and the United Kingdom were involved, though, over the next decades, this group expanded, with the additions of Japan, Italy, and Canada (in time order) leading up to the first meeting of the current Group of Seven (G7) in 1976. Russia's involvement was originally informal, though it briefly joined the group in 1998, forming the G8, before being suspended in 2014. Since then, it has remained the Group of 7 with the outlying members of Australia and South Korea, as well as several democratic countries (India, Indonesia, Poland, and Spain), who participate as observers.

Since its first gathering, the G7 has become a venue for discussing and coordinating solutions to major global issues, specifically in the areas of trade, security, economics, and climate change. Its primary focus was to facilitate shared macroeconomic initiatives in response to recent economic problems. However, it has since launched key worldwide initiatives, such as battling HIV/AIDS, offering financial help to developing countries, and addressing climate change through the Paris Agreement.

Also, the G7 has promised to phase out coal power by 2030-2035, unless emissions are collected or matched with the 1.5-degree climate strategy. Its areas of concern have expanded over the years to include international security, human rights, and global security, such as the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In recent years, this forum has discussed the Russian Federation and its 'violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine'. The G7 has been criticized for its outmoded structure, restricted representation, and ineffectiveness, with growing powers such as BRICS+ calling into question its relevance.

2. History of the Topic

The Russia-Ukraine war has resulted in one of the most serious refugee crises in modern history. This conflict has displaced millions of Ukrainians, both internally and internationally, putting a burden on neighboring nations and international organizations built to deal with mass displacement.

The Russo-Ukrainian War itself began in February 2014, following Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity. This marked the end of the Euromaidan protests, a year-long set of protests against the president's decision to make closer ties with Russia rather than support a free trade agreement with the European Union. After a series of violence-filled protests, the country had a majority vote to remove the president, though Russia claimed it was a coup. As more supporting protests began in southern and eastern Ukraine, Russia occupied and then annexed Crimea. This sparked the Donbas War (2014 till its subsummation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022). This first war displaced about 1.5 million individuals within Ukraine, laying the groundwork for widespread instability in 2022.

On the 24 of February 2022, Russia escalated the Russo-Ukrainian War with an invasion, the largest and deadliest conflict in Europe since the World Wars. The war is continuous and so far, has lasted three years of high casualties, both military and civilian. As of 2025, Russian troops occupy about 20% of Ukraine.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 6 million refugees fled Ukraine within the first few months of the invasion, seeking shelter in neighboring countries such as Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Moldova. Many others traveled further to countries including Germany, Canada, and the United States. Just in the first year of the initial invasion, nearly one-third of Ukraine's population was forced to flee their homes. Many remained within the country (5.9 million internally displaced), but approximately 39% of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were displaced repeatedly. As Russia's attack continued, millions more were forced out of the country. By April, more than 8.2 million had fled the country, becoming Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War 1.

By early 2023, the UNHCR estimated that over 8 million Ukrainians had sought asylum in Europe alone. Meanwhile, an additional 5 million people were internally displaced within Ukraine, fleeing conflict zones but remaining within the country's borders. These refugees were recorded seeking asylum internationally, though the majority (93%) of them remained in Europe. Almost all of those who stayed in Europe applied for Asylum, Temporary Protections, or similar national protection schemes in Europe as of February 2023. Primarily, reports show that the migrants applied the most in Poland, Germany, and Czechia. Poland emerged as the most significant host nation, receiving over 1.6 million Ukrainian migrants by 2023. Other neighboring countries, including Romania and Hungary, also welcomed hundreds of thousands of refugees. However, the sudden flood of displaced individuals created severe obstacles, such as a lack of housing, healthcare, education, and jobs.

3. Current Issue

As of 2024, the refugee crisis remained critical, with over 6 million Ukrainians displaced across Europe and 14.6 million seeking humanitarian assistance (~40% of the population) within Ukraine. The United Nations (UN) and other organizations continued to support the country. The UN launched a $4.2 billion plan to support the refugees and war-affected communities. In addition, the EU's Temporary Protection Directive continued to allow Ukrainians access to residence, employment, and social services. Children remained unenrolled in their host countries, and only 40-60% of the refugees were enrolled, albeit often below their qualifications. Conditions remain dangerous for the nearly 4.5 million Ukrainians who returned to their homes, especially in the frontline regions of Donetsk and Kharkiv. Refugees seeking asylum in foreign countries have also been exposed to trafficking, with 18,480 identified victims.

