

Commonalities between and Variation among the Policies of Illiberal Actors in Power

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Illiberalism in Power

1. Introduction: A holistic overview

The main objective of this report is to summarize the findings of AUTHLIB's empirical investigations on what policies European illiberal actors promise and adopt once they assume governing positions. The report will present our findings across a variety of policy areas, focusing on education and culture, foreign policy, immigration and citizenship, gender, and social policies, relying on the analysis of policy-relevant decisions, legislative changes, and discourse.

By illiberalism we mean the readiness to question or undermine fundamental aspects of liberal democracy: freedoms, equality, rule of law, minority rights, tolerance, and pluralism. Illiberalism is used as an umbrella concept. It covers, for example, actors who are opposed to liberal democracy from an elitist perspective, but also those who are for a more majoritarian, bottom-up political system. In the 21st century in Europe most of such actors belong to the populist hue: they speak on behalf of the ordinary people against an unrepresentative elite. Therefore, we rely extensively on the populist literature, emphasizing, however, the fact that illiberalism doesn't need to be populist.

The focus on policies is not self-evident in the context of populist politics. Until very recently, leaders typically identified as populists, such as Italy's Silvio Berlusconi or Czechia's Vaclav Klaus, governed in many respects like non-populists. Populist rhetoric has often served simply as a mobilizational tool for winning elections. Paul Taggart (2000) claimed, for example, that populist ideologies are unlikely to have any meaningful policy effect due to institutional constraints. In general, it has been taken for granted that policies introduced by populist actors are not sustainable across longer term, and that such actors discount the future in favor of immediate electoral success.

This perspective is, however, increasingly criticized (Muller 2016, Enyedi 2020), partly due to the reconceptualization of populism as an ideational phenomenon, denoting more than simply a style of politics, and partly due to the fact that parties often categorized as populists are

increasingly capable of staying in government across longer time periods, supervising important policy changes.

By actors here we mean primarily parties and governments. Influential opposition parties are also considered, but most of the attention is devoted to parties that have been in office in the last decades (see the list of actors surveyed in *Table 4*, Appendix A).

While the theoretical work on illiberalism is growing fast (Holmes 2021, Laruelle 2022, Sajó 2021, Sajó et al. 2021), empirical work on the impact of illiberal actors in government has remained relatively scarce. This is partly due to the fortunate fact that relatively few democratic countries experienced a wholesale illiberal turn. Many countries rather undergo illiberal swerves – temporary, episodic, and reversible illiberal changes in policy (Bustikova and Guasti 2017). The Hungarian, Turkish or Venezuelan cases are on the extreme end of the scale of the concentration of executive power, the degree of parliamentary majority and the ability to change constitutional rules.

Before introducing the policy-specific findings produced by the AUTHLIB project, it is important to provide a holistic picture – based on the existing literature, on our own assessment, and on some well-established indicators – about the nature and degree of impact on democratic governance attributed to illiberal actors.

Most previous work that is relevant to this project has focused on "populist policy-making" (Muller 2016, Bartha et al. 2020). This line of work found that populists adopt ideologically diverse and heterodox policy measures that challenge mainstream paradigms and disregard minority preferences, sidestep consultative mechanisms, ignore expert opinion, minimize civil society participation, and extensively rely on highly divisive, and emotionally loaded discourse (Bartha et al. 2020). Frequently, the rule of populist actors leads to executive aggrandizement (Kellam and Berlucchi 2023). This trend potentially affects the rule of law, legislative quality (Sebők et al. 2023), media freedom (Polyák 2019, Stier 2015), the pluralism of the civic space (Christensen and Weinstein 2013), and several other areas that require limited government. There is considerably less agreement on whether economic performance or good governance in general are affected (see Little and Meng 2023, Economist 2023).

The first step towards a holistic assessment is to consider the changes in the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) of the V-Dem Project (Coppedge et al. 2023). The index measures the extent to

which individual and minority rights are protected, checks on political power exist, and electoral democracy is robust.[1] Figure 1 extends the scope of country-cases to eleven (adding Greece, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey to the seven AUTHLIB countries to gain a more comprehensive picture) in order to establish whether the inclusion of populist parties into the government led to changes in the democracy scores, without controlling for other factors. According to the PopuList project, the parties we need to consider in such an exercise are the following: the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens of Czechia (ANO), the Coalition of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance (SYRIZA) of Greece, Fidesz of Hungary, the Italian parties Lega and the Brothers of Italy (FdI), the Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS), the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), the Slovenian Direction – Social Democracy (Smer(-SD)), the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) (cf. *Table 4* in Appendix A).

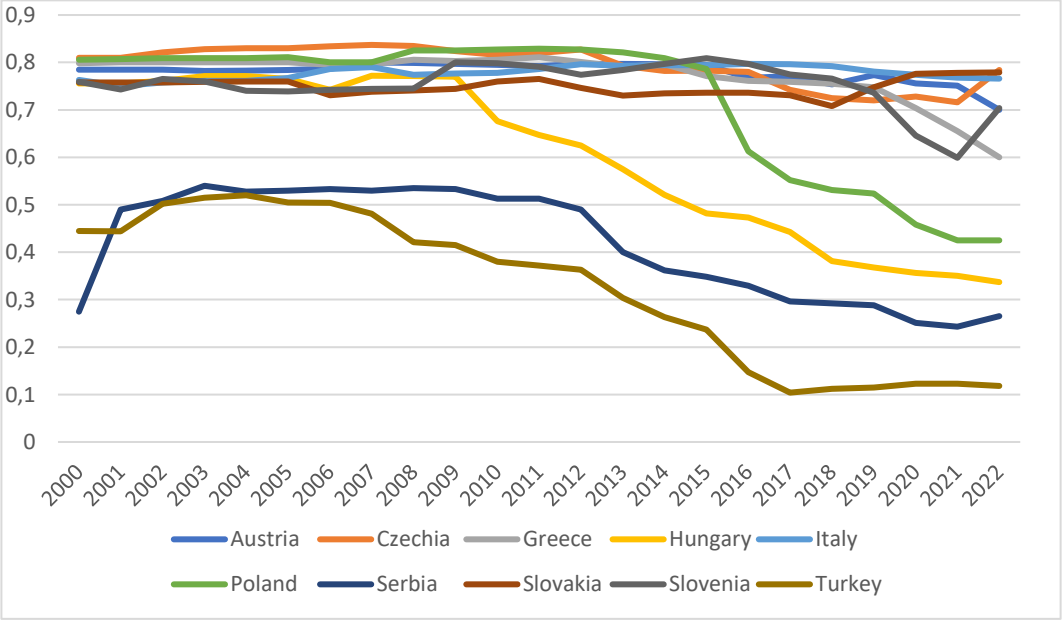


*Figure 1. V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index in selected country cases (2000-2022)**
**The Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) of V-Dem represents values on a 0-1 scale where "0" means the lowest and "1" means the highest level of democracy.*

[1] More precisely: V-Demv's 2x_libdem index is composed of the electoral democracy index (v2x_polyarchy), which primarily focusses on political competition and free and fair elections, and the liberal component (v2x_liberal), which aggregates indicators of liberalism that are separate from electoral democracy. The liberal component index measures the protection of the rights of individuals and minorities vis-a-vis the state and other limits on the power of the executive. It contains three sub-indices, which altogether measure 23 possible specific manifestations of liberalism in democracy through expert assessment.

The results presented in Figure 1 indicate that the nosediving of the Liberal Democracy Index has in most cases closely coincided with the reign of illiberal actors. At the same time, in several instances it started somewhat earlier, suggesting that democratic backsliding had some antecedents in the nominally liberal democratic periods. This is especially notable in the case of Poland and Greece, as well as in the case of Hungary which in 2006-2010 experienced a severe political and financial crisis (Bozóki 2012). It is also noteworthy that Turkey's decline has not been monotonic: its rating even improved during 2002-2005, the first years of AKP's rule (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Schafer 2021). Finally, even though one may note a general and relatively continuous decline of liberal democracy in the countries that have experienced populist governments for sustained periods, some have seen very sudden and drastic changes,

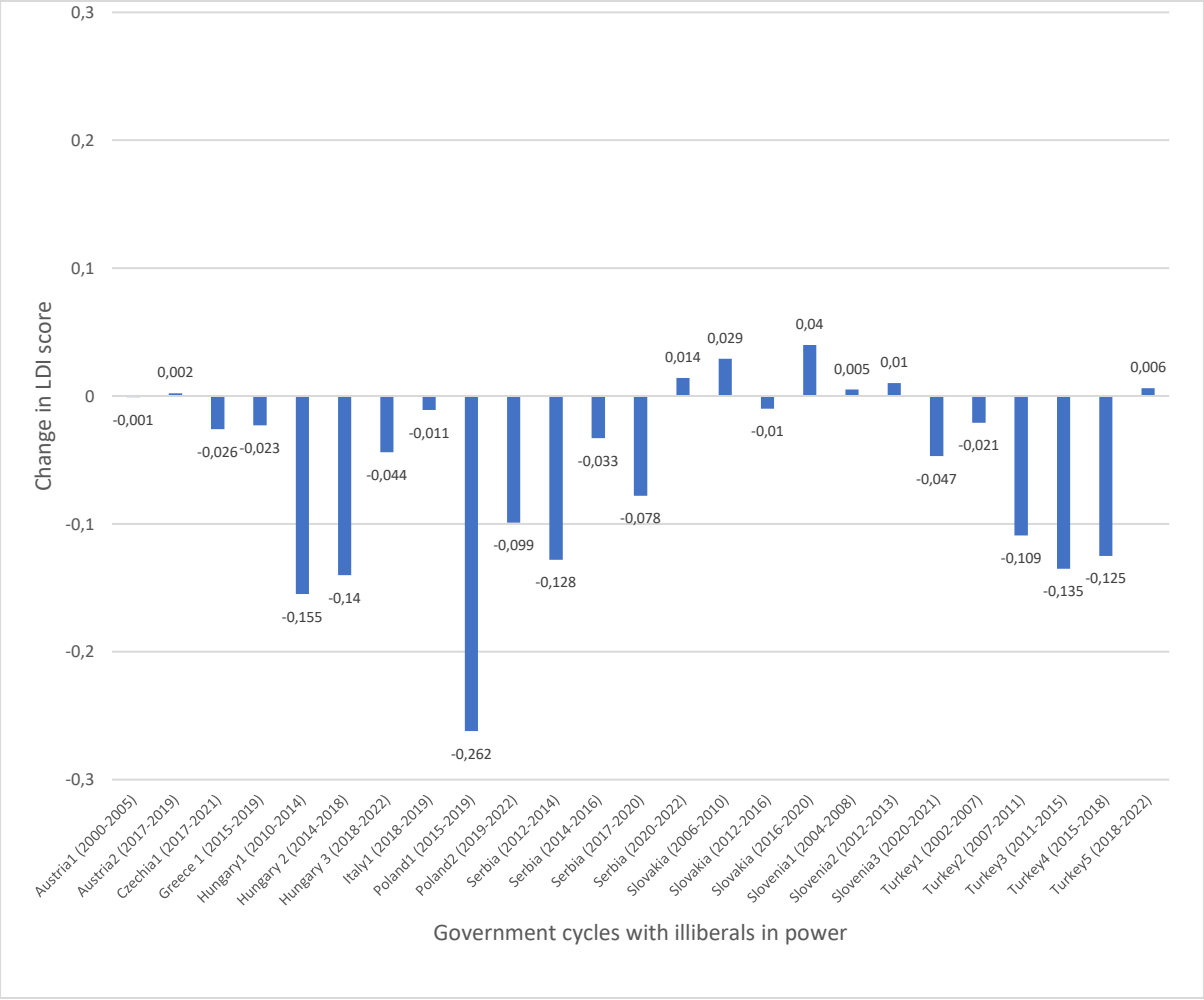


*Figure 2. Within-cycle change in V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index scores in European countries with illiberal governments**

**Change was calculated by the authors as the difference of LDI scores between the start and the end of each government cycle with illiberal parties in power.*

such as Slovenia under Janez Janša's third cabinet, while others, like Greece, have sunk further after a first shock of populist takeover.

To obtain a slightly different perspective, in *Figure 2* we compare the LDI scores at the beginning and at the end of each electoral cycle when populist parties were part of government.[2] As *Figure 2* above shows, liberal democracy suffered under 17 of the 25 cabinets surveyed here, while changes in the positive direction have mostly been minor. There is no evidence for a detrimental impact in the case of FPÖ, SMER and the first two tenures of Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (2020-2022).

Similar patterns were identified using Freedom House's Political Rights and Civil Liberties Index (see *Figures 14 and 15* in the Appendix), and the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index (see *Figure 19* in the Appendix). Freedom House's index shows particularly large changes in the Political Rights dimension following the inclusion of populist forces.

On the other hand, the Government Effectiveness Index of the World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGI) fails to demonstrate major trends (see *Figure 16* in the Appendix). It seems that governance is not necessarily worse under the rule of illiberal parties. The one major exception is corruption. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), and the Control of Corruption Index of the World Bank (see *Figures 17* and *18* in the Appendix) both suggest that the participation of populists in the governments of Czechia, Poland, and Hungary had a significant negative impact. In countries with shorter tenure of illiberal/populist parties (Austria, Italy) this is not the case, implying that a longer period is necessary for this effect to materialize.

It is a major question whether illiberal politics remains at the level of discourse and policies, or if it also shapes civil society. The recent literature conducted under the heading of "closing" or "shrinking" of civic space (e.g., Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014, Della Porta and Steinhilper 2021, McMahon and Niparko 2022, Müller and Slominski 2022) indicates that the growing constraints on associational rights and on NGO-financing, or their extended state monitoring, is in fact a major global trend and the introduced constraints predict declines in

[2] In this regard we follow the example Kellam and Berlucchi (2023), but we do not take the difference between the highest and the lowest LDI score within government cycles, but the one between the first and the last year of the cycle.

civil liberties and human rights (Chaudhry and Heiss 2022). Bolleyer calls attention to the fact that the counterterrorism measures, the austerity packages following the 2008 financial crisis, and the responses to the European migration crisis and to the COVID-19 pandemic, affected states that are otherwise considered to be liberal democratic: "virtually all EU member states have introduced some legal reforms that – intentionally or unintentionally – restrict civil society space" (Bolleyer 2021: 940). In Europe, tensions developed between governments and civic organizations in countries like Italy and Austria, especially in the field of refugee issues (see Cusumano and Villa 2023, Müller and Slominski 2022), and the French government's readiness to search and close mosques due to radicalism or the British government's attempts to constrain the rights of demonstrators using the pandemic as justification may count as further relevant examples (Bolleyer et al. 2023; Della Porta and Steinhilper 2021; Simsa 2019).

The closing of civic space is, however, more likely in regimes where illiberal forces are in office. Some post-communist countries have adopted the spirit of the 2012 Russian act on "foreign-funded civil society organizations" (Buyse 2018, Timmer and Docka-Filipek 2018, Roggeband & Krizsán, 2021), triggering what some authors called a "war on NGOs in Eastern Europe" (Kapronczay 2017, for global trends see Glasius et al. 2020).

The "shrinking civic space" has also been recognized as a challenge at the EU level, leading to several condemnations by international organizations, including the Council of Europe (2019) and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament (2022), of the restriction of access of non-governmental organizations to funding (ibid., Article 15). The fate of the most prominent case of restrictions, the Hungarian 'Stop-Soros' laws also showed, however, the combined power of civic courage and of the EU's leverage, as many NGOs responded with civic disobedience and the CJEU eventually annulled the laws.

Attacks on media and civil society were also notable in Greece under SYRIZA (Pappas 2020), Serbia under SNS, Slovakia under SMER (Havlík and Hloušek 2021), and Slovenia under SDS (Pajnik 2019). In Czechia Andrej Babiš as PM labelled specific critical human rights NGOs as corrupt, which led to a court case against him for slander (Gosling 2020) and in Poland the PiS government centralized public funding to NGOs and sought to limit the activities of progressive organizations, especially in the fields of LGBTQ, women's rights, and refugee rights (McMahon and Niparko 2022).

Even though illiberal actors have routinely sought for the inclusion of participatory tools and direct democracy while in opposition (e.g. FPÖ in 2013 and 2017; see Heinisch et al. 2019), they have been more reluctant to implement them once they gained power. Instead, as the "national consultations" of Hungary illustrate (Bátory 2016, Bátory and Svennson 2019, Oross and Tap 2021), illiberals in power had a tendency to either abandon calls for the use of direct democratic tools such as referenda or turn such instruments into top-down mechanisms that create the illusion of participation (Enyedi and Whitefield 2020), while in fact they only offer a set of pre-defined options that are aligned with the agenda set by the government. However, the Hungarian consultations have rather been an exception than the norm: similar consultations have been implemented by Slovak populist party OL'ANO before the 2020 general elections, and French President Macron in 2022, nevertheless, the large-scale use of phony plebiscitary consultations to strengthen legitimation both at the domestic and the international scene remains a unique feature of the Hungarian government to date (Mikola 2023).

The general pattern appears to be that such governmental measures undermine the quality of democracy only if the populist forces have a clear ideological illiberal orientation and if they have the time and the legislative majority at the national level to sustain their policies. Illiberal governments with a strong mandate (Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland) were able to implement more drastic institutional changes that weakened democratic checks-and-balances. In contrast, illiberal parties with a temporally or geographically restricted mandate often focus on generally popular policies, mostly in the field of social redistribution and welfare, with the aim of building credentials as competent and socially conscious managers (Goodliffe 2016), though relentlessly pushing for more restrictive policies on immigration (cf. Gruber and Rosenberger 2023) and occasionally implementing openly discriminatory policies, like when FPÖ used its regional power to block bilingual street signs in ethnically mixed districts with sizable Slovenian minorities (Fallend 2012).

It is somewhat more difficult to identify the impact of such parties on the policy agenda. The literature suggests that such impact can be considerable, primarily in the area of immigration (Verbeek and Zaslove 2019; Escartin 2020), although it is debated whether populists play the role of initiators or catalysts (Mudde 2013). The readiness of traditional, typically conservative, parties to outflank populists (Bale et al. 2010) and the readiness of mass media to focus on their favorite topics (Biard 2020) may amplify their influence.

In sum, what this brief overview of democracy and governance indicators has shown is that while there is little (if any) evidence that illiberal governments would be less effective than liberal ones, populist leaders tend to undermine civil liberties, political rights, rule of law and government accountability. The data also show, however, that democratic backsliding, if it materializes, is typically part of a longer trend, one that is not immediately reversed once a change in government occurs. Obviously, and as noted above, the degree of control over the executive branch matters. When illiberal actors have gained governing status at the national level for sustained periods of time (Fidesz in Hungary, and PiS in Poland), they have been able to implement overarching changes not just in specific policy areas, but also affecting the constitution, the judicial system, the media landscape, and civil society.

2. Design of the Report

The subsequent sections summarize the policy-specific research done in WP6. First, we present the methodology, then the findings.

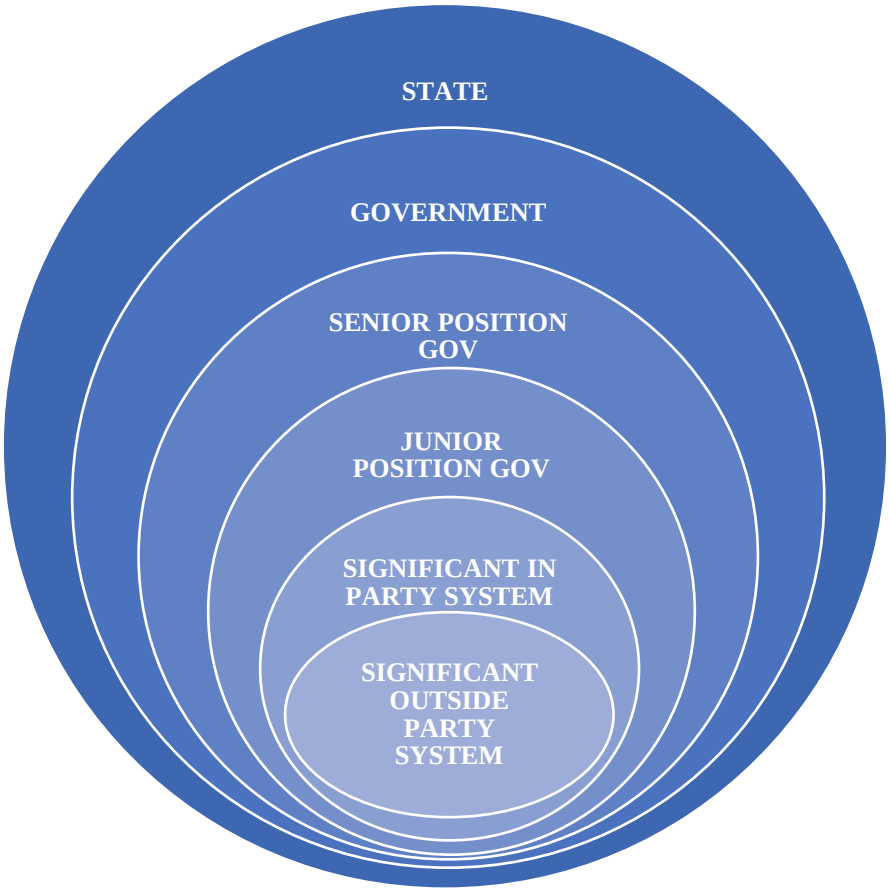


Figure 3. Location of illiberalism in political setting (size indicates opportunities of political impact)

Like AUTHLIB in general, WP6 covered seven major cases: Austria, Czechia, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom. However, these countries vary significantly in the role played by illiberal actors and in their access to power, and therefore the treatment of the cases cannot be uniform. These distinct locations within the political setting where illiberalism plays a role are depicted in Figure 3. Each case can be linked to one of these political settings. Although these settings bear significant implications for analysis and case treatment, this report does not provide a systematic examination of this classification across policy areas. Instead, it offers a contextualized approach.

