Domestic Politics and Immigration Policy: Examining Political Drivers of Restrictive Measures in V4 Region Post-2015

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Abstract: The existing literature reveals a significant gap in understanding how domestic politics influence stance on immigration policy. This study examines the impact of key domestic political factors on immigration policy stances within the Visegrad Group (V4) region, utilizing the Chapel Hill Expert Survey databases and applying Fixed Effect (FE) and interaction term econometric methods. The findings indicate that parliamentary power, ideology, and nationalism perspective of domestic political parties significantly contribute to restrictive stance on immigration policies, especially post-2015. At the country level, nationalism and ideology are crucial in Slovakia, while security concerns and parliamentary power dominate in Poland. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, a combination of ideology, security concerns, economic issues, and nationalism shapes their restrictive stances. The study highlights the complex interplay between political forces and immigration policy in the V4 region and advocates for more balanced and inclusive policies that address labor market inequalities and foster social cohesion, tailored to each country's political and economic context. Acknowledging data constraints, the study emphasizes the need for further research on immigration policies and its labor market impacts.

1 Introduction

The V4, established on February 15, 1991, initially aimed to promote political, economic, and cultural cooperation among the Czech and Slovak Republic, Poland, and Hungary, with the primary goal of joining the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Bauerová, 2018). While the V4 successfully achieved these objectives by gaining EU membership, the group has since faced new challenges, notably the migration crisis that began in 2015. This crisis, which intensified discussions around immigration policies across Europe, forced the V4 to adopt a unified response that significantly diverged from the broader EU stance (Clarissa, 2018).

The migration crisis of 2015 exposed deep rifts within the EU regarding immigration policies, particularly between Western European nations and the V4 countries. While the EU sought collective action to manage the influx of migrants, the V4 countries opted for more restrictive policies, driven by concerns over national security, sovereignty, and cultural identity (Duina & Carson, 2020; Stojarová, 2018). This divergence highlighted the complex interplay between domestic political forces and regional cooperation, with the rise of nationalism and populism playing a crucial role in shaping the V4's approach to immigration (Lindquist, 2019; Walters & Skocpol, 2024).

Existing literature offers various explanations for the V4's restrictive stance on immigration. Three dominant narratives have emerged: the neorealist perspective, which focuses on geopolitical and security concerns; the social constructivist view, emphasizing nationalism and xenophobia; and the neoliberal explanation, which highlights the influence of radical right-wing parties and domestic politics on immigration policies (Szalai et al., 2017). While these perspectives provide valuable insights, they often lack empirical evidence to support causal links between political determinants of restrictive stance on immigration policy in the V4 countries, particularly their increasing power in the parliament (Weinar, 2011; Fleischmann & Dronkers, 2010).

Despite the growing body of literature on immigration policies within the V4 region, gaps remain. Few studies have empirically examined how domestic political parties influence the framing of immigration policies in these countries, particularly in the wake of the 2015 crisis. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis on the factors driving the

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V4's collective opposition to the EU's immigration policies, such as the role of nationalism, political ideology, and economic concerns (Clarissa, 2018; Bauerová, 2018; Cichocki & Jabkowski, 2019).

This study aims to fill these gaps by empirically analyzing the political determinants of immigration policies in the V4 countries, focusing on factors such as the ideological positioning of political parties, their share of power, and the influence of nationalism, economic and security concerns. By doing so, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of how domestic political dynamics influence stance on immigration policies within the V4 region and offer insights into broader EU integration challenges.

The study's contributions are significant. First, it explores the relationship between the factors contributed to the restrictive stance of domestic political parties on immigration policies in the V4 region in the long-run and post 2015, providing empirical evidence on a topic that has been underexplored. Second, it focuses individually on the V4 region member countries, a critical but often overlooked context in discussions of European immigration policy. Finally, the findings will have practical implications for policymakers, offering recommendations on how to address immigration in ways that balance economic growth with social cohesion.

Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do domestic political parties in the Visegrad Group (V4) countries influence the framing of immigration policies?
2. What role do ideological positioning, parliamentary power, nationalism, and security concerns play in shaping restrictive immigration stances in the V4 region post-2015?

2 Are there significant variations in immigration policy drivers across individual V4 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia)?Methods

To empirically investigate the political determinants of restrictive immigration policies in the V4 region, this study tests the following hypotheses:
1. H1: The share of parliamentary power held by right-wing parties significantly correlates with a restrictive stance on immigration policies in the V4 countries.
2. H2: Nationalism and ideological extremism positively influence the likelihood of restrictive immigration policy stances in the V4 region.
3. H3: Security concerns and economic factors have varying impacts on immigration policy stances across V4 countries, reflecting their unique political and economic contexts.

To empirically test the specified research questions and hypotheses, the study employs the following econometric specification: $Y_{ipt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ipt} + \alpha_i + \gamma_p + \delta_t + \epsilon_{ipt} \dots \dots (1)$

In model (1) Y_{it} denotes the position of political parties (p) toward immigration policies in the country (i) at time (t). Additionally, X_{ipt} are the variables which explain the factors contributing to political parties' stance toward immigration policies. Theses variables include the seat share of political parties in parliament, the ideological stance of political parties, their concern about economic and national security concern, and nationalism. The model (1) is further extended to capture the time-invariant country and political party specific factors with consideration of robust standard error. Moreover, to investigate the impact of each factor on the stance of political parties toward immigration policies at the V4 region and members countries, the study applies several models by including interaction term of time and countries. This will provide us with empirically tested evidence on how various factors from the domestic political perspective influence the stance of political parties toward immigration policies. Additionally, it will highlight whether the V4 countries with stronger far-right- and right-wing political parties exhibit divergence or convergence in their stance toward immigration policies compared to countries with more far-left- and left-wing political parties.

2.1 Data and Variables

The research utilizes the Chapel Hill Expert Survey as its primary data source, covering the period from 1999 to 2019. This survey examines the factors influencing the framing of immigration policies. The dataset integrates surveys conducted in 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2019. Initially, the 1999 survey included 116 experts assessing 143 political parties across the 14 largest EU member states (EU-14). Subsequent surveys expanded to evaluate more experts and parties. By 2019, the surveys encompassed all EU member states, focusing on position of domestic political parties related to European integration, immigration policy, economic policy, security, and their share in government (BAKKER et al., 2021). Based on the theoretical framework and literature review, relevant variables for this research are outlined in Table 1 for analysis.

Table 1. Description of Variables

Variables	Definition	Measurement	Source
Immigration Policy	Position and stance of party on immigration policies	0 = Strongly favors liberal 10 = Strongly favors restrictive	Chapel Hill
Power	Share of the party in the national election	Numeric	Chapel Hill
Ideology	Position of the party in terms of its overall ideological stance	0 = Extreme left 10 = Extreme right	Chapel Hill
Economic	Position of the party on Economic issues	0 = No importance 10 = Great importance	Chapel Hill
Security	Orientation of the party towards a common EU foreign and security policy	1 = Strongly opposed 7 = Strongly in favor	Chapel Hill
Nationalism	Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers	0 = Strongly favors multiculturalism 10 = Strongly favors assimilation	Chapel Hill

Source: Author Elaboration based on Chapel Hill Dataset

Additionally, the descriptive statistics of variables which are utilized in this study are summarized in the Table 2. This table provide the mean, standard deviation and the number of observations.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
immigrate policy	875	5.269	2.375	0	10
Economic	1196	4.856	2.157	.091	9.588
Security	1195	4.523	1.585	1	7
Ideology	1196	5.188	2.264	.143	10
Power	1127	12.304	13.631	0	64.6
Nationalism	873	5.367	2.417	.444	10