The Russia-Ukraine refugee crisis has transformed the demographic landscape of Eastern Europe and has sparked critical discussions about international refugee policies and burden-sharing. The crisis illustrates the interconnectedness of conflict, displacement, and global security, emphasizing the need for coordinated international efforts to address such emergencies. As the war continues, addressing the displacement of millions of Ukrainians remains a pressing global priority. The G7 nations have a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid, facilitating refugee resettlement, and supporting long-term solutions to the refugee crisis. Coordinated action is essential to protect the rights and dignity of displaced individuals while mitigating the broader socio-economic impacts of this humanitarian disaster.

4. International Response to the Refugee Crisis

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been supportive of Ukrainian refugees since 1996 after the collapse of the Soviet Union but has stepped up their support since the start of the war. They have expanded their operations into hard-to-reach areas, delivering cash, giving emergency shelter repair kits to those with damaged houses, carrying out housing repairs, and providing legal support and psychological counseling. The International Organization for Migration has also made efforts within Ukraine to support IDPs, refugees, returnees, third-country nationals, and host and affected communities.

The UNHCR has coordinated emergency assistance, including shelter, food, and healthcare for displaced populations. It has also worked closely with neighboring countries to facilitate the registration of refugees and ensure their access to protection and essential services. UNICEF has also provided support, specifically to children and families, focusing on education, mental health, and basic needs. Additionally, the World Food Program (WFP) has delivered food assistance to displaced families, both within Ukraine and in host countries. The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supported transportation and reintegration efforts for those internally displaced within Ukraine.

The international community has made significant efforts to support Ukrainian refugees, but the scale of the crisis has tested existing systems. The European Union (EU) activated its Temporary Protection Directive for the first time, granting Ukrainian refugees immediate access to residency, healthcare, education, and the labor market across EU member states. Non-EU countries, such as Canada and the United States, implemented special programs to accommodate Ukrainian refugees.

Despite these efforts, the crisis has overwhelmed many host countries. Housing shortages, limited resources, and challenges in integrating refugees into local communities have highlighted the need for more sustainable solutions. Humanitarian organizations have also struggled to meet the growing demand for aid, underscoring gaps in the global system for managing large-scale displacement.

Essential Questions:

1. Analyze the efficacy of existing international legal frameworks, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, in addressing the unique challenges posed by the Ukraine refugee crisis. What are the gaps, and how can they be addressed?

2. Evaluate the concept of "burden-sharing" among nations in responding to refugee crises. How can the G7 ensure a more equitable distribution of responsibility, considering factors like economic capacity and geographic proximity?

3. Critically assess the role of international organizations, such as UNHCR, in coordinating humanitarian assistance and protection for Ukrainian refugees. What are the strengths and weaknesses of their involvement, and how can they be strengthened?

4. Devise a comprehensive strategy for the G7 to address the long-term integration of Ukrainian refugees into host societies, considering aspects like language acquisition, employment opportunities, and social cohesion.

5. Formulate policy recommendations for the G7 to address the specific vulnerabilities of particular refugee groups, such as unaccompanied minors, elderly individuals, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

6. Propose innovative solutions for leveraging technology to enhance the delivery of aid and services to Ukrainian refugees, while also addressing concerns about data privacy and security.

7. Debate the ethical dilemmas inherent in prioritizing certain refugee populations over others. How can the international community ensure a fair and equitable response to all those fleeing conflict and persecution?

8. Critically examine the narratives surrounding the Ukraine refugee crisis in media and public discourse. How can the G7 combat misinformation and promote a more nuanced understanding of the situation?

9. Propose concrete measures to prevent and address potential human trafficking and exploitation of Ukrainian refugees, particularly women and children.

List of Countries:

– **Canada**
– **France**
– **Germany**
– **Italy**
– **Japan**
– **The United Kingdom**
– **The United States**

Citations:

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UNHCR "Ukraine Refugee Situation"

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ReliefWeb:

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