In the UK illiberalism has been present primarily in the discourse of marginal actors (UKIP, Brexit party) and in certain factions of the Conservative Party, but it has surfaced also in the referendum campaign, in the way the Parliament was treated in reaching post-Brexit settlements, and in the decision to impose the will of the Parliament on courts in the Ruanda-legislation at the end of 2023. In France major actors in the opposition (primarily *Rassemblement National* – RN) can be considered to be, at least partly, illiberal. In Italy and in Austria populist-illiberal parties have been part of government, typically as junior partners, although this classification depends partly on how one labels Berlusconi and Meloni and their parties. In any case, the coalition logic presented some degree of limitation in both countries. The same applies to Czechia, with the additional consideration that Babiš and his party are probably best described as technocratic populist, i.e. representing the least illiberal version of populism. In Czechia some factions of the social-democratic ČSSD also supported illiberal goals, similarly to the opposition Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD). Finally, Hungary and Poland stand for very different patterns. In Poland there was a concentration of power in the hand of illiberal conservatives between 2015 and 2022, with a clear parliamentary majority, but within the format of a coalition government and not reaching constitutional majority. Finally, Hungary provides the example of total control of illiberals on executive, legislative and judicial power since 2010: illiberals are not only in government, but they also control the entire state apparatus. In both latter cases some opposition parties (e.g. Jobbik, Konfederacja) can be also added to the list of relevant illiberal actors in certain periods.

The selected policy areas are social policy, gender, foreign policy, immigration, citizenship, education, and culture. These areas were chosen with two criteria in mind: they should allow, in principle, the emergence of different, value-based alternatives and they should not be among the most obvious illiberalism-related fields, such as rule of law or media, areas that are already relatively well explored. The most important findings for each of the policy areas covered in this report are summarized in Appendix C.

The promotion of policies and party programs was complemented by a range of quantitative and qualitative methods. The principal focus is on the comparative interpretation of party programs, policy documents, decrees, laws, and policy outcomes. In addition, the education section utilizes interviews, and the immigration and citizenship section considers court decisions. The text analyses use computational methods to identify patterns in political

language. We develop an AUTHLIB Index that we use to place parties' positions in the six policy areas (social policy, gender, foreign policy, immigration, citizenship, education and culture) on a one-dimensional liberal-illiberal scale. The largest utilized database for text analysis comes from the ParlaMint dataset (Erjavec et al 2023) that includes 271,899 parliamentary speeches, focusing on periods when illiberal parties were in power (see Table 1 – Text Analysis). In general, the sources used by this report include electoral manifestos, newspapers, legislative speeches, court decisions, and National Security Strategy documents, detailed in Table 1 below.

Policy Area	**Source Material**	**Time Period**
Social Policy	• Electoral manifestos and secondary material • Case studies • Legislative decisions	2010-2023
Gender	• Electoral manifestos and secondary material • Legislative decisions • Comparative indices (Gender Equality Index, OECD 'Women in Politics')	2010-2023
Immigration and Citizenship Policy	• Case studies • Legal decisions • Policy documents • Newspapers • NGO reports	2000-2022
Educational and Cultural Policy	• Legislative documents and electoral manifestos for all countries (FPÖ for Austria, ANO/SPD in Czechia, RN in France, Fidesz in Hungary, Fdl and Lega in Italy, PiS in Poland) • Qualitative interviews with policy experts, academics, and journalists (N=14) • Policy experts from partner institutions involved in AUTHLIB (see Table 2)	• Austria, Czechia, France, Italy: illiberal party manifestos 2010-2023 • Hungary: 2010-2023 • Poland: 2015-2023
Foreign Policy	• Available National Security Strategy Documents for AUTHLIB cases (N=22) • Documents published by governments with illiberal participation (N=5)	NSS Documents: • Austria: 2001, 2013 • Czechia: 2003, 2011, 2015, 2021 • France: 2008, 2013, 2017, 2022 • Hungary: 2004, 2012, 2020

	(For an overview see Table 6 in the Appendix)	• Italy: 2015 • Poland: 2007, 2014, 2020 • UK: 2009, 2010, 2015, 2021 Government Documents: • Austria: 2001 (FPÖ) • Hungary 2012 (Fidesz), 2020 (Fidesz) • Poland: 2007 (PiS), 2020 (PiS)
Text Analysis	Parliamentary speeches by party members (ParlaMint dataset)	• Austria: 2017-2019 (N=5,662) • Czechia: 2017-2022 (N=38,573) • France: 2017-2022 (N=6,504) • Hungary: 2010-2022 (N=88,102) • Italy: 2018-2019 (N=10,106) • Poland: 2015-2022 (N=122,443) • UK: 2015-2019 (N=509)

Table 1. Overview of case selection and source material

Besides the work of the editors, the report is additionally based on the contribution of several groups of policy experts, each affiliated with AUTHLIB. They submitted policy papers covering at least two of the AUTHLIB countries. We then compiled their contributions for this report. Several researchers and students from different universities have also contributed to the policy expert groups and are included under *Notable mentions*.

Name and Affiliation	**Policy Area**	**Notable mentions**
• Kristina Vasić (PhD Candidate, Central European University)	Introduction: A Holistic Overview	
• Dorottya Szikra (Senior Researcher, Centre for Social Sciences Budapest, Hungary)	Social Policy	• Beatrice Bottura (Student CEU Vienna) • Lauritz Autischer (Student CEU Vienna) • Adrienn Győry (Post-doctoral Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute)
• Elena Basheska (Research Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute) • Dimitry V. Kochenov (Senior Research Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute, Budapest)	Immigration and Citizenship Policy	
• Péter Radó (Research Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute, Budapest)	Educational and Cultural Policy	• Jonas Suchanek (Post-doctoral Researcher, Charles University)

• Bálint Mikola (Post-doctoral Researcher, CEU Democracy Institute)		• Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik (Assistant Professor, University of Vienna) • Paolo Graziano (Professor, University of Padua) • Piotr Zagorski (Post-doctoral Fellow, SWPS University Poland) • Romain Lachat (Associate Professor, Sciences Po Paris) • Tomas Cirhan (Post-doctoral Researcher, Charles University) • William Edmonds (Fulbright Schuman Research Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute) • Wolfgang C. Müller (Professor, University of Vienna)
• Erin K. Jenne (Professor, CEU Vienna Austria) • Mehmet Yavuz (Doctoral Researcher, CEU Vienna Austria) • Daniel Hegedüs (Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund)	Foreign Policy	
• Mehmet Yavuz (Doctoral Researcher, CEU Vienna Austria) • Franziska Wagner (Doctoral Researcher, CEU Vienna Austria) • Dean Schafer (Post-doctoral Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute)	Text Analysis: Measuring illiberalism across policy areas	

Table 2. Overview of researchers involved in WP6

3. Social policy

Social policy is a field that profoundly affects the well-being and thriving of people and thus plays an important role in the toolbox of all political forces. Illiberal actors functioning under democratic or quasi-democratic circumstances also need to build popular legitimacy and therefore social promises and welfare policies are eminently important for them as well (Korkut 2012, Orenstein 2008, Scheiring 2020, Mudde 2016). Family policies are of particular importance because they can have a double-role: next to providing redistributive resources to (often formerly neglected) social groups, they may also carry the discursive message about the ideal family favored by the government. Recent research also shows how mother and care became central to the discourses and policy-making of illiberal regimes (Fodor 2022, Győry et al. 2022).[3]

Illiberal and populist actors frequently campaign with "welfareist" promises, presenting themselves as the "saviors" of the people from neoliberal austerity policies (see also Győry et al. 2022, Öktem and Szikra 2023), and attacking supranational agencies, like the IMF or the World Bank. When in power, they often live up to their promises and implement expansionary welfare reforms and/or tax cuts. They also tend to offer a smart mixture of widely propagated flagship programs that are popular across the nation and targeted policies whose exclusionary aspects are often subtle.

To capture the promises and actions of illiberal actors, below we contrast the four cases in which illiberal parties had access to government: Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Poland. These four cases together provide good analytic leverage because they belong to three different welfare regime types. Austria is an exemplary case of the conservative, Bismarckian welfare regime with strong social insurance coverage of the majority of the population, and a high reliance on female unpaid labor and charitable organizations when it comes to care. Italy is a Southern European welfare regime that established a dual social system with strong security for labor market insiders, and volatility and meagre coverage for everyone else. Unlike Spain, this country has not reformed its primarily familialist welfare regime despite structural pressure arising from increased female labor market participation. Finally, Hungary and Poland belong to the Eastern European mixed welfare regime type with a close-to-universal social security

[3] Please note that Chapter 4 discusses more closely the role of gender in illiberals' policy agenda and governance.

system and full-time female labor market participation. Hungary and Poland differ in the sense that in Hungary complex and explicit family policies exist for decades, while in Poland an implicit familialist system with weak state-involvement existed until the mid-2010s.

We carried out a qualitative document analysis of two types of sources. First, we scrutinized party manifestos of illiberal actors that were in opposition. Second, we analyzed policy documents, decrees, laws, and policy outcomes of illiberal actors who governed. In some of the cases we were able to compare manifestos and actions during shorter or longer periods of governance.

Italy

The actors that are often considered right-wing populist or illiberal in Italy are *Fratelli d'Italia*, the *Lega* and *Forza Italia* (for a while: *Popolo della Libertà*). Despite their differences (Forza Italia is more business-focused), social policies featured extensively in the manifestos of all three parties for the 2013, 2018 and 2022 general elections. The respective texts emphasized welfare, family and children, employment and labour, and pension and retirement policies to a similar degree. The parties also touched upon education policies, social inclusion and poverty reduction policies, housing and healthcare policies; although each at a different rate. Besides calling for the expansionary welfare reforms, all parties aimed at a general reduction of tax burdens on citizens and planned to implement this via tax deductions, tax credits, lower/eliminated VATs, vouchers, and bonuses. They identified freer markets and smaller state as ultimate goals. While these aims appear to be in opposition with a larger and caring welfare state, this contradiction was solved by an extensive utilization of fiscal rules. The fiscalization of social policies (Morel et.al. 2018) belongs to the new emerging trend of "social policy by other means", i.e. tools that lay outside of traditional redistributive policies like social insurance, social assistance, and universal benefits (Béland, 2019; Seelkopf and Strake, 2019).

All the examined Italian parties emphasized employment as a precondition for state subsidies and benefits, and then in office implemented such policies (e.g., the restriction of universal access to unemployment benefits based on distinguishing "deserving" vs. "undeserving" citizens). Moreover, they have proposed several policies that aimed at strengthening the role of women as caretakers in the family, through tax cuts and early retirements schemes. Finally,

they introduced incentives to boost fertility through tax reforms serving families, and other benefits that are available based on the number of children raised by a family, adopting a narrow conceptualization of families as composed by a man, a woman, and their children.

An analysis of Fratelli d'Italia and Giorgia Meloni's brief (2022-2023) tenure to date revealed that FdI also tried to implement policies along the lines discussed above. More specifically, Meloni has stressed that a reform of the welfare system according to the "deserving-undeserving" distinction was needed, and that the only way to welfare should be "work and the dignity brought by work". Accordingly, FdI suspended the universal "citizenship income" scheme earlier introduced by the Five Star Movement and replaced it with a much more restricted social support system in which the maximum length of payment was cut to seven months. FdI also adopted several traditionalist family measures, most importantly, it criminalized surrogacy (the act whereby a woman agrees to delivery/labour on behalf of another couple or person).

Austria

FPÖ, Austria's major far-right populist and illiberal party has gone through a notable transformation regarding its economic and social policies. During the 1990s, FPÖ tended to stand for economic liberal policies and for limited state intervention (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016). Since the 2010s, the party placed greater emphasis on social issues, advocating to restrict or condition access to social benefits for the non-citizen 'others'.

Thus, the contemporary FPÖ ties social policies to citizenship. For those who are not originally from Austria, FPÖ proposes strict deservingness criteria. Indeed, according to their program, only those immigrants should receive benefits from the state who "worked hard for Austria" (FPÖ 2011). Accordingly, already in 2011, and in their consequent manifestos as well, they have advocated to limit access to benefits for non-citizens to avoid "over-use" of the Austrian welfare state. They make a distinction between two types of immigrants: the "legal" and "legitimate" immigrants who are already integrated, speak German, and "fully acknowledge [Austria's] values and laws". They can receive the right to stay and obtain citizenship. Others, who have no cultural roots in the country, however, should not receive access to social rights

and citizenship. To improve integration, FPÖ demands mandatory German language courses and the so called "integration agreements" that immigrants would have to sign.

In terms of family policy, FPÖ advocates for family-friendly measures and stresses traditional family structures and related values. For example, the party promises to increase child benefits and introduce tax breaks for families. In the area of child protection, FPÖ emphasizes bringing up children in families rather than state-run systems and proposes child-care benefits.

During its first terms in coalition government with the ÖVP (2000-2007), FPÖ initiated and carried out a vast reform of social insurance institutions, creating a central pensions provider for all manual workers and "salaried employees". In family policies, ÖVP and FPÖ reformed "Kinderbetreungsgeld", a cash-for-care scheme for parents with extra bonus for second and third (and subsequent) children. Interestingly, during the 2000s FPÖ did not limit its support to the traditional family in that it voiced strong concern for single parents too, seeking to protect them from poverty and demanding benefit top-ups and an extended nursing leave for this group.

During its second coalition with the ÖVP (2017-2019), FPÖ again proposed overarching changes in social policy, and continued with the restructuring and unification of the social security system. Just like earlier, this reform served the double aim of more secure and equal social rights for Austrian citizens and the exclusion of "outsider" immigrants. The latter purpose was served by conditioning social benefits on the knowledge of German language. At the same time, while benefits for immigrants as well as refugees were cut, social assistance for people with disabilities was increased. Families with children also received extra support and FPÖ introduced a family bonus for low-income earners and single parents.

In sum, when compared to other illiberal parties' social policy programs, FPÖ stands out with the greatest emphases on immigration issues. Also, this is the only illiberal party with no explicit focus on women and mothers, or childcare. And third, this party did not initiate major tax breaks or a flat tax.

Hungary

Fidesz's social policies have been rather consistent throughout the years, with smaller modifications and at certain points also radicalization since the late-2010s, indicating that this

party follows an ideological blueprint. Social policy and other redistributive practices play a central role in keeping together the coalition composed of business, the middle-class and the lower social strata.

The cornerstones of Fidesz's social policy were the ideas of workfare (or "work-based society") and of the traditional family. All welfare reforms have been designed to support these principles. The idea of workfare was translated into concrete social policy measures in three major ways. First, Fidesz expanded programs or adopted new ones for people with stable employment and (mainly) an above-average income. Second, subsequent Fidesz-cabinets substantially cut universal benefits and services that would serve all Hungarian citizens, and nearly eliminated all social assistance benefits. And third, the Fidesz government adopted an over-arching public works program that effectively replaced all (formerly existing) active and passive labour market policies. Fidesz thus sharply delineated "deserving" and "undeserving" social groups through its social policy, in which the first equal the "hard working" and the second group with the "workless" population that does not deserve state help.

The other main ideological feature, serving the traditional family, was achieved by the expansion of family policy tools, especially tax credits and one-time payments and grants. It is important to underline that family policy, in Fidesz's understanding, serves the reproduction of "working families" and not all families. This means that family policy rules tacitly exclude the Hungarian Roma minority.

The major social policy reforms included pension and tax reforms, labour market reforms, and family policy reforms. The first and most fundamental paradigmatic element of the reform affected the private pillar of the pension system of which three-quarters of all employees were members. Under its first term in 1998-2002, Fidesz already shrank the private pension pillar, and this pillar was fully eliminated in 2010. With this move, the Orbán-government could get hold of an amount equal to about 10 percent of Hungary's GDP. Other main elements of the pension reform included the ceasing of all early retirement possibilities, the exclusion of disability pensioners from the system, as well as the compulsory retirement of civil servants. Through these measures, Fidesz created a strong division between the "healthy," "able bodied," "working" population and the "disabled" and "non-working" population, pushing the latter out of the social insurance system relegated to the punishing public works schemes, or to meagre social assistances.

Social policy changes related to (un)employment exemplify Fidesz's attempt to build a "work-based society". Benefits to the unemployed were drastically cut in 2011: the maximum length of social insurance-based unemployment benefit shrank to a mere three months and the replacement rate was cut. The re-designed and boosted public works program became *the only* active labour market policy, with all other social policy tools, including training and mentoring ceased. In fact, Hungary became one of the few countries in the world where public works is the only social assistance tool for the rural poor: only India features similarly expansive public works policies (Kálmán 2015). Public works programs became the flagship program that targeted the poor establishing local loyalty networks that served Fidesz in the 2014 and 2018 elections (Vidra 2018; Szombati 2018). Attempts at creating a "work-based society" were also strengthened by increasing minimum wages, and a life-long personal income tax exemption for mothers of at least four children.

In line with its main conservative ideological stance, the traditional family and the issue of demography became central to Fidesz's governance, especially since Hungary's history of family-focused welfare policies and thus resonated with the preferences of the population (Inglot et al. 2022). However, unlike PiS in Poland, the reforms of Fidesz in this field primarily benefitted those members of middle and upper classes who had stable employment.

While Fidesz first advocated for the care roles of mothers, after 2014 it started to promote motherly employment in the form of allowing mothers (parents) to work full time while receiving the full amount of parental leave. In 2015, a new boost of policies, especially in the field of housing was announced, while since 2019 a loan for newlywed couples, and a grant for large families to purchase vans was introduced alongside with the slogan of "demographic governance". Since 2019, the party became more radical and linked new benefits also to marriage, and the repayment conditions of state-supported loans became tied to the number of children born. The special constructions of grants, loans and tax exemptions in fact led to a primacy of "social policy by other means" under Fidesz, to the detriment of traditional cash transfers.

Poland

The Law and Justice Party *(PiS)* came to power in 2015 after a long record of demanding the end of the 'neoliberal era' of the Civic Platform (PO). In opposition, PiS joined forces with Solidarnost and the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) in organizing a social referendum against the 2012 pension reforms. The government led by Beata Szydło and backed by Jarosław Kaczyński soon issued expansionary welfare reforms unseen in the post-1990 history of the country. Against the scepticism of mainstream experts, PiS introduced generous and costly family payments and, at the same time, pension reforms that improved the lives of millions. These reforms were universalizing which was a new concept in the Polish welfare state. Meanwhile, PiS also paid attention to the poor. Thus, PiS effectively built up a wide coalition of promoters through its social and economic policies.

Once in power, PiS lived up to its promises and quickly adopted a bill to *decrease* the pension age in 2015 to 60 and 65 years for women and men, a move that one could rarely observe in Western democracies. The Szydło-government abandoned the unisex pension age and adopted the preferential treatment of women in order to "releas[e] women's caring capital" (Ambroziak 2017, Suwada 2019, Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa 2021). Like Fidesz, PiS also reversed privatization adopted by the PO government.

Unemployment insurance and social assistance for the unemployed has been long neglected in Poland. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a slight change in this. Here, in contrast to Orbán, the Morawiecki-government increased the amount and the length of the unemployment benefit and provided cash-transfers for the self-employed most affected by the pandemic.

In the spirit of what Fodor (2022) calls the "carefare regime", PiS reinforced the traditional gender role of women, while also underlining the deservingness of caretakers. The centrepiece of reforms has been the Family 500+ programme, which is a universal child benefit (amounting to 500 PLN/110 EUR per month) for the second and subsequent children. The universalistic approach is breaking the path of earlier Polish policies, and the amount of the benefit, as well as its length (providing the payment until children's 18th birthday) is among the most generous in Europe. In contrast with the Hungarian government, the Polish government did not link the new benefit to any further criteria. Neither employment nor marriage is a requirement to receive the payment, which was extended to all families prior to the 2019 elections.

Conclusions

Our aim for this section was to answer the following questions: 1. What kind of social policies do illiberal actors pursue? Is there an illiberal style of policy-making? 2. How do they frame social and welfare issues? Do we see any dominant narrative and discourse? 3. Did they initiate overarching paradigmatic change? Based on their party programs and actions when in power, all illiberal actors (parties) share the following traits related to social policy (see *Table 3*).