Source: Author Elaboration based on Chapel Hill Dataset

3 Research results

The main factors influencing the political parties' stance on immigration policies in the V4 region are summarized in Table 3. Specifically, a positive coefficient indicates that changes in the explanatory variables increase the likelihood of restrictive immigration policies. In column (1), there is a significant positive relationship between the V4 region and immigration policies in the long run. Furthermore, columns (2-6) explore the effects of each explanatory variable. Notably, in column (5), by adding the share of power of political parties in parliament, it positively influences immigration policies in the post-2015. Additionally, column (7) presents a pooled regression of all variables, revealing that the V4 region's ideological stance, nationalist sentiments, and increasing parliamentary power significantly contribute to

opposition to liberal immigration policies. While, the growing share of political parties in parliament is a key driver of restrictive immigration stances in the V4 region post-2015, ideology and nationalism are also the main factors.

Table 3. Regression Result for V4 Region

VARIABLES	(1) Model 1	(2) Model 1	(3) Model 1	(4) Model 1	(5) Model 1	(6) Model 1	(7) Model 1
Post-2015	0.263	0.231	-0.0355	0.216*	0.239	0.195***	0.152
	(0.205)	(0.168)	(0.198)	(0.118)	(0.205)	(0.0649)	(0.0933)
V4	0.447**	0.316	0.409**	0.00887	0.371*	-0.0355	1.183*
	(0.217)	(0.251)	(0.186)	(0.189)	(0.224)	(0.0921)	(0.708)
V4_Post	0.408	0.387	0.504	0.547	0.855*	0.186	0.685***
	(0.502)	(0.532)	(0.392)	(0.379)	(0.485)	(0.163)	(0.212)
Economic		0.531***					0.0164
		(0.0312)					(0.0652)
Security			-0.447***				-0.0646
			(0.0578)				(0.0670)
Ideology				0.795***			0.221**
				(0.0232)			(0.0881)
Power					0.0283***		0.00929*
					(0.00486)		(0.00502)
Nationalism						0.912***	0.565***
						(0.0111)	(0.0520)
Constant	5.112***	2.571***	7.230***	1.051***	4.806***	0.327***	0.415
	(0.101)	(0.165)	(0.324)	(0.130)	(0.133)	(0.0734)	(0.705)
Observations	875	875	874	875	829	871	825
R-squared	0.012	0.246	0.096	0.598	0.042	0.866	0.959
FE-Country	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
FE-Party	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
FE-Year	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

able 4 investigates the factors influencing the stance of political parties on immigration policies in V4 member countries. Firstly, Column (1) shows long-term changes, revealing that the Czech Republic and Slovakia have a significant positive influence on the stance toward restrictive immigration policies, whereas Poland exhibits a negative influence, and Hungary is deemed insignificant. In addition, Columns (2-7) analyze the post-2015 impacts. Here, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland demonstrate significant positive effects, while Slovakia remains insignificant. Notably, after 2015, Slovakia's stance becomes significant when ideological and nationalist factors are included, and Poland shows a similar response influenced by security and power variables. Moreover, both Czech and Hungary exhibit significant impacts across various factors, particularly political power. Lastly, Column (8) presents a pooled regression, indicating that only Slovakia has a significant long-term positive impact. While in the post-2015 context, Hungary and the Czech Republic demonstrate positive significance. However, the influence of political parties ideology, share of power in parliament and nationalism are also significant factors. Thus, V4 countries exhibit diverse stances on immigration influenced by ideology, nationalism, power, security, and economic priorities.

