

UKRAINIAN IMMIGRATION TO CANADA:

FROM POST INDEPENDENCE TO POST WAR

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Assessing the impact of the CUAET visa policy on Canada's humanitarian migration regime

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In response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the Government of Canada introduced a special visa to allow Ukrainians and their family members to seek safety in Canada. This visa is called "Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel" (CUAET). Besides granting its holders entry into Canada, the visa allows acquiring a free open work permit and/or a study permit. The federal government introduced free 14-day hotel stay and a one-time financial assistance for Ukrainians but it allowed and enabled the provinces and territories to design their own regime of protection available to war-displaced Ukrainians. As a result, the scope of the protection that CUAET-holders can rely on, varies between the provinces. Although CUAET does not provide a refugee status to Ukrainians in legal and policy terms, it has evolved through implementation into a temporary protection status for Ukrainians with access to settlement support and partial access to social, financial and health services that are usually extended to refugees in Canada. My presentation answers two key questions: how does the temporary protection given to Ukrainian CUAET-visa holders differ from the full refugee protection that has existed thus far in the Canadian humanitarian protection regime? What are the implications, if any, of this protection schema for the future of Canada's humanitarian migration regime and, particularly, the distribution of responsibilities between federal and provincial levels of government?

Drawing on comparative empirical analysis of provincial responses and on the scholarship on the evolution of federal/provincial responsibilities in Canada's refugee policy since the 1980s, I argue that federal and provincial responses to Ukrainian humanitarian migration have created a situation when Canada's response to the real-time human displacement is labour-market dependent and driven by the communities' capacity to provide settlement support. The analysis is undertaken along two dimensions, specifically: the private/public partnerships and federal/provincial distribution of resources and responsibilities.