Based on the four case studies, we conclude, first, that they tend to make state help contingent on performance and "hard work". This means that productivity lies in the centre of their redistributive ideas. They believe in a merit-based rather than need-based redistributive justice. This is not only true for labour market policies and social assistance, but more generally: the deserving (those who are not able to work, i.e. children, elderly, disabled) versus undeserving (those who are able to work) distinction is present in all cases. The strongest cases are Hungary (workfare society) and Italy where the distinction is present in all main areas of welfare. On the other hand, in Poland, we saw universalizing tendencies, just like in Austria, but criteria prioritizing nativist "citizenship" still predominate.

Second, illiberal actors are nativist when delineating the population eligible for social support. They do not always link this idea, however, to anti-immigration and exclusion. In Austria we see a very direct link: FPÖ went as far as requiring the knowledge of German language for social security rights and pursued a direct exclusion of immigrants from social rights. In Hungary the anti-immigration discourse was linked to pronatalist family policies. Polish and Italian social policies were the least connected to the issue of immigration.

Third, poverty is nearly completely missing from the programs of illiberal parties. They instead talk about people "being treated unfairly by the system", especially in Austria. All parties target workers, and particularly those who appear to be the losers of globalization with social policies; but *not* the most vulnerable. Among the fragile groups, the disabled, youth, and mothers feature high on the agenda especially in Italy.

Fourth, all illiberal parties came to power during crises where austerity policies were the most common response. They presented themselves as the saviours of the nation from supranational agencies and neoliberals. In this vein, they are often more "leftist" than left-wing parties when it comes to social policy. Importantly, all of them lived up to their welfare promises even if it

meant a vast burden on the state budget. In the case of Italy and Austria, illiberal parties turned from economically liberal ideas in the 1990s towards a welfare-centred, leftist approach by the 2010s.

Finally, when it comes to policy tools, the dominance of "social policy by other means" is striking. Thus, instead of traditional cash-transfers or services they promote publicly funded grants, loans, subsidies that are often provided by non-state actors, like private businesses or churches. They also advocate for vouchers that allow choice. Fiscal welfare like tax credits, allowances and exemptions gained prominence among illiberal welfare ideas. These parties often call for tax cuts for individuals (PIT) and (native) businesses and a decrease of VAT for child-related products. These non-conventional tools may be attractive because they can represent reduced state intervention *and* welfare extension at the same time.

	FdI – Italy	**FPÖ – Austria**	**PIS – Poland**	**FIDESZ – Hungary**
General focus	Activation	Immigration Austrian citizens vs. immigrant "others"	Families	Work-based society Families
Target populations	families, mothers, young, workers, poor pensioners, disabled	(native) Austrian citizens, workers, and families	Families Pensioners	Families above the average income
Main tools	Social policy by other means	Unification of social insurance Exclusion of immigrants	Universal benefits Decreased pension age	Social policy by other means
Family policies and gender	Slight family-focus Gender equality YES LGBTQ+ NO	Slight family focus Anti-gender agenda Heterosexual marriage Fathers' rights	Promoting all families, incl. single mothers Pro-natalism and child-poverty in focus Anti-gender + anti-abortion Anti-LGBTQ+	Promoting families (married couples) with above-the-average income Selective pro-natalism Anti-gender Anti-LGBTQ+
Pensions	Focus on poorer pensioners and the disabled "opzione donna"	Unification of pension system Focus on poorer pensioners: lower contribution and higher pensions	Decreasing pension age Mothers' early retirement	Stopping private pension scheme Increase of state pensions based on performance
Labour market policies	Activation of the young and mothers		Short-term contracts Minimum wage increase	Restrictive Labour Code Flexibilization

				Public works Minimum wage increase
Social assistance	Deserving – undeserving distinction Against citizenship income	Stronger work incentives for S.A. recipients	Not in focus Some extension of unemployment benefits during covid-19	Not in focus No handouts without work

Table 3. Social policy orientation of illiberal parties

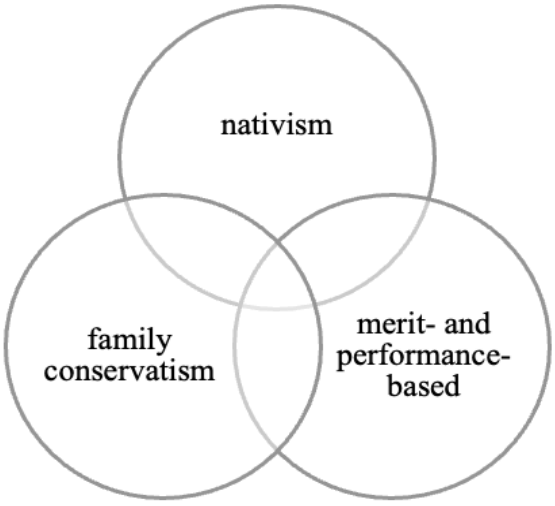


Figure 4. Dominant narratives/framing of illiberal parties related to social policy

Overall, illiberal social policy discourse is divisive in a populist manner and differentiates between "we" and "them", between "insiders" and "outsiders". The insiders are native, hard-working, heterosexual individuals and families with children (*Figure 4*). Often, single mothers are also included, just as disabled individuals. The outsiders are immigrants, the unemployed and the poor (who are rarely mentioned), LGBTQ+ people and families, and elites who gained from the previous governments and are winners of globalization.

4. Gender

A considerable part of the social policy analysis addressed gender issues but given the central role of this area in the culture wars of today, we need to dedicate a separate section to it. 'Gender' is a major topic of right-wing illiberal discourse and practices, and it is an increasingly important issue for actors such as Vladimir Putin or Robert Fico, who represent different versions of illiberalism. There is, nevertheless, a considerable variation within the illiberal camp in how this area is approached. On one extreme one finds those right-wing populists who mix identitarian Christianism and secularism with an "ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech" (Brubaker 2017, 1191). On the opposite extreme one finds traditionalists, Catholic integralists and Protestant fundamentalists who consider the progress of the last years in gender-politics as a provocation. Not accidentally, the former are more common in Scandinavia, while the latter in Eastern Central Europe. The common tenets of the traditionalists are the equation of women's politics with family politics and the emphasis on "natural differences" between men and women. Nativists-nationalists also emphasize that the reproduction ability of women is vital for the survival of the nation. As a result, sexual minorities are often portrayed as threats to normalcy, nation, and religious values.

When asking the question of how these tenets are expressed once illiberals are governing and how it affects policymaking, one must note that in most of our countries illiberal actors inherited formal gender-equality laws and policies. These regulations are rarely fully removed or dismantled but instead are reframed to focus more on traditionalist family protection or to promote demographic sustainability. In many instances they are simply weakened though budget cuts (Roggeband and Krizsán 2018).

Despite these backlashes, the available data don't indicate a major decline under illiberal rule in gender equality. *Figure 5* below illustrates developments over time based on the European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) Gender Equality Index which summarizes six dimensions fields: work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health. As shown, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Czechia[4] have consistently remained below the EU average but all have experienced a modest increase from an average of 58 to 66 points on the Gender Equality Index. In fact, the only significant decline occurred under a social democratic government (Czechia,

[4] The United Kingdom is not covered by EIGE's Gender Equality Index.

2015-2017). This suggests that even though illiberal parties may have shifted gender discourse in a traditionalist, pro-natalist direction, this did not lead to a major change in women's participation in politics or the workforce, nor their access to education or social services.

On the other hand, the fact that Poland and Hungary consistently score in the bottom half of the spectrum is clearly related to the philosophy of their governors. This is also the case concerning women's political representation: despite a generally increasing share of female MPs, Hungary, Czechia, and Poland are consistently among the European tailenders in this regard, with a mere 12.6% of female MPs in Hungary (see *Figure 20* in the Appendix). The share of women in government is even lower, with Czechia and Hungary often having only one female minister or none at all (as is the case in Hungary in late 2023). The strong representation of women in Western illiberal movements (including Italy and France), suggests that in this regard the difference is primarily regional-historical.

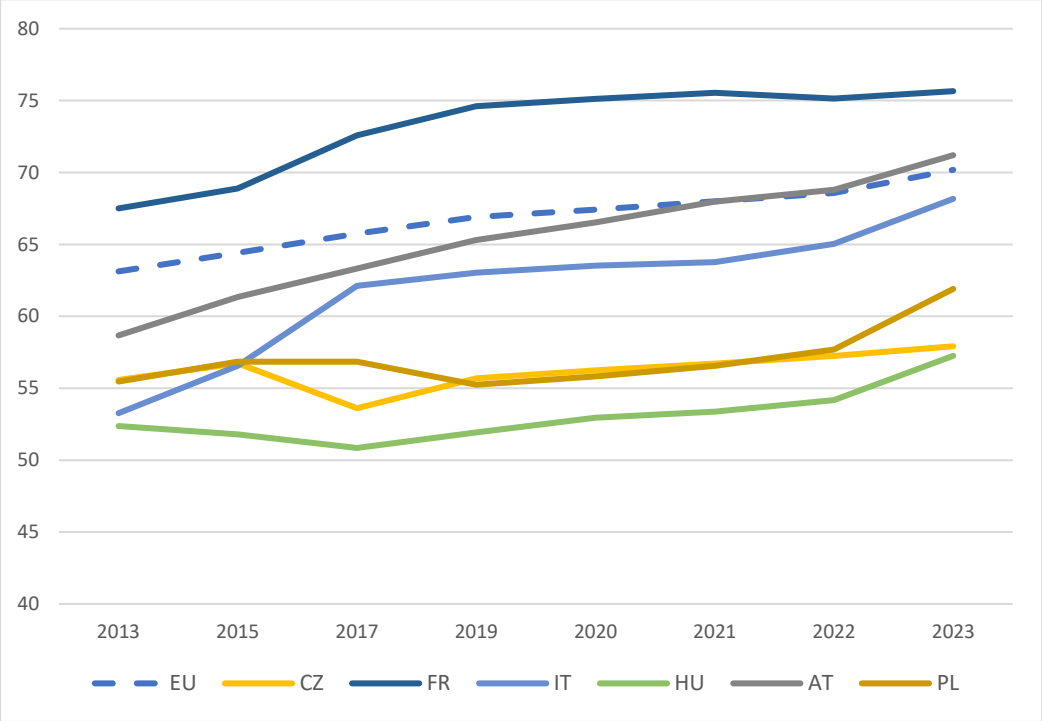


Figure 5 - EIGE's Gender Equality Index (2013-2023)

We see particularly robust negative effects of illiberals in power in the field of reproductive rights and sexual education. The most symbolic turnaround occurred in the context of the Istanbul Convention, a declaration primarily focusing on domestic violence. The original

widespread support changed when radical right actors framed the document as a Trojan horse for the 'gender-ideology': as a result, the Hungarian parliament decided not to implement the signed treaty, the Slovak parliament rejected its ratification, and the Polish Minister of Justice started the procedure of withdrawal from the treaty (but ultimately failed to conclude it).

Civil society groups related to gender issues also suffer under illiberal leadership. The formal consultation structures such as councils or committees of sustainable communication between those groups and the government are often dismantled (Roggeband and Krizsán 2018).

The sections below take stock of the most important policy initiatives and measures adopted by illiberal political actors in power or, like in the case of RN in France, in the vicinity of power.

Austria

The core of FPÖ's gender politics is deeply conservative biopolitics that sees the Austrian *Volk* at the brink of destruction due to the decay of traditional gender roles and other traditional values such as military virtue. Drawing on fascist imaginaries of *Volk* and *Volkskörper*, Austrian women are depicted as the embodiment of the Austrian nation and the party reasserts gender relations as heterosexual and primarily reproductive (Rheindorf and Wodak 2019).

This ideological core is also translated into politics with a strong anti-gender agenda. The party objects to compulsory gender-quotas in public or private institutions or gender mainstreaming as required by the European Union. Notably, they argue that women's disadvantages stem from a multitude of factors that should not be addressed by policy measures like positive discrimination. Moreover, contrary to other parties such as the RN, the FPÖ accepts the underrepresentation of women in the labor market and emphasizes the importance of motherhood. Interestingly, FPÖ has increasingly devoted more attention to the domain of family policy, including a staunch anti-abortion position (Akkerman 2015). The party also has a strong anti-LGBTQI discourse, promoting only heteronormative families and opposing same-sex marriage or partnership.

During FPÖ's government participation in the Kurz I cabinet (2017-2019), the party introduced several changes that had a direct impact on gender equality policies. The coalition's family

policy was directed towards traditional families by abolishing tax-deductibility of childcare and child allowance, which mainly benefitted male breadwinner and high-income citizens (Fischer and Guiliani 2023). Another measure was to drastically reduce the budget for women's organizations (Glösel 2018).

Czechia

Although the term "gender" has for long been demonized in Czech public discourse, and the country's family policy has rested on the assumption of the "norm of threeness", i.e. the expectation for women to work full-time before they give birth, and then stay home until their child reaches the age of three (Saxonberg 2014, 2015), the country has seen a modest wave of more progressive parental leave policies in the last one and a half decade that gradually introduced higher levels of flexibility. More specifically, the "three-speed" parental benefit scheme introduced in 2008, and further enhanced in 2012 offered parents the possibility to work while remaining eligible for parental benefit, and to select the length and monthly amount of the benefit from a fixed overall budget. Such flexibility has improved second-birth rates throughout the 2010s against a background of generally declining fertility (Šťastná et al. 2019).

When it comes to ANO's involvement in gender policy, one of their most significant contributions in this regard was failing a parental leave policy reform that would have introduced "daddy months", i.e., a paternity leave, in 2017. The reform, proposed by a group of experts, which stipulated the introduction of a six-months incomed-related parental leave for fathers, theoretically enjoyed the support of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. However, the proposal was significantly watered down and not subjected to a vote in parliament before the 2017 elections, most plausibly because the social democratic party (ČSSD) in charge of the ministry feared losing seats but also the veto of its coalition partner, Andrej Babiš's ANO party for the reform being too costly (Saxonberg et al. 2023).

Since Babiš's term in office (2017-2021) largely coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, the most important gender policy measures were aimed at increasing benefits for parents who had to stay at home with their children. Therefore, the caregiver's allowance rate was raised from 70 to about 90% of the net wage, and a new temporary caregiver's allowance scheme was introduced for self-employed persons who were previously ineligible (Sirovatka et al. 2023).

In sum, ANO did not seek to promote traditional gender roles through legislation during their tenure, and the share of female MPs has even increased throughout their term in government (Żukiewicz 2022).

In the field of LGBTQ rights, the fate of a draft bill to legalize same-sex marriages and provide the same rights to non-heterosexual couples deserves attention. The initiative was formulated in 2018 by 37 Czech MPs from different parties, including ANO, and would have required a simple majority in the Chamber of Deputies to pass. However, two days later, another draft bill was formulated which proposed the constitutional protection of marriage as union between a man and a woman (Sekerák and Novotný 2021). Even though the Babiš cabinet publicly expressed that it backed the bill that would liberalize same-sex marriage (Reuters 2018), the proposal was never subjected to a vote in the Chamber of Deputies until it lapsed in 2021. During the same year, Babiš refused to condemn the Hungarian "Child Protection Act", unlike the representatives of 18 other EU Member States (Zachová 2021).

France

Rassemblement National's (RN) discourse on gender politics is related to internal conflicts and shows discrepancies between discourse and programmatic elements. Under Marine Le Pen's attempt to move the party to greater social respectability, the party has shifted from a focus on women as 'mothers of nation' to 'working mothers'. Positions on family, sexuality, and women have softened towards a more progressive stance with demands such as equal pay in the 2017 presidential program. Even though the party does not argue for a strict opposition to abortion, RN promotes pre-natal adoption, the prevention of abortion as well as elimination of public funding for abortion, while at the same time stating that women should have a 'real choice'. Contrary to other illiberal parties, RN also has a pragmatist position towards same-sex relationships (Scrinzi 2017, Morgan 2017).

Nonetheless, RN keeps a 'modern-traditionalist' discourse focusing on issues of employment, social protection and the exclusionary welfare state by relying on an essentialist view of gender as well as an ethnopluralist defense of national identity (Scrinzi 2017). The party portrays the French society as strongly secular, which is threatened by Muslim immigration with a particular focus on the threat of Muslim headscarf for the emancipation of women. Other

gender-related issues such as violence against and oppression of women are argued to be imported by immigration and especially Muslim immigrants, who are depicted as people from misogynistic cultures (Morgan 2017).

Italy

While conservative family values and traditional gender roles have been part of the Italian Lega since its foundation, they only became core elements after Salvini's take-over in 2013 and expanded after 2018. With Salvini as head of the party, gender and family issues were mainly associated with references to the party's anti-immigration discourse in defense of the Northern Italy's cultural identity. This expanded in the 2018 national election, which also resulted in Lega's government participation during the Conte I cabinet. The party underlined the defense of the traditional family, clearly defined as a married heterosexual couple with children. Although the party was only shortly part of the government (15 months), this period was marked with major attacks on women and LGBTIQ rights such as homophobic campaigns (Donà 2021).

In the short time of government participation, Lega particularly affected pension and family policy. Lega's flagship pension reform 'Quota 100' reduced the retirement age to 62 years with 38 years of contribution without further reductions. This scheme is particularly targeted to men with long consistent contribution records compared to women who are more likely to have discontinuous careers. The party also prolonged the *opzione donne*, which enables women to retire at 58 after 35 years with less favorable conditions. This differential retirement policy is consistent with a traditional conception of family that emphasizes men as breadwinners, while women are the sole caregivers for children as well as grandchildren (Meardi and Guardiancich 2022).

During this time, Lega also made changes to existing pro-natalist policies. They increased 'natality benefits' for newborns starting from the second child and increased nursery subsidies. Additionally, the party abolished subsidies for baby-sitting or crèches for mothers opting out of parental leave introduced by a previous center-left government (Meardi and Guardiancich 2022). Furthermore, the Lega adopted initiatives to cancel gender programs in schools across Italy, which aimed at blocking LGBTIQ-friendly initiatives as well as at restricting abortion

access. Lastly, Salvini as the Interior Minister replaced the gender neutral ‘parent 1’ and ‘parent 2’ with the traditional ‘mother’ and ‘father’ in ID documents in 2019 (Donà 2021). Further changes only failed due to the party’s short stay in government.

After 2022, Italy received its first women prime minister, the Italian radical right party leader Giorgia Meloni (FdI). Confirming that descriptive representation does not equal substantive representation, women issues have a relatively low salience in Meloni’s parliamentary and social media discourse. She promotes the rights of working mothers and welfare mechanisms for their protection such as ‘outsourcing’ domestic work related to housework and care for the elderly. On the other side, Meloni primarily focuses on women’s traditional social roles as mothers in heterosexual families, evoking the idea of motherhood as women’s destiny. Both her and FdI also use the issue of women’s rights to emphasize anti-immigration stances, framing illegal immigration as a threat to women. Similarly to RN in France, Meloni’s positions can be considered as ‘modern-traditional’, which also sets her and her party apart from the more traditionalist Lega (De Giorgi et al. 2023).

These positions can also be expected to translate into governmental behavior. First indications have already arrived with a bill that aims to prosecute couples who go abroad to have a baby via surrogacy, which is argued to mainly target gay couples (Armellini 2023). Concurrently, the Italian government has ordered city councils to stop registering same-sex couples’ children (Maccioni 2023). FdI has also adopted a strong anti-LGBTQ+ discourse.

Hungary

Hungary has been generally a weak performer in gender-equality, but even the existing policies were rapidly dismantled after Fidesz took over in 2010. Similarly to Poland, Orbán proceeded with two main strategies: reframing and implementation stalling. Reframing particularly occurred in the context of family policies in which the government asserted the primary role of women as carers. After 2016, Fidesz also introduced reforms to the labor-market participation of women to boost fertility rates. Existing gender equality policies were stalled. Dismantling particularly occurred in the case of gender-equality structures after 2010 such as the removal of support from women’s groups to non-feminist conservative women’s organizations (Szikra et al. 2020). The neglect of gender-equality issues manifested itself in institutional

arrangements, too: already under its first EU-presidency the Orbán-cabinet initiated "family mainstreaming" instead of "gender mainstreaming" and relegated all women's issues into a small unit under the state secretariat of family affairs.

The promotion of traditionalist gender roles was also enshrined in the constitution through the 9th amendment to the Fundamental Law adopted in 2020 which introduced a conservative definition of marriage and families. Specifically, the amendment postulates that the institution of marriage should be protected "as a voluntary union between a man and a woman", and that families are defined along fixed gender roles, according to which "the mother is a woman, the father is a man". Another amendment adopted during the same year prescribed that "Hungary shall protect the right of children to their identity aligning with their sex at birth and shall ensure an upbringing in accordance with the values based on our homeland's constitutional identity and Christian culture" (Takács et al. 2022:42). Moreover, the Fidesz government adopted a new "Child Protection Law" in 2021, which intentionally conflated pedophilia and homosexuality, and has implied that books depicting or "promoting" homosexuality can only be sold in closed packaging, and not at all in the vicinity of churches and schools (Rédai 2023). Beyond the legislative sanctions, the law was also used by Fidesz as a pretext to launch an anti-LGBTQ campaign and even a referendum on sexual education and the promotion of sex-change surgeries (Krekó 2022).