Table 4. Regression Result for V4 countries

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Post-2015	0.255**	0.126	0.116	0.0479	0.103	0.127	0.187**	0.151
	(0.118)	(0.116)	(0.115)	(0.113)	(0.108)	(0.116)	(0.0849)	(0.0935)
dummy_hung	0.297	-0.647	-1.353**	-0.556	-1.641***	-0.426	-0.314	-0.609
	(0.298)	(0.585)	(0.630)	(0.541)	(0.605)	(0.558)	(0.603)	(0.646)
dummy_pol	-0.746**	-1.625**	-1.794***	-1.493**	-1.214	-1.457**	-0.173	0.0976
	(0.298)	(0.667)	(0.688)	(0.652)	(0.780)	(0.608)	(0.812)	(0.814)
dummy_cze	2.226***	0.864	-0.0529	0.852	-1.182	0.933	0.476	-0.383
	(0.298)	(0.596)	(0.689)	(0.593)	(0.754)	(0.610)	(0.543)	(0.682)
dummy_slo	1.410***	0.702	-0.149	0.731	-1.276	5.635***	0.384	1.291*
	(0.298)	(0.687)	(0.753)	(0.675)	(0.775)	(0.745)	(0.592)	(0.769)
dummy_slo_post		0.808	0.832	0.814	0.975*	0.922	0.606*	0.578
		(0.614)	(0.596)	(0.604)	(0.550)	(0.669)	(0.365)	(0.362)
dummy_pol_post		0.980*	0.972	0.951*	0.994	0.982*	0.323	0.322
		(0.592)	(0.593)	(0.576)	(0.645)	(0.521)	(0.654)	(0.621)
dummy_hung_post		1.045**	1.067**	1.057**	1.100***	1.053**	0.676*	0.715**
		(0.498)	(0.470)	(0.451)	(0.398)	(0.452)	(0.381)	(0.315)
dummy_cze_post		1.463***	1.562***	1.433***	1.551***	1.581***	0.900***	1.025***
		(0.512)	(0.515)	(0.513)	(0.533)	(0.521)	(0.281)	(0.306)
Economic			0.208***					0.0245
			(0.0720)					(0.0650)
Security				-0.137*				-0.0661
				(0.0712)				(0.0672)
Ideology					0.545***			0.217**
					(0.0870)			(0.0880)
Power						0.0141**		0.00970*
						(0.00615)		(0.00505)
Nationalism							0.592***	0.565***
							(0.0485)	(0.0523)
Constant	2.602***	2.631***	2.088***	3.452***	1.195**	2.400***	0.720	0.409
	(0.295)	(0.324)	(0.403)	(0.524)	(0.507)	(0.349)	(0.497)	(0.709)
Observations	875	875	875	874	875	829	871	825
R-squared	0.928	0.932	0.933	0.932	0.938	0.932	0.958	0.959
FE-Country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE-Party	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE-Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

4 Conclusions

This study investigated the political factors shaping stance toward immigration policies in the V4 region and member countries, emphasizing the significant influence of domestic political parties, particularly after 2015. In this context, ideological stances, nationalism, and increasing parliamentary power drive restrictive policies, aligning with the Political Opportunity Structure Framework (POSF). Moreover, this finding supports Kitschelt et al. (1995)'s conclusions regarding the impact of extreme right-wing parties. As a result, the growing share of righ-wing political parties in parliament is a key driver of restrictive immigration stances in the V4 region post-2015, ideology and nationalism are also the main factors. Additionally, in the member countries the Czech Republic and Slovakia demonstrate long-term restrictive trends, while Hungary and Poland adopt stricter stances due to security and power concerns. Specifically, in Poland, immigration

policy is largely shaped by parliamentary power and security concerns, while in Slovakia, nationalism and ideology play key roles. Thus, V4 countries exhibit diverse stances on immigration influenced mostly by ideology, nationalism, power, security, and economic priorities. Similarly, these findings align with Szalai et al. (2017), who identified conflicting narratives in the V4 countries. Moreover, Stojarová (2018) noted how xenophobic rhetoric has caused these countries to diverge from EU norms. This study emphasizes that the rise of right-wing parties and nationalist rhetoric has further driven opposition to liberal immigration policies across the region.

While the study offers valuable insights, certain limitations, such as using perceptive suvey data constraints may affect its comprehensiveness. Therefore, future research should consider real indicators, measuring the immigration policies and expanding the dataset to ensure a more accurate understanding of the factors shaping immigration policies in the V4 region and memeber countries.

Acknowledgement

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