Even though Hungary saw some improvements in the domain of domestic violence, this only took place in terms of child and family protection. Instead, opposition to gender equality became particularly vocal in the context of the Istanbul Convention ratification, which was then ultimately rejected.

Poland

Poland has always had a strong opposition to gender-equality policies due to the considerable influence on policymaking by the Roman Catholic Church (Gaweda 2017), even if the PiS government was more aggressive in rhetoric than in action in this regard. Several of its decisions nevertheless pushed Poland in a more traditionalist direction, such as the special retirement age for women (60 compared to 65 for men), or the raise of the compulsory school

age from six to seven, reinforcing the family as main care provider (Meardi and Guardiancich 2022).

The politically most controversial and most costly move was the draconian restriction of abortion. While in line with illiberal conservatism, even many PiS supporters, especially women, were opposed and expressed their unsatisfaction with abandoning the party. The role of the Catholic Church and its organization initiating the reform (notably Ordo Iuris and the Stop Abortion alliance) in shaping the government's policies was particularly visible in this case.

The same spirit was expressed in the "LGBT-free zones" issued by various municipalities throughout the country (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa 2021), in the drastic reduction of the Ombudsman's budget and in the sidelining and defunding of women's organizations (Roggeband and Krizsán 2018). But in most instances the harsh rhetoric and the financial penalties were not accompanied by equally harsh changes in the regulations.

Conclusions

Illiberal parties have often been associated in the literature with pro-natalist, traditionalist family policies, emphasizing and incentivizing the caretaker and reproductive roles of women, and hostility towards LGBTQI communities, NGOs and persons, both at a discursive and at a legislative level. Moreover, illiberals in Eastern and Central Europe have sustained low levels of women's participation in politics, both in legislative chambers, as well as in government.

As the overview of specific policy proposals and adopted measures demonstrated, illiberal parties have in fact mostly focused on pro-family and anti-LGBTQI legislation. FPÖ in Austria has adopted family policies in government that favored high-income working families and drastically cut the budgets for women's organizations. In Czechia, even though the ANO cabinet extended some childcare benefits to previously non-eligible groups during the Covid-19 pandemic, it did not promote paternity leave policies while in coalition government with ČSSD and failed to adopt a proposed extension of marriage and associated rights to non-heterosexual couples while governing alone. In Italy, the Conte I cabinet with the inclusion of Matteo Salvini's Lega launched discursive attacks on LGBTQI communities, implemented a pension reform that incentivized the early retirement of women, and introduced "natality

benefits" to families raising at least two children. During its short tenure to date, Giorgia Meloni's FdI prosecuted surrogacy, and barred local councils from registering same-sex couples' children, both in an attempt to curtail family models not based on heterosexual relationships. At the same time, despite propagating a traditionalist family model, all the parties surveyed push for motherly employment and related childcare services. They promote women and mothers when they perform: work or give birth to children; but not as individuals who should be protected or promoted. Meanwhile, their divisive policies often appear under the disguise of the "protection of our children" and "our women" from outside (Muslim) intruders or from "homosexual propaganda".

While the policy changes in the countries described above may be understood as incentives to boost family and relationship models deemed desirable by the governing parties, Fidesz in Hungary went much further, and enshrined some of these restrictive understandings in the constitution per se. This entails that both the traditionalist interpretation of marriage, and that of family are now included in the Fundamental Law of the country, which laid the groundwork for further legislation in the same spirit, including the homophobic "Child Protection Act" of 2021. In Poland, the PiS government implemented a series of pro-natalist family benefits, similar to the family policies of Fidesz described in the social policy section. Moreover, some municipalities heightened anti-LGBTQI discourse in the country through designating "LGBT-free zones", while restrictions to abortion right sparked nationwide protests.

Even though there seems to be a degree of uniformity in the extent to which illiberal actors prioritize gender issues in their discourse and policy actions, there are also notable disagreements that may hinder cooperation on this front. Most notably, the hostility of the Hungarian and Polish illiberals towards same-sex marriage is not generally shared among illiberals in Europe (with the partial exception of the Austrians) who tend to take more pragmatic or even supportive stance on this issue. Nevertheless, pro-natalist family policies are a uniting theme that can foster alliances between these forces.

5. Education and culture

When illiberal parties at the extreme right of the political spectrum are striving to strengthen their popular support, especially when they gain power, they typically engage in a culture war. This struggle in the symbolic space of politics is based on relentless efforts to re-frame the political discourse along certain ideological values, such as conservative traditionalism, nationalism, and exclusionary religious dominance, while in terms of regime characteristics, it combines "the formal aspects of liberal democracy with many of the goals and instruments of (…) authoritarian and totalitarian regimes" (Bonet and Zamorano 2021:562). What links these ideological elements is the political narrative of the protection of traditional identities that are perceived to be endangered. Since education is traditionally perceived as the most important institutional vehicle through which ideological values can be promoted, culture wars immediately turn education into a battlefield, too. When conservative illiberal parties form governments and gain control over all means of policy-making these culture wars tend to intensify. Nevertheless, the scope and intensity of transforming ideological narratives and doctrines into concrete educational policy measures is determined by non-ideological factors. Explicitly ideological policies are, therefore, rare.

One core feature of the education and culture policy narratives of right-wing illiberal actors is conservatism, i.e., a quest to return to the cultural ideals of previous historical periods (especially late-nineteenth century and the interwar period), combined with a desire to resist contemporary cultural pressures that are mostly associated with progressivism, "the West", and individualism. The narrative justifies these tendencies with the necessity of strengthening (mostly national) communities to resist the atomization of societies, alienation, moral relativization, and the loss of (national, cultural, and Christian) identity. This narrative is often closely intertwined with religious and nationalist narratives, however, what differentiates it from the other two is that it has a predominantly negative view on human progress and aims to use education and culture to protect communities from value changes that it deems dangerous or immoral. Examples of such policies may be found in several of the parties we have studied. For instance, in its 2017 and 2022 electoral manifestos, the Rassemblement National sought to enshrine "national identity, values, and the traditions of French civilization", as well as "the promotion of our historical and cultural heritage" in the constitution. A conservative tendency

has also been noticeable in the case of the initially regionalist Lega in Italy (Albertazzi et al. 2018).

The studied illiberal actors frequently refer to nations as the core vehicles and embodiments of a shared identity that can safeguard communities against the pressures of globalization, uniformization and moral demise. Often defined in ethnic, linguistic, or nativist terms, the construction of the nation also provides an opportunity for illiberal actors to draw clear boundaries between ingroups and outgroups, discursively exclude minorities from the concept of a shared community, as well as to ostracize certain groups as the "enemies of the nation". Through making nationalism a central ideological tenet of such regimes, illiberal actors often end up monopolizing the term and creating controversies regarding the use of national symbols, constructing a space in which their liberal opponents may be portrayed as "traitors" – a practice that Bonet and Zamorano (2021:569) referred to as "exclusionary nationalism enforced through historical revisionism".

Nationalist appeals are especially prevalent in the education and cultural policies of the parties we have scrutinized. In the Austrian case, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ, which has been involved in coalition governments between 2000-2005 and 2017-2019) favors the promotion and subsidization of regional customs and traditions as expressions of national identity, as well as the preservation of cultural monuments. The FPÖ views German language as a central culture-forming element. In pursuit of this, the party has advocated for free admission to Austrian federal museums for Austrian families, as well as for increasing the share of Austrian films and music in public broadcasting (ORF). In the French case, the policy proposals of the Rassemblement National are based on the defense of traditional values, and particularly national sovereignty, both in education and in culture. In terms of specific policy proposals, this translates to increasing the share of French history and language in school curricula, as well as promoting a peculiar understanding of history that is based on a romanticized interpretation of the nation. In 2022, Marine Le Pen also suggested introducing a "national patrimonial service", on a voluntary basis, during which young citizens would work towards the restoration, protection, and enhancement of national heritage. Moreover, RN suggested having a French flag on permanent display on all public buildings and to remove European flags.

Many of the studied actors refer to religious values and identities. This is particularly true about PiS and Fidesz (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville 2022). In the other cases these values tend to appear mainly in an anti-Muslim context. For instance, in its most recent electoral manifesto, the Austrian FPÖ refers to religious symbols as markers of 'occidental' – as opposed – to 'oriental' (read: Muslim) identity. Similarly, in the French case, RN is explicitly in favor of secularism (Laïcité) mostly as a means to curtail the growing influence of Islam in certain schools, whereas RN does not extend this argument to state-contracted private schools (which are mostly Catholic). RN also advocates for banning wearing the Islamic veil for persons accompanying school excursions. Therefore, religion and religious symbols are used by illiberal actors for different purposes, depending on the national context: either to rely on the church as an ally and an external source of legitimation, or to marginalize non-Christian minorities. References to faith and church typically imply a support for social conservatism, strong preference for nuclear families, heteronormative relationship models, traditional gender roles, and anti-abortion.

Arguably one of the central tenets of illiberalism is its strong preference for majoritarianism and anti-pluralism, i.e., the idea that the core mandate of government is to represent the interests of a well-defined plurality of citizens at the expense of social minorities. This understanding is closely related to populist actors' self-definition as the sole representative or even embodiment of "the people" as opposed to corrupt elites or outgroups defined by different terms (globalists, atlantists, traitors, "Brusselites" etc.). |This narrative also entails that the plurality of opinions and diversity are not seen as values but rather as necessary evils that governments cannot openly oppress but are also not worthy of support or protection. Several examples of majoritarian narratives may be found in the electoral manifestos of the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party in Czechia, which target various minorities (immigrants, LGBTQ+, Muslims, other ethnic minorities etc.). In its cultural policy proposals, SPD makes a distinction between cultural manifestations that are desirable and acceptable – when they represent "our" (Christian, European) culture and traditions, as opposed to other forms which are perceived as "foreign" (i.e., Islamic, non-European and therefore inherently barbaric) and deemed undesirable and unacceptable. In the case of France, Marine Le Pen's party is strongly against positive discrimination in secondary and tertiary education, and advocates for the elimination of courses aimed at popularizing diversity.

Finally, the majority of the illiberal actors tend to favor hierarchical state-society relationships within which interest articulation is the job of elections, and not civil society activists. In the case of post-communist countries, such respect for authority is coupled with étatism. In other cases we found the support for pro-market solutions. For instance, the Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) of Giorgia Meloni, in their most recent electoral manifesto (2022) emphasized the centrality of private support for culture and underlined the relevance of the role of private funding in the management of public sites. The most recent (2022) electoral manifesto of Lega also places a special responsibility on private actors in promoting national "culture and Italian identity'. These findings suggest that the extent to which authoritarianism and paternalism are compatible with illiberal parties' agenda is a factor of national historical contexts.

In the area of education and cultural policies, illiberal actors seem to be most concerned with implementing a canon that emphasizes national values as opposed to cosmopolitanism, globalism, and cultural liberalism. However, the extent to which such considerations are made explicit varies both regionally, and as a function of whether illiberal political parties are in government or in opposition. This section will explore educational and cultural policy agendas in the countries where illiberal actors have been in power for a sustained period of time and therefore had a chance to implement their policy agendas, Hungary and Poland. The policies can be grouped into four main categories: 1, policy measures that serve genuine cultural policy purposes; 2, measures that are meant to indicate a radical break from/reversal of the policies of previous governments; 3, policies designed to directly promote ideological considerations; and 4, policies driven mostly by power-related motives/autocratic centralization. The following sections will first review the main policy agendas in education, followed by culture.

Education policies

Hungary

The educational policies of the consecutive Orbán-governments during the last 13 years can be divided into three main periods with distinct governance behavior. The first period has started with the enaction of new legislation on primary and secondary education, on vocational training and on higher education at the end of 2011 and lasted till the end of 2015. Between 2016 and 2022 the number of government initiatives was very small, partly due to the resistance

movement of teachers. During this period the focus of the educational policy interventions shifted from systemic changes to serving ideological agendas and to higher education (Radó 2021/b). After 2022, the shift of emphasis of educational policy was the result of the renewed intensive teacher and student resistance to the government (and supportive public opinion) that was fueled by the devaluation of teachers' salaries, the high workload and shortage of teachers, and the further erosion of quality. In this period the government responded to the resistance by ever more open repressive measures (e.g. by firing protesting teachers) and regulations (e.g. the de facto abolition of the right to strike and the new law on the employment status of teachers).

The most dominant purpose underpinning the great majority of education policy changes under the consecutive Fidesz governments has been power concentration: the extreme centralization of the governance of the school system, the complete abolition of the autonomy of all institutions (schools, universities, research and development institutions), or the exclusion of autonomous actors from education (such as textbook publishers, professional service providers, professional associations, NGOs, trade unions, etc.) and replacing all these with the mechanisms for bureaucratic administrative control. The public justification for these institutional changes revolved around two major themes: the statist doctrine of the need to increase the role of the government that alone is able to guarantee a uniform quality, and the populist narrative on the need to restore order in education.

The majority of institutional changes implemented between 2011 and 2015 served power concentration. All public educational institutions – with the exception of kindergartens – were taken over from the local municipalities and maintained by the newly established Klebelsberg School Maintaining Authority (KLIK). For a short period of time the operational costs of education were funded by local governments, but in 2015 expenditure was centralized, the municipalities' responsibility in education was eliminated. This process is widely referred to as the "nationalization" of schools (Semjén et al. 2018). The state-owned schools were terminated as separate legal entities and were merged into the organization of KLIK. Ever since, schools are directly micro-managed by the 198 school district directorates of KLIK.

On the basis of the new legislation school directors are directly appointed by the minister responsible for education, and school district directors took over all employment-related

decisions-making competencies from school directors. The financial autonomy of schools was severely restricted and is centralized (Radó, 2021/a).

In 2013 a new system of professional supervision was introduced focusing on the administrative control of individual teachers and school directors. To exclude teachers' unions from decision-making a "Teachers' Chamber" was established in which membership is mandatory. Finally, to push out not-profit and for-profit actors from the education sector the system of textbook publishing, textbook distribution and all sorts of pedagogical services were nationalized. Instead, a single government issued textbook system and a small network of government operated regional pedagogical centers were created that enabled the government to directly control the content of textbooks and teacher training programs.

The number of interventions that directly served ideological indoctrination was limited, but their impact on the value orientation of the educational practice was significant. The first was the introduction of religious classes – one class per week – delivered by the educators of the Christian churches and funded by the state budget. The optional alternative offered to the parents was signing up their children to ethics classes. Beyond the government incited process of the rapid expansion of the school network owned by the churches, this was a gesture to the large, established Christian churches that were – and are – the political allies of Fidesz (Radó, 2019).

Another ideological project of the government was the development and introduction of the new national core curriculum. The 2012 curriculum did not overtly serve ideological indoctrination yet. Its main purpose was establishing direct government control over the content of teaching and learning in the classrooms. At the peak of the 2016 teacher protest movement, the government promised to develop a new national core curriculum that will reduce the workload of teachers. The new national curriculum implemented in 2020 finally did not reduce teacher workload; instead changed the curriculum of a few subjects (especially history, and literature) in a highly nationalistic and conservative manner (Benziger 2017). The enactment of a special law to force Central European University to move its teaching activities abroad in 2017, as well as the prohibition of gender studies programs at public universities in 2018 also served mainly ideological purposes (Pető 2021). Further restrictions of academic freedom included the enactment into law of the right of the Minister of Education to appoint rectors independently of the university senates, the constraints on the independence of the

higher education accreditation committee, and the introduction of the position of government appointed chancellors who are supervising the economic, financial, and organizational management of higher education institutions without being subordinated to the rector.

Poland

While Fidesz with a two-thirds majority in the Parliament since 2010 has immediately introduced constitutional changes, PiS after the 2015 elections had no such latitude for action. But the educational policies of PiS were even more targeted to ideological aims than the Hungarian policies, so in the case of Poland we can establish a more direct connection between ideological values and specific educational policy interventions.

We can also more easily separate the above-mentioned four categories of measures and initiatives. The first type of changes are policy measures that serve genuine educational policy purposes without being obviously directly connected to political or ideological agendas. This list is the shortest, containing a single, although complex change: the reform of vocational education and training by further strengthening the system of qualifications that is reinforced by external examinations (Jakubowski, 2021), and complemented with extra funds for trainings that serve existing labor market demands. However, even this set of interventions is not entirely independent of ideological orientations, since conservative parties tend to focus strongly on vocational training in order to meet the needs of the labor market.

The second and longest list of educational policy measures implemented by the PiS government after 2015 includes various institutional and policy changes that were designed to demonstrate a radical break with the educational policies of previous governments. They can be described as populist policies as – according to Polish education experts – their selection was based on opinion poll results: those elements of the 1999 education reform were targeted that were unpopular in the constituency of PiS, especially among conservative teachers. These included the reversal of key elements of the early education reform, such as making preschool education no longer obligatory for 5-year-olds and postponing school starts again to the age of 7. The most iconic element of the 1999 reform was a shift to a 6+3+3 school structure, from which the government turned back to the earlier 8+4 structure. These measures were supplemented with an intervention of the same kind in 2017: the partial reversal of the prior gradual

curriculum modernization by the removal of interdisciplinary curricular blocks and project-based learning programs from the national core curriculum. All other elements of the 1999 reform and the various follow-up changes during the 1999-2015 period remained in place. Therefore, the education system remained decentralized and liberalized and the changes did not undermine the effectiveness of the education system (Radó, 2021/b).

In terms of education policies that mostly served ideological purposes, PiS implemented a limited number of measures, which at the same time implied the highest political costs. The first initiative is the part of the anti-LGBTQ legislation that aims at reducing the impact of "liberal elites" trying to "sexualize" Polish children that is a threat to their "morality". The goal of the government in this respect is increasing oversight of extracurricular activities run by NGOs. To this end, the government appointed regional superintendents whose approval is required to host any extracurricular activities in schools. Although this legislation was vetoed by the President, the government has announced that it will pass the amendment of related regulations anyway. This initiative was obviously a gesture to the government's main political ally, the Catholic Church. The measure has been widely criticized for its vague framing that makes it applicable to purposes beyond sexual education (Szelewa 2021).

The second policy change that was clearly driven by ideological motives concerns protecting the historical identity of Poles. This policy is based on the false claim that previous governments removed Polish history from the curriculum. In other words, the emphasis on historical memory with resistance to external aggression in the center serves well a policy legitimized by resistance to present imagined enemies. The educational policy initiative that serves this purpose is a new curriculum for social studies; Knowledge about Society curriculum was replaced by History and the Present curriculum in 2022 that presents the worldview of PiS.

Cultural policies

Hungary

After Fidesz gained a supermajority in parliament in 2010, it has considered cultural policies as a means to directly promote ideological considerations, including nationalism and conservative cultural values (Kristóf 2021), mostly regarding issues such as family, gender, and respect for authority. The extent to which such values are enforced through policies differs

across subsectors: while theatres and the literary scene have been especially considered by the Fidesz-led government as the primary arenas of their self-declared "culture war", the sphere of classical as well as popular music have been less central during most of Fidesz' tenure. However, pressures to extend the scope of culture war have intensified from 2018 when in his regular speech at the Baile Tusnad Free University, PM Viktor Orbán explained that:

> *"An era is determined by cultural trends, collective beliefs, and social customs. This is now the task we are faced with: we must embed the political system in a cultural era. (...) after the third two-thirds victory, we really need to adopt a spiritual and cultural approach".*[5]

While ideological motives undoubtedly played a role in shaping the cultural policies of the Orbán cabinets from 2010, it seems justifiable to argue that creating highly centralized institutions directly controlled by the government, and "the suppression of autonomous intellectuals, as well as their replacement by intellectuals loyal to the regime" (Humán Platform, 2020) have been even more important principles of their policies.

Power-grabbing motives seemed to prevail in several policy changes in the field of culture. Institutional takeover and elite change have permeated all fields of cultural policy since 2010, along with a radical reallocation of public resources. Starting with the field of theatre, the Orbán government has actively sought to replace directors that were known to belong to left-liberal intellectual circles with loyal allies who were prone to implement a national-conservative cultural doctrine. Beyond the emblematic cases of the Hungarian National Theatre and Új Színház (New Theatre), the majority of theatre directors in the countryside were also replaced within few years after Fidesz gained power (Kristóf 2017). In the field of literature, the government has not only sought to reshape the canon by integrating previously ostracized conservative (and in several cases, anti-Semitic) authors into the national curriculum (Pető 2017), but also through the drastic reallocation of funds: alternative writing academies set up by previously marginal right-wing authors received generous public funds from the Ministry of Human Resources, and support from pro-government media outlets to publish their journals. However, even more drastic changes started to unfold in 2018, when an Orbán loyalist was

[5] Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the 29th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp; https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-29th-balvanyos-summer-open-university-and-student-camp/

appointed as the leader of Petőfi Literary Museum, a landmark institution of Hungarian literature which later acquired control over other fields (including popular music) and became a cultural agency with a vast budget. In the field of fine arts, the government gave the conservative Hungarian Academy of Culture (MMA), a hitherto private and partisan organization, the status of a public body and enshrined it in the constitution in 2011, guaranteeing a steady influx of public resources (including real-estate property) and an opportunity to co-opt previously autonomous artists (Nagy and Szarvas 2021).

While Fidesz may have not succeeded to impose a new, national-conservative cultural canon on the society, it managed to reallocate cultural funds to loyalists, sideline intellectuals whom it could co-opt, appointed trusted allies as heads of institutions, and created alternative institutions when state control over the old structures had been insufficient. Even if cultural-ideological motives had been strong, Fidesz was much more successful in implementing its hidden policy agenda, i.e., that of institutional takeover and financial control over cultural production.

Poland

In the case of Poland, the ideological underpinnings of cultural policies carried out since 2015 are coherent with the broader ideological narrative of the ruling party, centered on nationalism. The PiS government treats culture as a means to construct ethnic and national identity, increase patriotic feelings and a sense of belonging to the nation. Thus, only "patriotic culture" is valuable to the eyes of PiS government. Moreover, as Polish national identity is characterized by its historical fusion with Catholic religion (Grzymała-Busse 2015), the values that serve national identity building are, according to PiS, of clearly religious nature. In this vision, cultural polices should aim at promoting traditional catholic values and morals and defend national identity from existing threats (from the left, from the EU, from 'moral relativism', and so on). PiS cultural policies are characterized by historical revisionism and martyrologic vision of the country's history invoking "a specific albeit totalizing mythology of the national past to gain control over the present, including its political aspect" (Kotwas and Kubik 2019, 458). A substantial part of its discourse refers to how Poles were unilateral victims during World War II and the Holocaust and claims that any effort to shed light on the possible collaboration should be cancelled.

In terms of the reallocation of power and resources, one of the key institutional changes introduced by PiS after forming the government was to raise the profile of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage portfolio by promoting Minister Gliński to Deputy Prime Minister. After years of lack of major attention from previous cabinets, culture became a pivotal part of PiS government's policies. Different strategies were employed to implement changes in line with the ideological underpinnings of illiberal cultural policies of PiS: from indirect pressure and prioritization of certain fields/actors, through staff appointment according to fidelity criteria and cutting or increasing levels of public subventions and expenditure, to censorship and persecution of dissident artists. These measures have consistently followed the logic of increasing centralization and control. Although most of the existing legal framework remained untouched, the Polish cultural landscape has changed dramatically during the last eight years.

Taking stock of the actions of Minister of Culture and National Heritage during this time, in the first place, regarding the important number of cultural institutions dependent on the Ministry, several of them were subjugated in the name of 'state interest'. The change in leadership of these institutions was carried out in often not fully legal way (as several legal suits lost by the Ministry manifest, e.g., the dismissal of the director of Adam Mickiewicz Institute). The appointments of politically aligned staff were usually centrally planned and not consulted with the employees of the institution nor with other co-financing entities such as regional or local governments. This has led to conflicts, boycotts, and scandals. What followed was a change of program with contemporary arts being marginalized, while national heritage, folk and popular culture and religious values-based cultural enterprises emphasized. This has led to the loss of the public and a number of artists and collaborators leaving the institutions or ceasing to collaborate with them, as happened in the case of the National Museum in Warsaw, the Contemporary Art Museum in Warsaw, the Modern Theater in Wroclaw, the National Old Theater in Cracow, the II World War Museum in Gdansk and many others.

If the capture of a particular institution or cultural enterprise was not possible, either funds were cut to a legally required minimum or alternative institutions were created, to represent a more 'national', 'patriotic' and 'classic' repertoire. These newly created institutions sometimes directly 'double' the functions of the original ones. This is the case of the Institute of Heritage of Solidarity, created to 'double' the European Center of Solidarity or of the Council of

National Media that ‘doubles’ the function of National Broadcasting Council and was created only to gain more control over public media. Other newly created institutions or institutions that saw the public financing of their activities increase are clearly profiled to follow the ideological, patriotic-religious, underpinnings of cultural policies of PiS.

Conclusions

The educational and cultural policy relevant political narratives of illiberal European parties that justify using political power to fight culture wars are composed of a very similar set of ideological values; these are conservatism, nationalism, religiosity, anti-pluralist majoritarianism, and authoritarianism. Although the key ideological sources of educational and cultural narratives of illiberal parties are very similar, their actual composition adapts to the cultural and political contexts within which they are constructed. For example, while references to religious values are a key element in the policy narratives of Hungarian and Polish illiberal parties, this is not so in the rather secularized political context of Czechia and France. Also, authoritarian tenets based on anti-pluralistic political views are more typical to Eastern-European illiberal parties than to those in the western part of the continent, where authoritarianism is largely present only in its “Law and Order” aspect and not in full-fledged political philosophy.

The analysis of the two cases with illiberals in power (Hungary, Poland) has shown that the latitude for selecting educational policy instruments was rather different for the Fidesz and the PiS governments. Supermajority allowed for an autocratic style governance of education in Hungary, while PiS had no choice but to further operate the decentralized education governance system that it inherited from previous governments. In terms of cultural policies, however, the latitude was rather similar.

We found the relationship between value-based political narratives and actual educational and cultural policy measures to be rarely direct and unequivocal. But the way governments frame their policy discourse bridges the value-based political narratives and the actual educational and cultural policy actions. In this respect, the similarities between Hungary and Poland are striking and, in both countries, they represent a shift away from mainstream international education and cultural narratives.

Due to the very different political latitude for the two illiberal parties, the actual outcomes of the educational policies of Fidesz and PiS are very different. While the all-encompassing education system reshuffle implemented by the Fidesz government inflicted serious damage to the quality, effectiveness and equity of the Hungarian education system, the Polish system remained intact. Available data suggests that the redirection of public resources, the takeover of cultural institutions, and the financing of cultural products that serve the aim of ideological indoctrination have had a limited impact on the cultural output and consumption in both countries.

6. Foreign policy

The global rise of populist and illiberal leaders since 2000 raises the question whether the ideologies and mobilizational frames used by these leaders have an independent impact on foreign policy, or even on the international system itself (Chryssogelos et al., 2023). This is an academically challenging question, since ideology and party politics have been largely sidelined in the study of international relations and foreign policy; they are the "neglected element" (Alden & Aran, 2016). Most scholars have assumed that "politics stop at the water's edge", as the conditioning effects of international anarchy will prevent politicians from deviating too far from policies to maximize their survival on the international stage (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). Recent work, however, shows the international implications of the rise of populism such as changes in the global system, the growing mediatization of politics merging domestic and international affairs, or the increasing polarization of international relations in sovereigntist struggles (Levitsky and Loxton 2013, Verbeek and Zaslove 2019, Zürn 2014). Overall, domestic ideologies are increasingly likely to imprint on foreign policy goals, grand strategies, foreign policy behaviors and diplomatic practices.

The neglect of foreign policy is particularly noteworthy in the study of European populism. Due to the foreign policy constraints of membership in the EU and NATO, populist leaders in Europe have historically focused on domestic politics. Second, citizens of most countries tend to care more about domestic than foreign affairs. Hence, politicking over foreign policy offers populist politicians less of a mobilizational payoff.

Sceptics have made three main arguments against the foreign policy effects of populism. First, populism is too thin-centered as an ideology to provide any sort of concrete direction in foreign policy. Second, populist politicians were thought to temper their politics once they gained high office and encounter systemic constraints on transgressive behaviors. Third, populists come in a variety of ideological flavors, associated with diverging positions on the EU, the US, alliances, and international organizations.

However, a new generation of populist research from the mid-2010s is reexamining the record of populism and foreign policy in light of the rise of a new wave of illiberal leaders that have

emerged in the post-2010 period in Poland, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Hungary in Europe; the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil in the Americas; South Africa and Ghana in Africa; and the Philippines in Southeast Asia. The focus is in fact on whether today's populist leaders engage in some specific policymaking at the international level–either in content or in practices.

One crucial question we need to explore is to what extent previous foreign policy doctrines concerning the EU, Atlanticism, or bilateral relations towards Russia and China became disrupted. The literature highlights that Russia, and to a considerably lesser extent, China, exploits the rise of illiberalism, with the ambition to undermine European unity (Laruelle 2015, Shekovtsov 2018). Given, however, the historical embeddedness of pro-EU and pro-Atlantic commitments, we expect that even illiberals with a strong mandate cannot change them within a few electoral cycles.

The comparison of the programmatic positions and governmental actions indicate that there is a high degree of heterogeneity among illiberal actors in terms of foreign policy. They converge only on emphasizing national sovereignty against the EU and on opposing immigration. Nonetheless, there are two different approaches of illiberal foreign policy emerging in the cases of Poland and Hungary that have challenged the international environment while pursuing authoritarian domestic transformation: geopolitical loyalty and geopolitical disloyalty. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the most important foreign policy changes in our countries of interest during the tenure of illiberal or populist actors in government.

Austria

One of the most notable aspects of the foreign policy of the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government of 2017-2019 was the intensifying relationship with Russia, particularly in the case of FPÖ. The alignment between FPÖ and United Russia started in 2007 when H. C. Strache started strengthening bilateral relations, which later further intensified during the annexation of Crimea. When FPÖ entered coalition government, the close ties were expressed through a series of joint appearances at social events, including the participation of Vladimir Putin at the wedding of the FPÖ-appointed foreign minister, Karin Kneissl in 2019 (Chryssogelos 2021). Beyond such symbolic acts, the two parties have also shared strong criticism towards the EU and the US; therefore, the FPÖ has for long criticized EU sanctions against Russia (Rheindorf

and Wodak 2019), and an FPÖ politician assisted the illegitimate referendum of Crimea as an "election observer" (Shekovtsov 2014). Even though FPÖ has refrained from openly expressing support towards Russia after the 2022 aggression, it continued to mobilize against EU sanctions, arguing that they would harm the country's neutrality and national interests (Kurmayer 2023).

FPÖ frames its foreign policy around the concept of national sovereignty. This led to ambivalent policy positions vis-à-vis the EU. The party has been generally supportive towards military cooperation, but it is skeptical against several EU initiatives that would have implied further integration (particularly in the field of immigration, but also concerning monetary policy), and it often frames EU institutions as the "enemies" of Austria. The protection of German language as an integral part of national identity is also considered as part of fighting for the sovereignty of Austrian culture and media, and as a safeguard against "Islamization".

Sovereigntist claims have also been incorporated into the Austrian People's Party's (ÖVP) agenda by 2017, the year when ÖVP and FPÖ engaged in a governing coalition (Heinisch et al. 2020). Their convergence was also reflected in their shared "populist securitization" of foreign policy issues, i.e., the use of securitization arguments internationally for gains in terms of domestic political mobilization, which culminated in the coalition government's abstention at the 2018 UN General Assembly meeting which adopted the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), an intergovernmental agreement to regulate migration and refugee rights (Müller and Gebauer 2021).

Czechia

During ANO's first participation in government with the social democrats, the government had no coherent policy on Russia. ANO itself had little direct influence on foreign policy changes as their minority government only briefly took over all ministries in 2018 and failed to win parliamentarian confidence. Their main impact on foreign policy was due to informal alliances between Babiš and the ČSSD Prime Minister Zeman (Weiss 2021). Both were strongly favoring a dialogue with Russia and opposed EU sanctions against Russia. Nonetheless, after the increased aggressions against ukraine and mutual sanctions, political relations deteriorated, while Czech-American relations intensified. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Babiš tried to stick to the existing economic and energy policies and was opposed to extending the sanctions on

Russia (Ogrodnik 2019). In the runup to the 2023 presidential elections, Babiš poised himself as the antithesis of his pro-Western, and pro-Ukrainian rival and warned about an impeding war between NATO and Russia unless a more conciliatory position is adopted (Jochecová 2023).

The various statements created the impression of incoherence, without, however, altering the fundamentally pro-European policies. (Weiss 2021). As far as China is concerned, Czechia under Babiš and Zeman made some spectacular gestures regarding Chinese investments and concerning the treatment of Taiwan and Chinese dissidents, but the government finally decided to exclude China from the Prague 5G Security Conference in 2019 and 2020 (Qin et al. 2023), in line with its fundamentally pro-Western orientation.

France

The foreign policy narrative of Rassemblement National implies opposition against the current shape of the European integration, though the party is no longer for an exit from the European Union. Its protectionism and its rejection of free trade and economic liberalization are well entrenched. The party is not isolationist but approves developmental aid and military interventions only if they reduce the probability of immigration and terrorism. Humanitarian purposes as reasons for interventions are fully rejected (Ostermann and Stahl 2022). The party tends to be anti-American, but Donald Trump's victory was welcomed as a "liberating, nationalistic, systemic tipping point" (Ostermann and Stahl, p.11). Marine Le Pen emphasizes the need for an inclusive security framework in Europe that is coordinated with Russia and the US, however, not necessarily with the EU or other European states and wants France out of NATO's integrated command.

Despite RN not being part of the French government as of 2023, the party still has influence on the adoption of bills. For instance, RN's recent backing of a flagship bill of President Macron that is seen as the most regressive immigration law in decades, has been called an 'ideological victory' by Marine Le Pen. The bill was initially attempted to seize the immigration issue from the far right, however, after a deadlock in Parliament, immigration rules have been further tightened so that RN started to approve it while several left-leaning politicians threatened to leave the government (Le Monde with AFP 2023).

Italy

Illiberal Italian parties do not have a united foreign policy profile. While Forward Italy (FI) and FdI are generally considered pro-American, Lega has a more skeptical attitude towards transatlantic relations. While Lega has a traditionally strongly pro-Russian positions, Meloni, as PM, has shown steadfast support for Ukraine (Maślanka and Szczepanik 2022; Varvelli 2023).

Another complicated and divisive issue is the attitude towards China. Lega initially supported strong relations with China, and Italy became the first major EU economy to join the Belt and Road Initiative. But later the party changed its attitudes, and now sees China as a threat to the Italian economy. FdI goes further, considering China as an ideological enemy too, and therefore Italy has withdrawn from the Belt and Road Initiative in 2023. The FI, however, continues to maintain strong business relationships with Chinese companies (Maślanka and Szczepanik 2022, Kazmin 2023).

The previous, "yellow-green" coalition of the Lega and the Five Star Movement (M5S) (2018-2019) sparked controversies within the EU with its sovereigntist orientation, as well as through Lega's close ties to Russia (Coticchia 2021). But those conflicts were kept within limits, the Conte government supported the sanctions against Russia during the summer of 2019 despite an agreement with US President Donald Trump to allow Russia to rejoin the G7 summit in 2020. On less consequential issues the government proved less conciliatory, for example it blocked the EU's attempt to recognize Juan Guaido as president of Venezuela.

The Meloni-government also has its conflicts with 'Brussels', on immigration and on the economy, particularly on the ratification of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). The members of the coalition disagree on some other EU policies, e.g., on whether stronger military cooperation is needed at the EU level (which only FI and FdI supports). Nevertheless, based on its first year in power (Newell 2023), Meloni's government seems less disruptive within the EU than its predecessor.

Hungary

Ever since Fidesz gained power in 2010, the Hungarian government has for long argued for the necessity of diversifying its foreign relations following the doctrine dubbed "Eastern opening" (Végh 2015), which has led to strengthening economic and cultural ties with CIS countries, Turkey, China, and South Korea – global authoritarian powers which can be considered as the main contenders of the West. Intensifying relations have also been coupled with symbolic acts, such as joining the Turkic Council in 2018. These strong strategic ties follow an approach of "geopolitical disloyalty", which represents an alternative policy model for future Western autocrats to effectively challenge the external leverage of democratic international environments. At the same time, these ties are used as "counter-leverage" to deter, discourage and potentially avoid European and US sanctions due to breaches of European and Transatlantic values.

Whereas symbolic and discursive shifts in Hungary's rhetoric towards the EU (Bozóki and Hegedüs 2018, Varga and Buzogány 2021), and more recently, towards the US have been widely covered in the literature (Balci and Yolcu 2023, Kurucz 2020), and interpreted as a shift in value orientations, the more pragmatic, mostly economic incentives of strengthening ties to Eastern countries have comparatively received less scholarly attention (Völgyi and Lukács 2021). Two specific measures deserve special attention due to their far-reaching implications. First, in 2013, the Hungarian government issued a visa bond scheme that offered EU settlement rights to third country nationals in exchange for investing EUR 100 thousand in state bonds (Beck et al. 2021). The scheme's main goal was to attract private investors; however, it was not coupled with adequate security protocols, therefore resulting in the admission of individuals who posed a clear security risk due to links to terrorist organizations or oligarchs blacklisted in other EU countries. Even though the program was terminated in 2017, by that time, it granted access to the EU to close to 20 thousand third country nationals, with the majority of claimants from China. Second, the so-called "Strategic Partnership Agreements" offered tax rebates and direct state subsidies for hundreds of foreign companies.

Since 2022, i.e. since the EU blocks Hungary's access to a share of its EU funds due to the country's failure to meet rule-of-law conditionality criteria, the Hungarian government tries even more intensively to attract FDI from Asia. These efforts recently focus on battery plants

that serve the car manufacturing industry, triggering intense debates about environmental impact and sustainability (Czirfusz 2023).

Beyond diversification for economic motives, Hungarian foreign policy under the Orbán governments has been characterized by increasingly close ties with Russia, illustrated for example by Vladimir Putin's frequent participation in bilateral negotiations in Budapest before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Ádám 2023, Ámon and Deák 2015). The strong economic and often political ties with countries such as Russia or China are also being (c)overtly represented in the decision making of the European Union and NATO through "veto diplomacy" and other means. Besides creating the impression of strong strategic economic and financial alternatives outside of the Western system, Hungary also uses the policy of "blackmailing" and "extortion" to raise the costs of political confrontation for EU and NATO partners and has the ability to block decision making in both cases. Since 2022, the cooperation mostly took the form of Hungary threatening to veto EU sanction packages against Russia, and blocking the EU accession of Ukraine, however, the two parties also converged in the diffusion of specific illiberal measures, e.g. restrictions on NGOs and LGTBQI rights.

In the meantime, Hungary's relationship with the United States became tense, first because of the so-called Lex CEU adopted in 2017 which forced an American private university to move its teaching activities from Hungary to Austria (Bárd 2020), and then because of the cooperation with Russia in the context of the war in Ukraine, which led to the adoption of diplomatic sanctions against Hungary in 2022 and 2023.

In sum, Hungarian foreign policies during the Orbán governments have for long remained dominantly business-oriented (which was also expressed through renaming the relevant ministry to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade), however, the diversification of foreign relations has led to difficult value choices in times of crisis. The country challenged the EU and the West both internally and internationally, while the war in Ukraine only exacerbated Hungary's drift towards Russia and increased tensions with the EU and the US. At the same time, Viktor Orbán's unusually vocal support for Donald Trump means that the US-Hungarian relations depend entirely on the outcome of the 2024 American elections.

Increasingly, Hungary represents Russian and Chinese interests in the decision making of the European Union and NATO through "veto diplomacy" and other means. Threatening both the democratic integrity of the EU and the Western alliance system, as well as challenging its unity

on foreign policy issues with geopolitical importance, the Hungarian model of autocratization poses a dual challenge both in the internal (EU) and international dimensions for the European Union and key Western partners of the country, while the regime's true loyalties appear to be laying outside of the Western alliance system.

Poland

Post-1989 Polish foreign policy has been characterized by a strong commitment to Atlanticism which remained intact even during the reign of illiberal PiS in power (Cadier 2021). Nevertheless, Poland under PiS has often shared the anti-EU positions of its Hungarian counterpart, and the two countries often strategically voted in tandem during their disputes with the European Commission, e.g. in reference to the Commission's "refugee quota policy" in 2015, and the EU's banking union (Varga and Buzogány 2021).

However, Poland has followed a drastically different strategy with regards to its relationships with the US and Russia, resembling a model of "geopolitical loyalty": in the former case, it strengthened its commitment towards the NATO, whereas in relation to the latter, it sought to contain the military threat posed by Putin's regime. The former entailed the decision to hosting and funding a US military base in Poland and accommodating some of the Trump administration's anti-China stances. Towards Russia, PiS has adopted a slightly more confrontational strategy than its predecessor (PO), in line with the anti-Russian traditions of Polish foreign policy and based on the commitment that Russia had been involved in the Smolensk air crash that killed then President Lech Kaczyński in 2010, however, it has sought to balance its anti-Russian stance by often defining the country's national identity against Germany which it often portrayed as a historical aggressor (Cadier 2021).

The EU-discourse of PiS has been largely negative, leading to a depiction of the EU as a threat rather than an opportunity (Balcer et al. 2017), to parallels drawn between the EU and the USSR, or to warnings that Poland will not be a "colony of the EU" (Csehi and Zgut 2021). The discourse materialized in hostile gestures as well, like the opposition to the refugee quota system, the banking union, or the establishment of a joint EU military force, but the overall orientation remained pro-European. The government capitalized on the country's central role of being a security provider on the Eastern Flank of NATO and a stability provider in the

Eastern Neighborhood of the EU. The fundamental goal of the PiS government was to offer geopolitical loyalty for non-intervention into domestic affairs, including immunity from domestic autocratisation induced sanctions.

Unlike Hungary, Poland has not created strong ties to anti-Western powers. Both illiberal governments opted for a confrontative strategy and challenged the international environment they are embedded in to successfully pursue the agenda of authoritarian domestic transformation. Both regimes did so in spite of the existing strong linkage with the democratic West and the significant leverage of the European Union and the United States over the two countries. One can observe in both cases the conscious use of foreign policy by autocratizing elites to neutralize the leverage of democratic integration structures and peers and to manage the impact of the international environment on the authoritarian transformation project in these countries. But, altogether, Hungary and Poland followed rather different foreign policy strategies to achieve these goals.

These differences are also confirmed by the analysis of the parliamentary speeches. The following two figures compare the discourse of Fidesz and PiS on Russia and Ukraine, respectively. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show which terms distinguish each parties' discourse, and

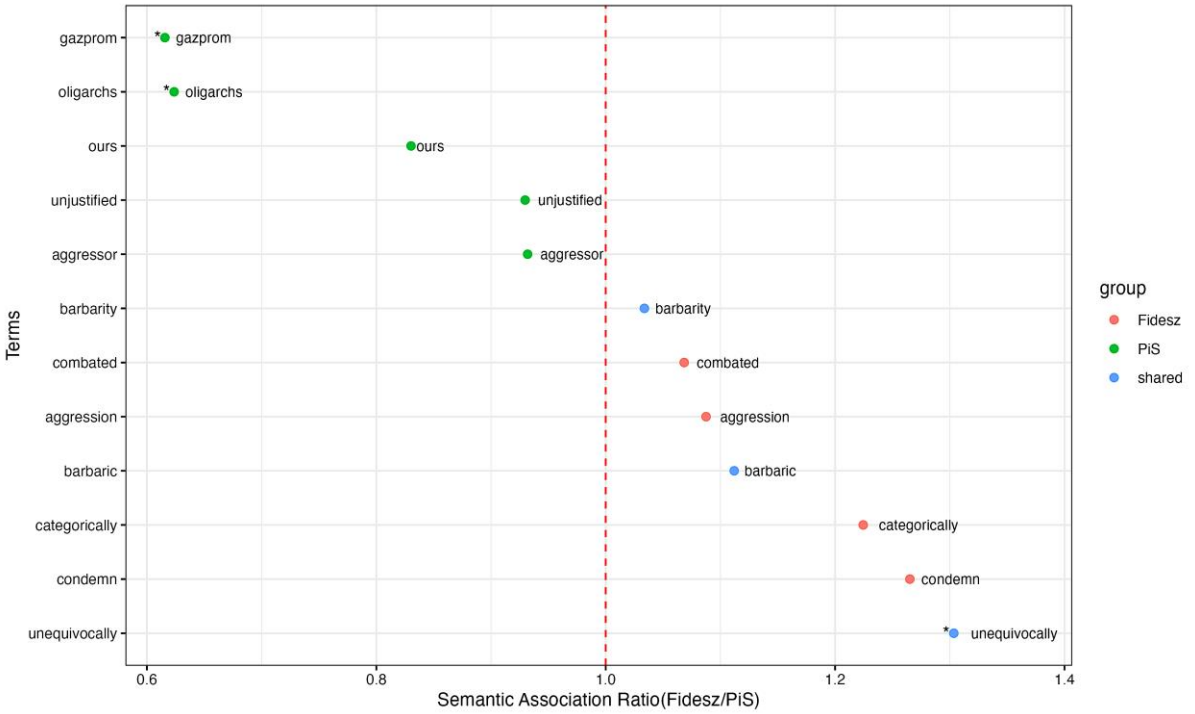


Figure 6. Most Distinctive and Shared Words on Russia, Fidesz and PiS Comparison, after full-scale invasion 2022

which terms are shared. Stars indicate a 0.05 confidence level, indicating with a high level of confidence that these words are significant. We can use these graphs to identify what ideas each party emphasizes when discussing Russia and Ukraine.

As Figure 6 above shows, the difference between the attitudes of Fidesz and PiS is not defined by terms condemning or not condemning the Russian invasion. Both do so, and Fidesz tries harder to fight against the impression of equivocality. But only the Polish government connects the invasion to Russian economic-political interests and to the non-democratic nature of Russian politics. As far as the discourse on Ukraine is concerned (see Figure 7 below), both governments acknowledge the brave resistance of the attacked, but only the Polish government speaks of the moral duty to help and only the Poles see the issue through the lens of liberation and mobilization. Fidesz speeches focus on the interests of the Hungarians, while the Polish ones downplay the particularly Polish perspective.

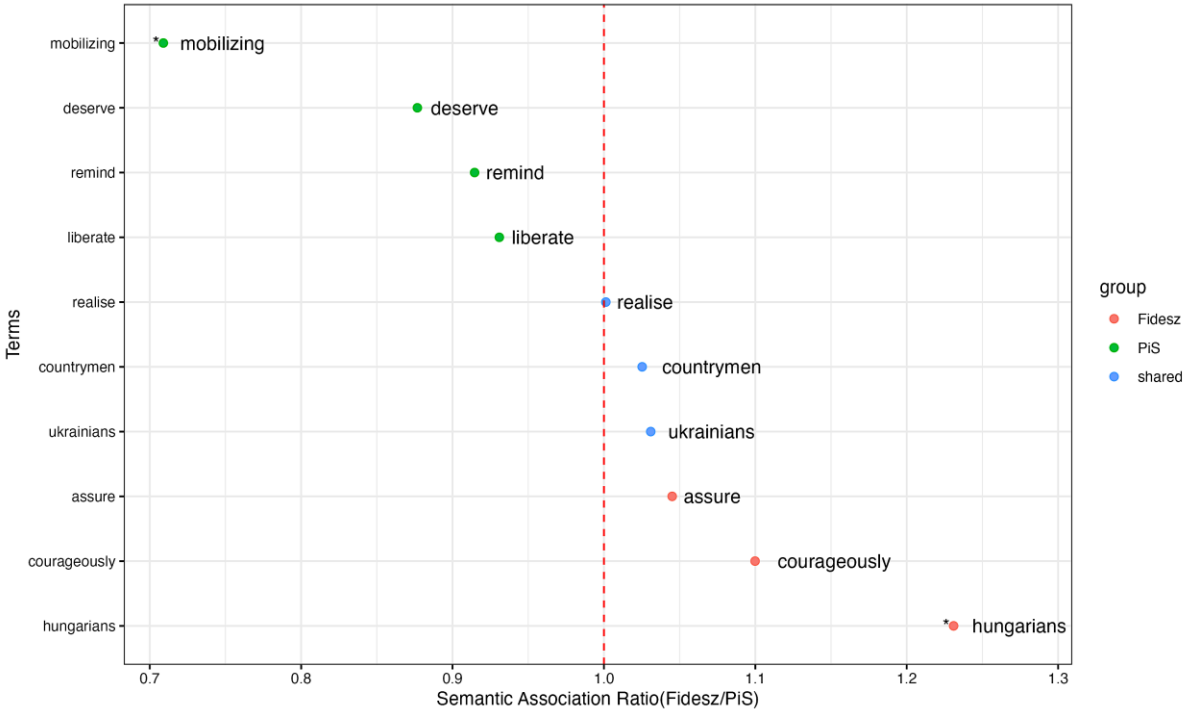


Figure 7. Most Distinctive and Shared Words on Ukraine, Fidesz and PiS Comparison, after full-scale invasion 2022

National security and sovereignty

In the second part of the foreign policy section, we present empirical results that emerged from our quantitative text analyses. First, we present analyses on national security strategies, from the point of view of the presence of the most relevant ideological elements: nationalism, populism and ethnopopulism. The first two of these concepts are about the rule of the *nation* and the *people* (Freeden 1998, Mudde 2004, 2007), respectively, while ethnopopulism, or populist nationalism, combines the two, and demands radical territorial sovereignty and local control for a culturally defined people. These thin-centered ideologies must be articulated with thicker ideologies to offer more detailed guidance for state policymakers. It is clear that populism and nationalism are comfortable bedfellows (Bonikowski et al., 2019; Brubaker, 2017; Heiskanen, 2021). However, populist nationalist discourse can be deployed to support breaking as well as maintaining alliances, belonging to, or exiting the EU or NATO, and promoting free trade as well as protectionism. What this suggests is that "the people's will" (populism) and "national interests" (nationalism) are maximally flexible and can encompass a range of more specific policies. When ethnonationalism and populism are articulated together, however, the impulse is nearly always toward a radical illiberalism, which implies that the elites should be excluded from the demos AND national others should be excluded from the ethnos of the territorialized sovereign community. Although not by definition anti-democratic, these ethnopopulist parties and leaders are certainly illiberal, in the sense that they argue for a homogenous set of national interests as well as a singular popular rule. There is no place in this radically sovereign community for minority vetoes, technocratic (elite) rule or anything other than policy that serves the rump "people-nation" (De Cleen, 2017; De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, 2020).

What does this mean for foreign policy? Our contention is that populist nationalists (ethnopopulists) will insist that the all-important people-nation should enjoy maximal sovereignty over the state. That means they should call for rejecting any constraints on the rule of the people-nation by allies or their representation in international bodies like the EU and NATO. If the international bodies demand sovereignty carve-outs, then the ethnopopulists should oppose these ambitions, "defending the national interests" and "elevating the will of the people" in foreign policy, which is the most salient expression of state sovereignty.

For the WP6 report, we have analyzed 22 National Security Strategy documents, from all the seven AUTHLIB countries, but with a special focus on the Austrian and Hungarian documents. We found that the degree of ethnopopulism, nationalism and populism varies across the NSS documents. For instance, while the NSS produced in 2020 by the illiberal Law and Justice Party government was not particularly ethnopopulist, it framed the EU in unequivocally nationalistic terms. The discussion of the EU was assigned to the subsection of bilateral relations, the national interests were emphasized, and the EU was understood as a coalition:

"Pursue national interests and participate, in the spirit of solidarity with allies and partners, in missions and operations led by international organizations (including the United Nations,

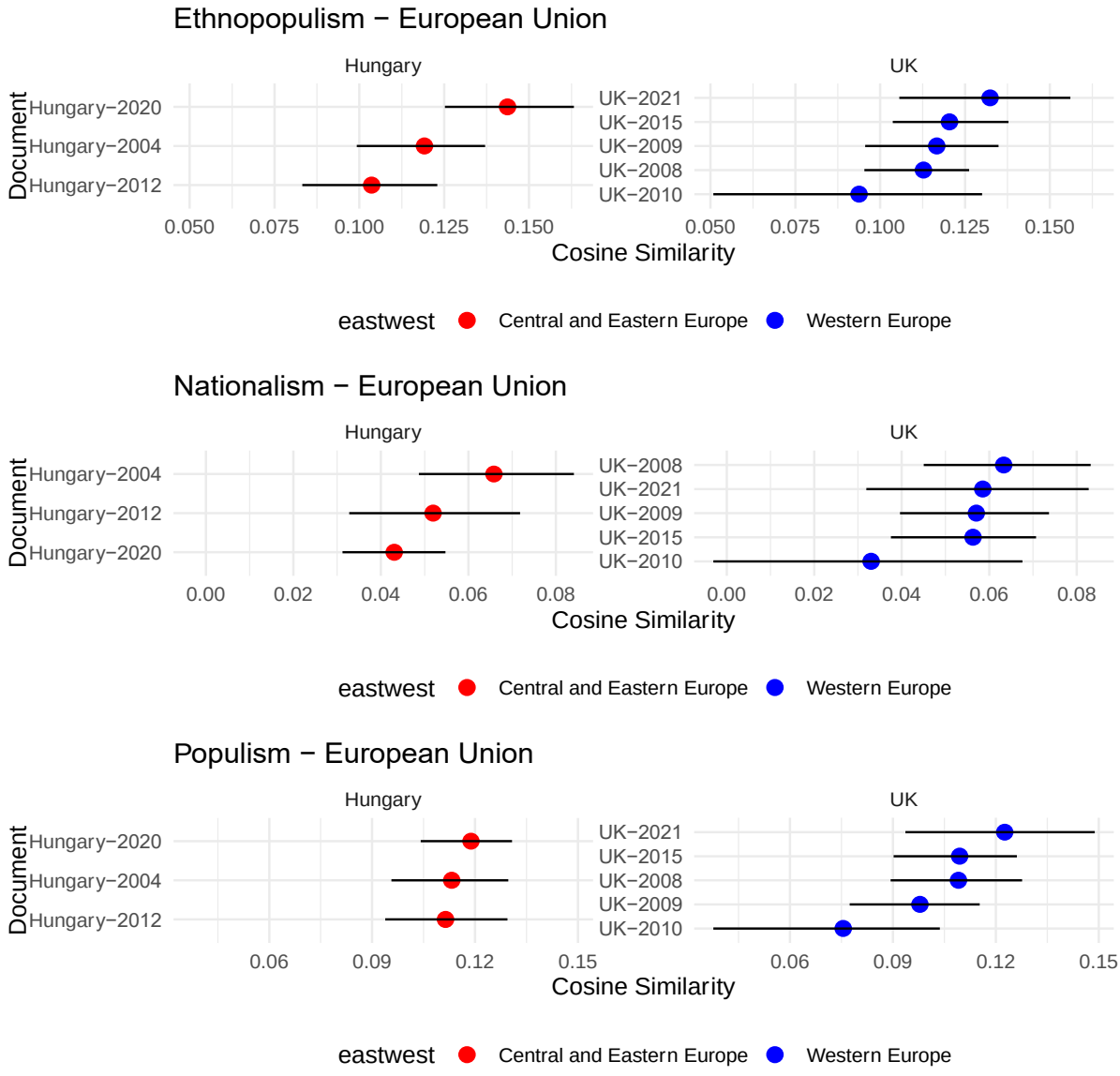


Figure 8. Semantic Association between Populism, Nationalism and Ethnonationalism

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and in a coalition format".

Thirdly, unlike we expected, there seems to be no clear divide between Eastern and Western Europe on populism and ethnopopulism, though the Central and Eastern European countries appear to employ a more nationalistic approach to the European Union.

Figure 8 shows the semantic association of three discourses about the European Union in Hungary (left side) and the UK (right side). We use these two cases to illustrate the change of illiberal discourse over time in the NSS document. We choose Hungary to illustrate how the discourse of illiberal actors changes over time and include the UK to assess if Brexit, which can be considered as a move away from liberal norms, has an impact on the discourse.

The results presented in Figure 8 suggests that the Hungarian government increasingly framed the EU with an ethnopopulist discourse (Jenne 2018), combined, however, with a decreasing tone of traditional nationalism. The increased ethnopupulist framing of the EU can be illustrated with the contrast between a 2012 and a 2020 sentence. The 2012 document ends with the following sentences where the country's contribution to the EU is emphasized: "The Government will work for a Hungary that is free, independent, modern, successful, faithful to its values and strong in the area of security, a Hungary that will contribute to maintaining a strong NATO and European Union and is able to make use of the benefits arising from its membership." In contrast, the 2020 National Security Strategy document provides a rather different frame: "Hungary believes in a successful European Union (EU) that respects the sovereignty of its Member States, enjoys their unanimous support, and advances in the development of European and national communities, the improvement of the continent's global competitiveness, and the effectiveness of defence against shared challenges".

In the UK no consistent decreasing or increasing time trend regarding nationalism and populism could be observed, but, just like in Hungary, we found a rise in ethnopopulism after Brexit. It seems that out of the three ideological constructs ethnopopulism is increasingly the dominant one, whether the country is illiberal or not.

Beyond scrutinizing illiberal actors' stances towards European integration based on National Security Strategy documents, we have also analyzed to what extent the topic of the EU is approached through the lens of sovereignty in the parliamentary speeches of our parties of

interest. Figure 9 looks at the semantic association between “Europe” and “sovereignty” for the MPs of seven governments (Conservatives in the UK, Fidesz in Hungary, ANO-ČSSD in Czechia, PiS in Poland, M5S-Lega in Italy, LaREM in France, and ÖVP-FPO in Austria). This figure tells us whether or not these parties tend to emphasize national sovereignty when talking about Europe.

The results (Figure 9) show that the Conservative British government is, as expected, an outlier in this regard. It is followed by Fidesz, then by a group of countries (Poland, Italy, Czechia) that had populists in government, but where the alienation from the EU has not reached the Hungarian levels. On the least-sovereigntist end of the spectrum one finds France and Austria, where the junior status of illiberal nationalist parties (Lega and FPÖ) was not consequential enough to reshape the traditional pro-European strategies.

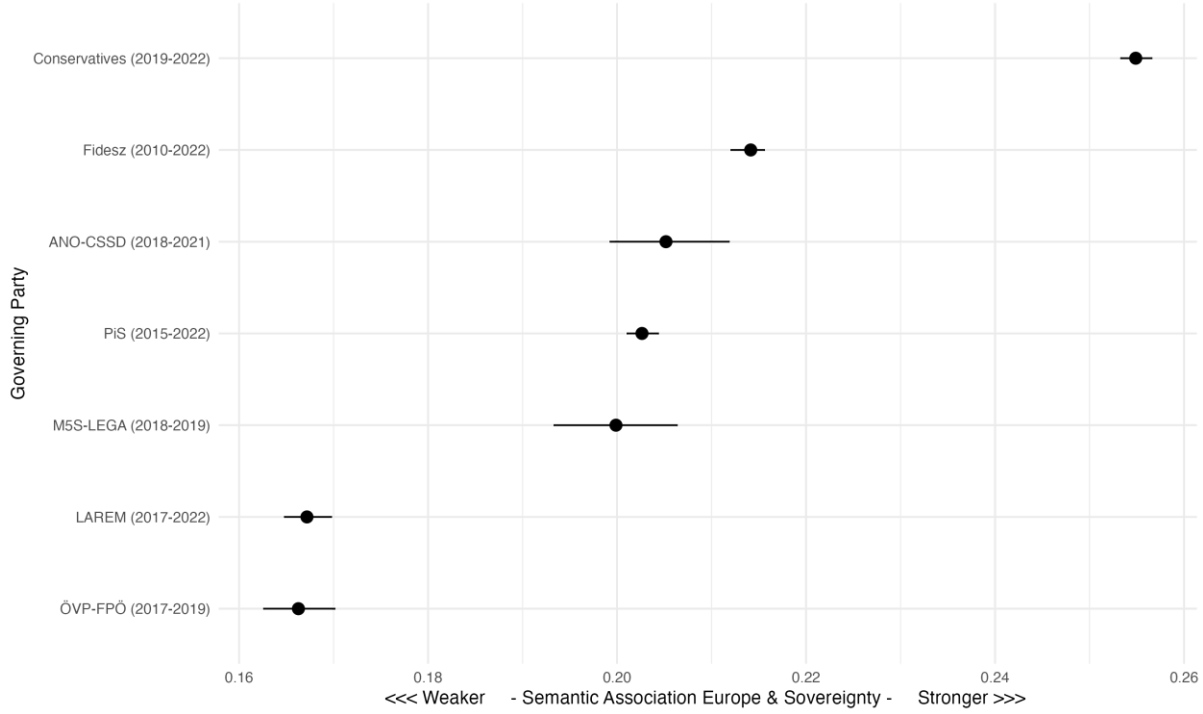


Figure 9. Association of the term Sovereignty with the EU Across Parliamentarians of 7 Governments

Conclusions

While the European illiberals have no unified foreign policy, they often converge on Eurospkepticism (though typically on its soft version), on the support of Donald Trump, and

on the criticism of human rights-based, interventionist international strategies. The Russian invasion against Ukraine has divided them. Most of them cut their links to Kremlin, but they remained – with the exceptions of the Poles, and, to a lesser extent, of the Italians – less-than-enthusiastic about active financial involvement, and the Hungarian government even shows open hostility to Ukraine. These differences were detected both in National Security Strategy documents, as well as in the parliamentary speeches of the parties concerned.

Despite the heterogeneity (also manifested in the split between the Identity and Democracy and the European Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament), the sovereigntist discourse is supported by ideological arguments whether a party is part of government or not. However, we found considerable heterogeneity between illiberal actors in terms of the extent to which they framed their EU-related discourse in sovereigntist terms, with populists in government leaning towards more Euroskeptic positions.

Our text analysis reveals significant trends in the framing of political discourse. While illiberal actors, including the Hungarian government, tend to employ populist-nationalist framing more frequently, it is crucial to note they are not radically different in this regard from liberal governments. Sovereignty and independence frames emerge prominently in most NSS documents.

In summary, our research underscores the prevalence of ethnopopulism as a dominant discourse, wherein the narrative consolidates the people and the nation, portraying a unified national interest against the global elite.

7. Immigration and citizenship

Introduction: Immigration Is Becoming Increasingly Salient

Immigration policy area has come to dominate political debates in the EU and impact the outcomes of elections. This is partly so due to the increasing number of immigrants. 2015 was, of course, a special year, with more than one million asylum applicants across EU Member States and there were a million new applications again in 2016 (Eurostat 2023). While these numbers halved in the following years, 2022 again saw an increase in the number of asylum seekers, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan, with 881,220 first-time asylum applicants.

The issue of immigration is coupled with a humanitarian crisis. For each refugee body that washes up on Europe's shores (Tondo and Bellingreri 2023; Smith 2015; Giuffrida 2023), many more are never retrieved or even searched for (Okeowo 2023). Some EU member states participate in illegal pushbacks (Carrera 2020, Cusumano and Riddervold 2023, Davies et al. 2023, Kochenov and Ganty 2022), create a hostile environment as a point of policy to discourage immigration (Griffiths and Yeo 2021; Webber 2019), and introduce plans to send asylum seekers to Africa, challenging the continent's liberal, constitutional order (Grabowska-Moroz and Kochenov 2022).

In parallel, the increased numbers of migrants incite fears about physical safety, drive a growing perception of the need to protect national identity, and motivate concerns about the stability of economic and welfare systems. Many political parties have exploited these citizens' concerns. Anti-immigrant rhetoric brought Europe's far right into the mainstream (Rachman 2023) and even moderate, centrist parties have adopted anti-immigrant rhetoric hoping to get more votes, while left parties have often 'flirt[ed] with xenophobia' (Kopyciok and Silver 2021).

The current immigration debate has muddled the distinction that used to exist between the immigration policies of left and right parties of the 1960s, when right-wing parties were in favor of immigration and left-wing parties were less pro-immigrant (Natter and de Haas 2018). Katharina Natter and Hein de Haas's example (2018) illustrates this point well. Pedro Sanchez, Spain's socialist prime minister, offered refuge to hundreds of migrants after Matteo Salvini,

Italy's far-right interior minister, made a show of forbidding the landing of a rescue ship. Yet, a few days later, Italy accepted another boat, and Spain supported an EU decision to create closed centers outside Europe to asylum seekers.

Far-right parties do not necessarily deliver on their pre-election promises of bringing down immigration. Three years after Brexit, immigration in the UK has more than doubled compared to pre-Brexit levels (Wallis and Strauss 2023). At least, 606,000 immigrants arrived in the country in 2022 – the highest number on record (Honey-Foster 2023). Giorgia Meloni has also seen a rise in the number of immigrants arriving in Italy. 2023 has started with 880% increase in arrivals of immigrants compared with the previous year (Carlo 2023).

In some instances, governments have been successful in imposing restrictive immigration measures, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz is a prominent example. Yet, Hungary is not alone in deterring asylum seekers from arriving in the country. In fact, most EU countries have taken measures of some kind to that end, even imposing border checks on each other and closing borders with third sates (Gavin 2023).

Europe's Liberal Paradox: Who Has the Right to Have Rights?

Liberal democracies, which also are some of the most popular destinations for immigrants, are caught in a paradox when it comes to immigration control. This liberal paradox described by Hollifield et al. (2008) is produced by states' need to embrace free trade and immigration in order to remain competitive in a global economy. Yet, increased migration produces a political backlash and triggers demands to close the borders to newcomers. In a similar vein, Jopkke (1998) notes that liberalism intrinsically undermines the capacity of states to control immigration by providing an expanding set of rights to non-citizens within the territory of a liberal state through its independent courts. As a result, even the most powerful, industrialized states struggle to control migration, and therefore, have strong incentives to externalize it to other, more illiberal states (Schafer and Besserer Rayas 2021).

In 2021, numerous activists, captains of rescue ships and human rights organisations launched a campaign against the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) (Tondo 2021). In an open letter to the EU Member States and EU institutions, the campaign coalition

demanded "[a]bolishment (of) Frontex and the system it spearheads" (Progressive International 2021), highlighting the inhuman practices of the EU's border agency and "lives lost because of the European Union's obsession with reinforcing borders instead of protecting people." The allegations of the coalition campaign about the human rights violations by FRONTEX were corroborated by the leaked report of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF report 2021).

The new EU migration framework was severely criticized even before coming into force, in particular with regard to the proposed Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation and the Instrumentalization Regulation, which "pose severe concerns for human rights and the right to asylum in Europe" (Amnesty International 2023). The Director of Amnesty International's EU office, Eve Geddie, states:

> *"If adopted, the proposed Crisis Regulation would further normalise the use of emergency provisions in Europe to deal with arrivals. It would weaken the coherence of the common European asylum system, while failing to prevent 'crisis' situations from arising in the future."*

The priority of such EU policies appears to be the protection of EU borders rather than the protection of human lives. The result, observed by the coalition mentioned above, is the militarization of the EU border:

> *"Europe has now built over 1,000 kilometres of border walls and fences. The EU's militarised borders are sustained by intense and invasive surveillance and connected by databases full of personal – biometric – information. To stop people from even reaching European soil, third countries are put under heavy pressure to act as outpost border guards."*

A contrast between the handling of Syrian refugees in 2015 and the influx of refugees from Ukraine (Hasan 2021) indicates that such border policies come down hardest on citizens of the Global South, rather than on white European Christians.

Citizenship policies work along similar lines. States use such policies to determine who is desirable and under what conditions they can be part of the polity. The routes for legal immigration—whether open or restrictive—is a precondition to naturalisation and, therefore, goes hand in hand with citizenship policy. Therefore, the racialization of border control reinforces status hierarchies across the Western world, as Tendayi Achiume (2022) theorized. Immigration and citizenship policy not only serves the purpose of excluding foreigners but also of nation-building.

It is conventional to associate illiberalism with a negative attitude towards immigration (Natter 2018). This is partly so due to the example of countries like Hungary that excelled on both dimensions[6]. Since on the question of rule of law or media freedom illiberal governments are opposed by the EU's various institutions, and since Hungary has been reproached by these institutions for its disrespect of the rights of asylum-seekers, it is easy to project an EU vs illiberals dichotomy onto the field of immigration and citizenship too. Our investigation rather shows that immigration and citizenship are sensitive fields used for political gains in both liberal democracies and illiberal regimes and the role of the EU is far from being comprehensively benign.

In fact, across both democracies and autocracies there is a considerable overlap in the preferences to restrict immigration. There exists a difference between 'liberal' and 'illiberal' regimes, but this is in the number of obstacles in front of effective policies, as "democracies are bound by existing legal frameworks, and enacting policy changes is subject to (lengthy) negotiations among different stakeholders and institutions" (Natter 2018). The fewer legal constraints in illiberal regimes empower political leaders to enact immigration policy changes without too many obstacles, but the same condition also, ironically, sometimes allows them to be more permissive. A relevant example is the one of Turkey: the increasingly autocratic Erdoğan opened the doors in front of millions of Syrian refugees, imposing this generosity on a rather reluctant society.

2015 and 2021 constituted two major waves of immigration into the European Union[7], both were tests of the cooperation and solidarity between the Member States and the EU in difficult times. The EU welcomed 6 million Ukrainian refugees in an orderly and lawful fashion, but the arrival of 1.3 million Iraqis, Syrians, and Afghans constituted a "migration crisis".

[6] Poland has been also opposing the EU migration reform. Preparing for its most recent general elections, Poland placed the migration questions at the heart of the process. Building its campaign on the claim that 'illegal immigration' would destroy Poland, the Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, used footage of riots to show to the voters 'what is happening on the streets of western Europe: rapes, murders, arson, destruction' – *see* (Davison and Pospieszyńska 2023).

[7] As verified by Statista (an online platform specialized in data gathering), since the beginning of the large-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, approximately 6 million Ukrainian refugees have been registered across Europe as of September 2023. The majority of the refugees fled Ukraine through Poland, followed by Russia, Hungary, and Romania.

The 2015 arrivals led to significant changes in policies. Building on previous proposals, in 2020, the Commission tabled a new EU pact on asylum and migration (European Commission 2020). The EU pact — though full agreement has yet to be reached — envisages sharing the burden and responsibility between EU Member States.

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees was treated by the EU in a highly generous manner. The EU activated, for the first time, the Temporary Protection Directive, ensuring that Ukrainian refugees had access to food, shelter, and healthcare (Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382). Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war have the right to an EU residence permit, are allowed to work, and can enrol their children in schools. As of October 2023, approximately 4.1 million people benefitted from temporary protection in the EU and the temporary protection has been extended until 4 March 2025 (Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409).

But this generosity contrasts with the way asylum seekers are treated in general. The behaviour of border guards across various national borders, how the EU responds to various human rights violations, and the behaviour of the EU's agency FRONTEX raise major questions about whether the principles of liberal democracy have much relevance when it comes to non-citizens.

Considering the most recent developments, one must point to both the Mediterranean and the Eastern borders of the EU. The previous case is well known due to the high and rising death toll, but the latter is also of concern. In 2021, Poland constructed razor-wire fences on parts of its border with Belarus and imposed a state of emergency within two miles of the border "blocking all access to that area for journalists, civil society organizations, volunteers, and others" (Human Rights Watch 2021). Human Rights Watch documented numerous cases of abuse by Polish border officials, including use of force in pushing migrants and asylum seekers back to Belarus. Latvia also declared a state of emergency at the Belarusian border in August 2021, prohibiting people from seeking asylum and legalizing pushbacks. Amnesty International documented how powers stemming from state of emergency declarations were abused by authorities whose behavior included "acts constituting torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, and the use of intimidation and violence to force people to return "voluntarily"' (Amnesty International 2022). These problematic practices developed without

clear ideological motives, especially not illiberalism, and the EU was unable or unwilling to prevent the violations of human rights.

Below we examine closely two of our seven cases, Hungary and the UK, one illiberal, the other supposedly liberal, in order to see how this specific field is influenced by ideological character and by the nature of domestic politics and how the European institutions react to the decisions of the national governments.

Hungary

The Hungarian government took a hard line on immigration from the beginning of the 2015 migration crisis. Numerous laws were adopted to prevent irregular immigration. Just between 2013 and 2020 the Asylum Act has been amended twenty-one times (Kovács and Nagy 2022).

Most of these amendments were introduced in 2015 when 161,000 people—mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria—claimed asylum in the country in the first eight months of the year. These included amendments to the Asylum Act allowing for accelerated processing of cases where the asylum seeker transited though a "safe country", including Serbia, where most passed through. On 14 September 2015, the construction of a razor wire fence on the border with Serbia was finished. Later that month, amendments to the Police Act and the Act on National Defence were passed to extend the powers of the police—with the help of the army—to take measures in "crisis caused by mass immigration," which was simultaneously declared (Government Decree No. 269). Further amendments to the Asylum Act allowing the police to "escort through the gate," i.e. push third-country nationals apprehended back to "within an 8-kilometre strip from the borderline or border sign of the external border" (Act no. XCIV). In 2018, Hungary passed more amendments (as part of the so-called 'Stop Soros Act Package') in order "to prevent Hungary from becoming a migrant country" (Bill No. T/333). The new package even criminalized aiding migrants in making asylum claims (Bill No. T/333).

Hungary has certainly been successful in reducing the number of asylum seekers through its restrictive laws and unwelcoming treatment of immigrants. The "embassy procedure" severely limits access to asylum in the country with "only a handful of people hav[ing] successfully used this process" (UNHCR 2023), even three years after its introduction.

Hungary's draconian laws did not go unnoticed by the European Commission, which lodged numerous infringement procedures against Hungary in relation to its asylum practices. The CJEU passed judgments on the incompatibility of the laws of Hungary with the rules and procedures in the transit zones with the EU law (Case C-808/18), on the incompatibility of the 'Soros Law' with EU law (Case C-821/19), and on incompatibility of the new asylum system (the "embassy procedure") with EU law (Case C-823/21), but these had little effect on the Hungarian officials' attitude towards immigration.

Migration remained the central issue in Hungarian politics and one of the dominant questions in the Hungarian elections. In 2022, PM Orbán even discussed openly that Hungarians did not want to become 'people of mixed race' (Than 2022).

United Kingdom

Immigration has always been a sensitive issue in the UK. The question of immigration was a major reason for calling the Brexit vote (Portes 2020). The Brexit campaign overlapped with the migrant crisis in Europe, even though the UK saw a relatively small number of asylum seekers compared to other European countries due to its geographical position. That said, "Britain's opposition to accepting refugees was some of the most vocal in Europe" (Garrett 2019). The UK did, however, have high levels of immigration which substantially increased with the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 (Office for National Statistics 2015).

The UK's withdrawal from the Union did not solve the issue of high immigration numbers. On the contrary, the numbers sharply increased after Brexit. The rise in numbers came after the Immigration Bill, which implemented a points-based system intended to be more restrictive (Honey-Foster 2020). The large number of Europeans coming mainly from EU Member States was replaced by an even greater number of immigrants coming mainly from Asia and Africa. The increase also included people fleeing Ukraine and Hong Kong. In addition, irregular immigration, particularly small boat arrivals, increased significantly post-Brexit, reaching the highest number in 2022, when 44,666 small boats arrived and 40,302 people claimed asylum. Since 2018, there have been a total of 83,236 small boat arrivals and 76,134 asylum applications (Home Office 2022).

In 2022, the 'UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership' (Rwanda asylum plan) was announced (Home Office 2023). This would use Rwanda as a zone to relocate and process asylum seekers. According to the plan, if seekers' applications were rejected, Rwanda would either allow them to stay in the country or would send them back to their country of origin. The Rwanda asylum plan has been primarily intended to be used for inadmissible irregular immigrants, i.e. "to people who pass through or have a connection with a safe country, including people who make irregular journeys across the English Channel" (UK Parliament 2022).

However, the legality of the plan was quickly challenged. Minutes before the first plane could take off on 14 June 2022, the ECtHR granted an urgent interim measure to cancel the flight. The court determined that one of the immigrants, an Iraqi national, was "fac[ing] a real risk of irreversible harm" (ECtHR 2022). Two weeks later, on 29 June 2023, the Court of Appeal ruled that the Rwanda asylum plan is unlawful, stressing that Rwanda is not a "safe third country" (*AAA and others v The Secretary of State for the Home Department*). The decision by the court of appeals was also upheld by the UK Supreme Court (*R and others v Secretary of State for the Home Department*). In this case checks by liberals, and both EU and non-EU institutions prevented the implementation of exclusionary immigration policies by the conservative UK government.

Immigration in National Security Strategies in the UK and Hungary

In the second part of this section, we investigate the framing of immigration appears in two sources: National Security Strategy (NSS) documents and parliamentary speeches. Figure 10 represents the cross-document comparison where points to the right (left) indicate more (less) illiberal framing of migration based on NSS documents. Figure 11 compares all parties' positions on immigration—on a one-dimensional liberal-illiberal scale—in the seven AUTHLIB countries.

Figure 10 suggests a mixed picture of the illiberal framing of migration across actors. While the illiberal Hungary-2020 document has the highest migration-illiberalism association, it is followed by Czech-2023, a document produced by the anti-populist coalition. Babiš, and UK-

2015, produced by the last Cameron government in the UK. This pattern suggests that there is no illiberal-liberal ruling party distinction when it comes to the issue of immigration. Furthermore, the figure also implies that there is no east-west divide when it comes to the illiberal framing of migration as a security issue.

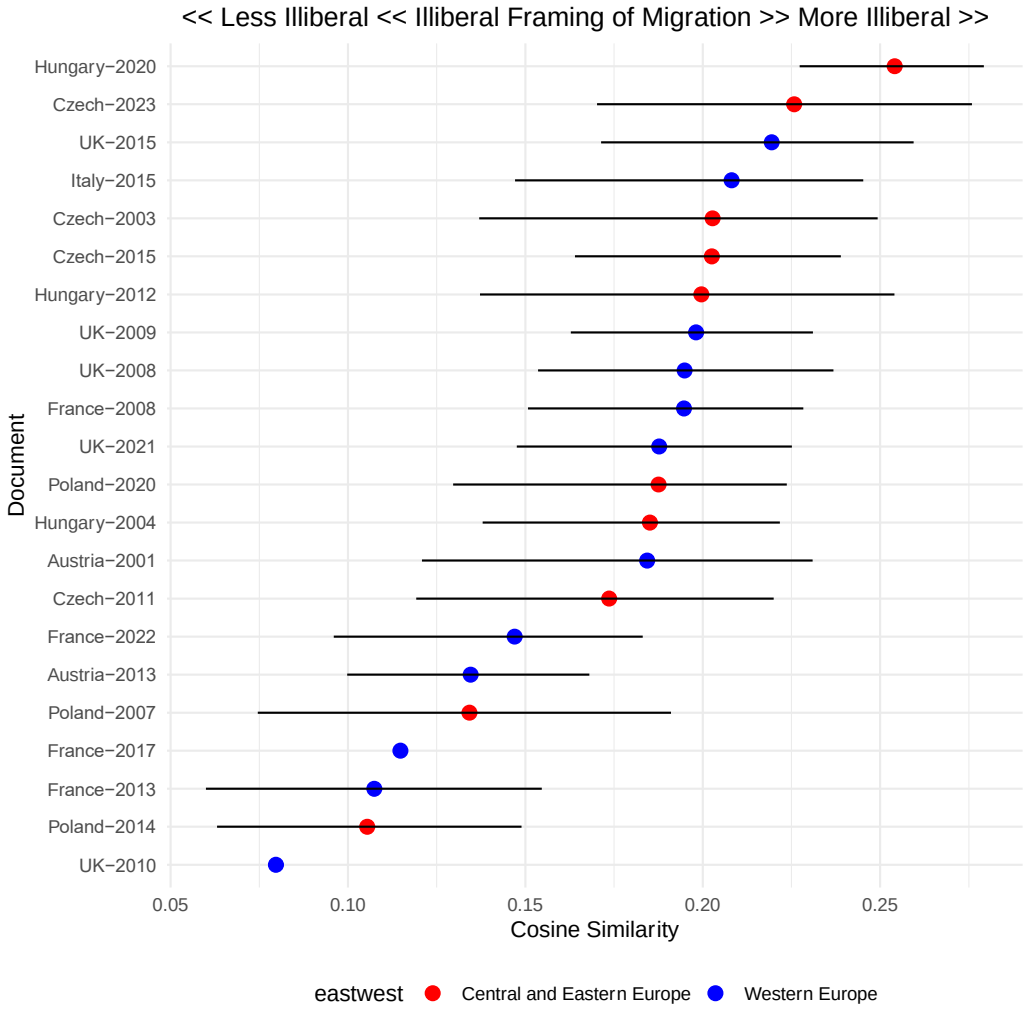


Figure 10. Semantic Association of Illiberalism with Migration across 22 NSS Documents

Figure 10 presents the AUTHLIB Index scores for all parties in the seven countries of this study (Austria, Czechia, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom) on immigration. This index leverages speeches in parliament to place parties on a one-dimensional liberal-illiberal scale. We present more about this AUTHLIB Index and findings in the next section, “Comparing Policy Areas” (see Figures 12 and 13). Colors indicate the country for each party. Parties are ranked according to whether they are mor—or less—liberal on immigration.

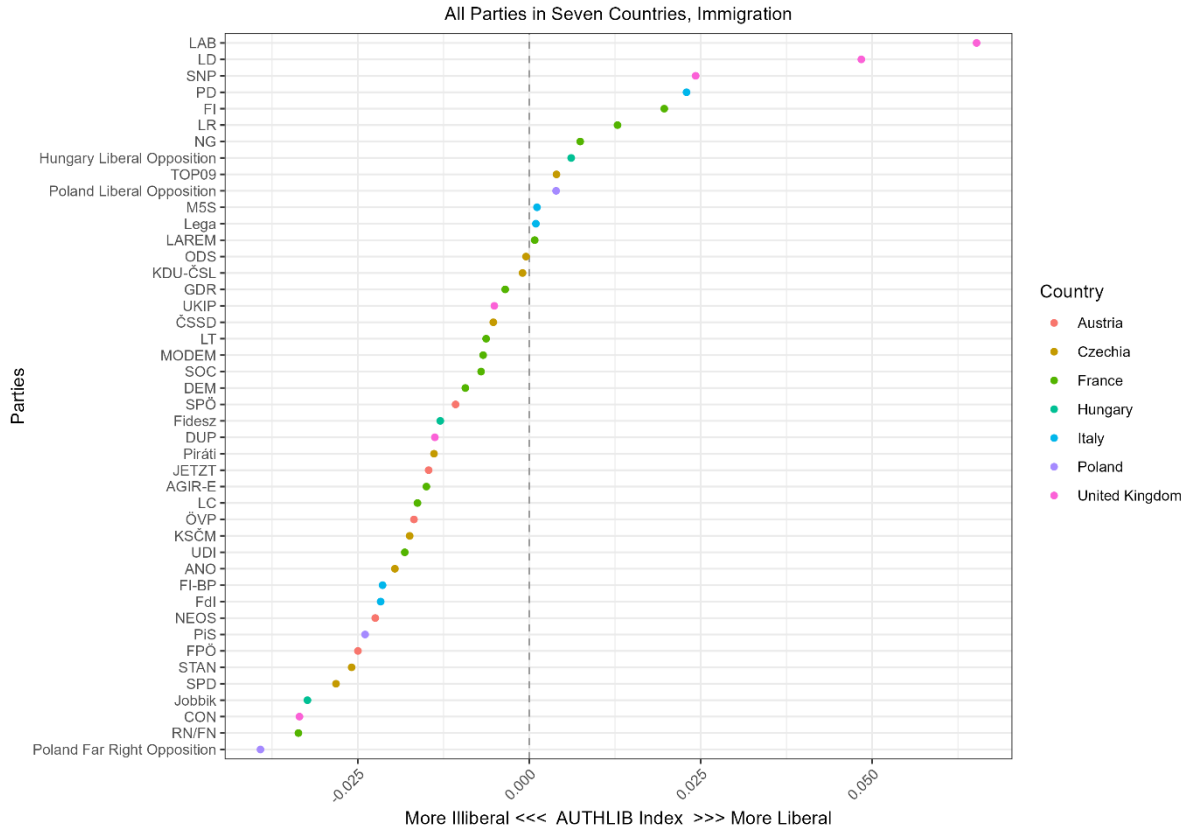


Figure 11. AUTHLIB Index, All Parties' Positions on Immigration

The results of the AUTHLIB Index—based on speeches in parliament—corroborate the analysis of the NSS documents (the time periods covered for each party are specified in Table 1). The radical right parties such as RN or Jobbik are on the extreme end, but most parties use an illiberal discourse on immigration—defined as using exclusivist and anti-minority language—including mainstream, and even some leftist and liberal parties. The liberal end is represented by a handful of parties, including Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom, Social Democrats in Italy, and Mélenchon's *La France Insoumise*.

Conclusions

Our analyses indicate that immigration and citizenship are divisive issues that have been used for political gains in both liberal democracies and illiberal regimes. Further, the European Union has been repeatedly proved to be unwilling or unable to protect the rights of migrants, outsourcing border policing to illiberal regimes like Turkey and Morocco and failing to condemn non-compliance with international human rights law by some member states.

The immigration and citizenship policies of the UK show that some governments in liberal democracies would implement immigration restrictions comparable to illiberal governments like Fidesz if not constrained by the rule of law and liberal institutions. Unlike the UK, the Hungarian government has not only failed to comply with CJEU judgments but openly admitted that it had no intention to do so in the future. Other EU Member States have followed suit, although more quietly. All three Baltic states and Poland amended their laws to allow illegal pushbacks, Italy has concluded a Rwanda-style Memorandum with Albania, and Denmark passed a law to allow the processing of asylum seekers applications in a country outside of Europe.

The troubling question in this context is what role racism plays in the failure of EU states to follow through on their commitment to universalistic principles of human rights. While parties' positions in liberal democracies are not necessarily different from illiberal regimes like Hungary, the liberal institutions that protect the rights of migrants show a clear alternative, and, occasionally, are able to prevent human rights violations. The analysis both of National Security Strategy documents and of parliamentary speeches show a worrying consensus: parties and governments across the political spectrum oppose inclusive migration policies.

8. Comparing Policy Areas

Finally, we use text analysis to build an encompassing framework for all the countries and policy areas (education and culture, gender, foreign policy, immigration and citizenship and social policy) analyzed in this report. Text analysis—of speeches given in parliament—allows us to build an AUTHLIB Index that maps actors in different countries on the same liberal-illiberal scale. The following analysis is based on speeches between 2015 and 2022, with the exception of Hungary, where our sample goes back to 2010 (for more details see Table 1 in Section 2). More positive scores indicate a more liberal position. More negative scores indicate a more illiberal position.[8] The external validity of the index is supported by a contrast with CHES and V-Party data (see Appendix). Internal validity is assessed by examining the association between words within the same dictionaries to confirm that they belong to distinct discourses (see Appendix). Time-series analysis of the Hungarian case (see Appendix, Figure 24), provides further, cross-time validation: Jobbik used to be on the extreme right, but as made a concerted effort to move towards the middle and that shift is captured by the text analysis.

We can assess the severity of the illiberal challenge to democracy by comparing the AUTHLIB scores of all parties across all five policy fields. The results provide us with a relatively robust ranking from the most to the least illiberal countries: Hungary, Poland, Czechia, Italy, Austria, France, and the UK.

[8] See Appendix B: Text Analysis, for a more detailed description of the method used to build our AUTHLIB Index. In essence, we develop a computational approach that measures the association between words that define policy areas (such as "migrant", or "border" for immigration) and either a liberal or illiberal discourse (for example, words like "acceptance" or "cooperation" versus "against the nation" or "threat"). We use a word embedding approach that calculates the association between terms based on their use in context by specific actors (here, political parties in parliamentary speeches). We develop seven dictionaries, which are lists of terms that define each of the five policy areas, as well as both a liberal and illiberal discourse. Parties are scored as illiberal if they are more likely to use illiberal terms—or liberal if more likely to use liberal terms—when discussing any of the five policy areas in parliament.

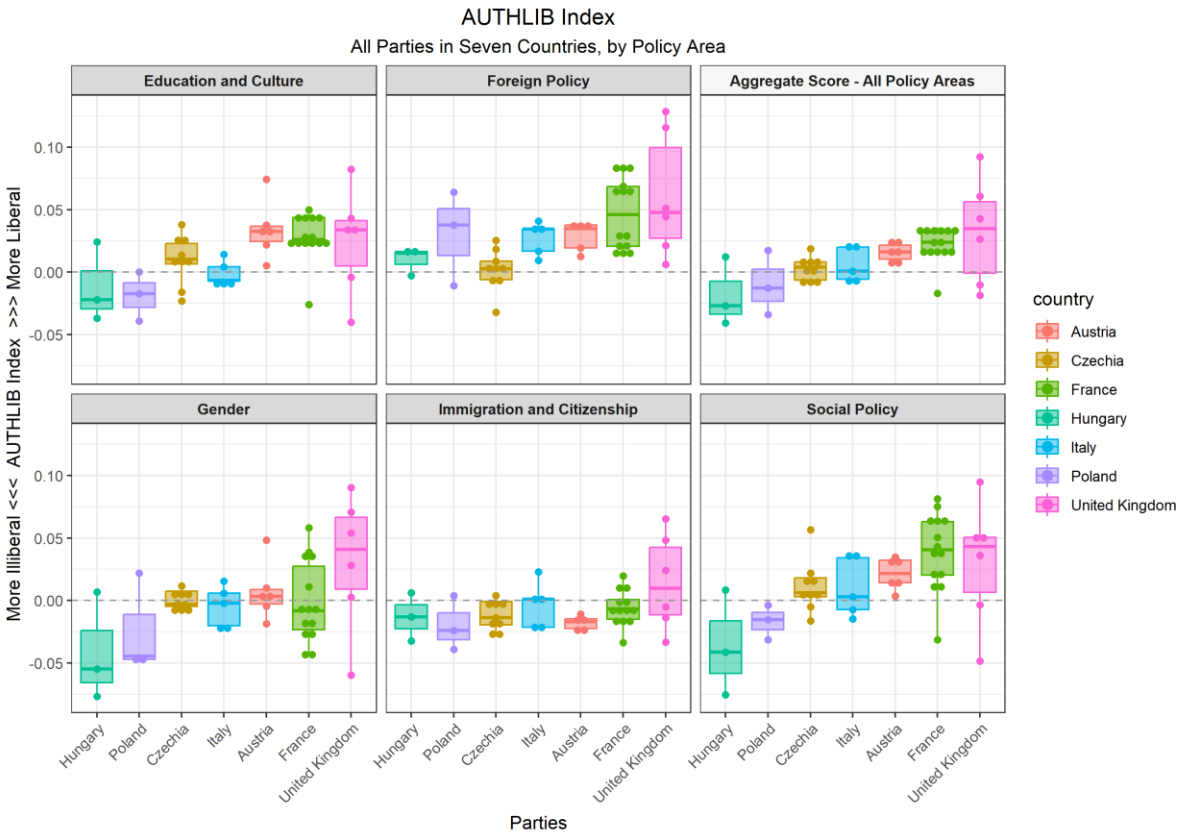


Figure 12. AUTHLIB Index per policy area per country

According to party-specific data (shown on *Figure 12*, with *Figure 13* showing the illiberal parties), the Austrian party system is the most homogeneous, followed by the Czech and the Italian. Poland (the *Konfederacja*-led radical right vs the PO-led centrist bloc), France (RN vs Macron's LAREM and Bayrou's MoDem in France) and Hungary (Jobbik vs left-liberal opposition bloc) belong to the more divided systems. But the most heterogenous country, somewhat surprisingly, is the UK, because of the large distance between the illiberal DUP and the liberal Labour. If DUP was not considered, due to its regional profile, UKIP would play the same role, keeping the UK on the top of dividedness. Even just considering the distance between Labour and Conservatives, one arrives at a larger range than in any other country in our sample.

Across all 46 parties in our sample, the Hungarian Jobbik is the most illiberal, with a score -0.04, followed by the Polish radical right bloc and by Fidesz, while on the opposite end of the

scale one finds British Labour (0.09), followed by the LibDems. The position of these parties explains why the UK and Hungary are polar opposites in our sample.

Regarding policy fields, and according to the AUTHLIB Index, the most illiberal discourse is in immigration. The next most illiberal policy areas are gender, social policy, and education. Foreign policy is the most liberal domain. The discursive space of the specific countries differs somewhat from this general pattern. In the UK, all fields score as liberal, but education somewhat less so than social policy and gender. In Poland and in Hungary, the policy field of gender politics appears as the most illiberal one, followed in Poland by immigration, education, and social policy, and by social policy, immigration and education in Hungary. The only discourse that is liberal in these two countries is on foreign policy. Similar to Poland and Hungary, gender is the most illiberal field in Italy too, followed by immigration and education, while social policy and, especially, foreign policy appear on the liberal side. In France, immigration is the field framed in most illiberal terms, followed by gender. The rest of the fields in France are all liberal, education the least, followed by social policy and by the most liberal foreign policy. In Czechia, the only illiberal discourse is on immigration. The discourse on the other fields is neutral or slightly liberal, the most liberal being on foreign policy, then education, foreign policy, and gender. Note, however, that the Czechs appear to be close to the neutral position on all fields. Finally, all Austrian parties appear illiberal on immigration. Austria is the only country where no party takes a liberal position on immigration. On the other hand, Austrian parties are most liberal on education, followed by foreign policy, social policy and gender.

Immigration and gender are the most illiberal policy areas, with the most illiberal countries being Hungary, Poland, and Italy (gender) and France, the UK, Czechia and Austria (immigration). The first group of countries—where illiberal parties spent the longest time in office–also exhibit illiberal rhetoric on education. These three countries are distinguished from each other primarily by social policy, which is characterized by highly illiberal discourse in Hungary, much less so in Poland, and an explicitly liberal one in Italy.

The lack of illiberal profiles on foreign policy allows two interpretations., The first is that our dictionaries are not fine-tuned enough to capture illiberalism in this domain. The second is that the language of diplomacy is more likely to satisfy the norms of liberal democracy. The fact that the ranking of countries on foreign policy largely reproduces the general ranking, with the

relatively more liberal position of Poland, gives some legitimacy to our method, as Poland has followed an Atlanticist strategy even during its most illiberal periods (Cadier 2021).

According to range and standard deviation both across countries and across parties, our sample is most homogeneous in terms of immigration. In other words, this is the least polarized field, this is where we find most convergence, although note that some of this convergence may reflect the periodic effects in the aftermath of the 2015 refugee crisis, which coincides with the period that our parliamentary speech data sample covers. The most differentiated field is social policy, partly due to the particularly large gap between the illiberal Hungarian and liberal French parties.

Finally, we zoom in on those parties that are most relevant from the point of view of our Work Package. Figure 13 provides the scores for parties that are often considered to be populist or illiberal in the seven AUTHLIB countries. We added to this list those parties that are not explicitly illiberal but have spent time in government as coalition partners of illiberal parties (such as ÖVP, M5S and ČSSD) and parties that are neither illiberal nor populist, but according

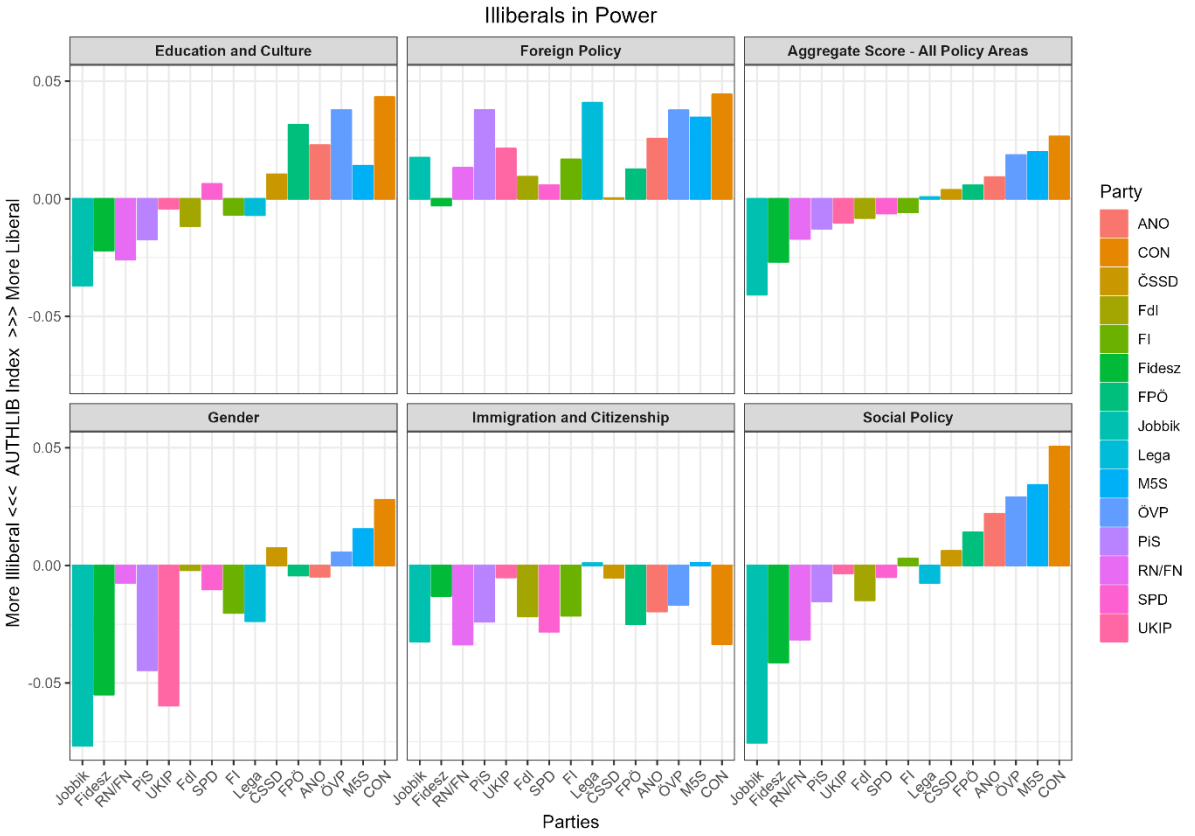


Figure 13. AUTHLIB Index per policy area per party

to the literature harbor illiberal factions or policies (UK Conservatives). The top right-most box presents the aggregate scores that average the five policy areas.

Figure 13 suggests that this group of parties tends to converge not only on immigration but also on gender. In both realms virtually all parties have a clearly illiberal profile, with the expected exception of M5S, ÖVP, ČSSD and the Conservatives (and on immigration also Forza Italia). Social policy, education and culture pit the most extreme cases, such as Fidesz, *Rassemblement National*, and Jobbik against the rest. Finally, while the foreign policy index fails to capture robustly illiberal discourses, it demonstrates that parties such as Fidesz and the Lega, while they may agree on some gender and immigration-related issues, are worlds apart in terms of their geopolitical orientation.

Conclusions

This section demonstrates that we can measure the ideological positions of party actors directly in their speeches using computational methods. The results indicate that the policy areas chosen by us for closer examination are not equally polarized on an illiberal-liberal dimension. Somewhat surprisingly, we see considerable polarization on social policy, and less on immigration. But in fact, these results dovetail with the policy analyses reported above. Only the most extreme parties have a robust illiberal profile on education and culture. More of them have a strong 'anti-gender' perspective and approach social policy in an illiberal way. Foreign policy and immigration are more uniform, either because everyone pays lip service to liberal norms (foreign policy) or because virtually nobody does (immigration). Both indices allow for internal differentiation, but the source of differentiation lies more in national conditions than in ideological positions.

9. Concluding Observations

In today's Europe illiberal forces, typically in the form of populist parties, are within reach of executive power, and, in some cases, they are even part of the governmental arena. They develop policies and practices of governing. Consequently, their supporters are not simply voting based on the character of the leader or on fundamental values but respond to specific promises and decisions.

First, we would like to underline some of the major findings of the preceding chapters:

Overall quality of democracy: the inclusion of populist and illiberal forces in government has a negative effect, but the magnitude of this effect is very much dependent on their relative power position and on the nature of their ideologies, including their readiness to accept membership in the alliance of Western nations. Administrative inefficiency does not necessarily accompany illiberal rule, but the likelihood of corruption tends to increase.

Social policy: the analyzed parties implemented their welfare promises to a surprisingly large extent. They don't offer a genuine alternative to liberal capitalism, but their generosity towards certain social groups (primarily employed, native, living in traditional family structures) is likely to explain part of their electoral appeal.

Gender: not all illiberal forces are for patriarchal structures, but the majority are traditionalist, and elevate the perceived dangers posed by sexual minorities to the level of national and existential threat. When in full control, illiberal parties are even ready to annul progress achieved in the previous decades on dimensions such as the freedom of women to choose or using state power to marginalize LGBTQ citizens and their civic organizations. In this realm there seems to be a pronounced East-West divide, with the Austrians in between.

Education and culture: the cultural offer of illiberalism in the analyzed countries is fundamentally nationalist and conservative, but such priorities could alter the operation of the state only in countries where illiberal had a major role in running the government for a long time-period, that is, in Poland and Hungary. The difference between the two cases revealed that the degree of centralization and politicization of education can vary: striving for cultural hegemony does not inevitably require autocratization and unprofessionalism.

Immigration and citizenship: the opposition to immigration and the preferential treatment of native citizens is a generic feature of illiberals, but these characteristics apply to a much wider circle of actors, and the role of the European union is ambivalent.

Foreign policy: the discourse of illiberals is unequivocally sovereigntist, but their behavior in government varies widely, partly because of their diverging interests, but also because some of them have an ideological commitment for a more positive or negative orientation to the West, the EU, Russia and United States. The heterogeneity is very large, weakening the illiberal camp, but not altering the basic fact that unanimity in the European Union provides illiberal governments with blackmail potential, a potential that is increasingly used by the Fidesz-government.

Textual comparisons: Considering all political actors, we found little unequivocal illiberalism in foreign policy-related documents, and much in the field of immigration. But in Poland, Italy and Hungary gender politics was the field most dominated by illiberal terms. The struggle between illiberalism and liberal democratic norms has polarized discourse on social policy, a field that was not expected to be in the focus of this struggle.

Overall, our analysis of various policy areas indicates that the impact of illiberals in office is mediated by the institutional setting they are placed in, on the sustainability of previously implemented reforms as well as on the resources available to them. Compared to the Hungarian educational system, for example, the Polish one remained well governed and compatible with pluralism largely because the previous reforms and the institutional structures limited the illiberals' scope of actions. Illiberal damage can also be mitigated by entrenched rule of law and checks by institutions such as courts and the EU. It is important to note though that formal admonitions alone are not sufficient to curb illiberal transformations; instead, they need to be followed by legal repercussions or other forms of binding safeguards. And even the illiberal actors who were unable to dominate the government do not appear to pose a lasting challenge to democracy, their impact on public discourse and on the position of their conservative rivals' positions need not be underestimated (Akkerman 2012, Muis and Immerzeel 2017).

An additional institutional factor moderating the transformation of policy areas is the setting of illiberalism itself. The analyzed cases show clearly that illiberalism plays a role in all settings, however, the extent to which it can influence policy areas differs. While for instance

illiberalism that encompasses the state or government can have a strong impact on transforming policy areas such as it is the case for social or education policy in Hungary or Poland, the influence of illiberal parties with junior positions in government is dependent on their governing partner. Actors who have no direct influence on government such as the RN in France have also established other forms of power over policy areas such as through parliamentary influence.

A second important finding is that using text analysis to map ideological positions helps us predict the policies parties will attempt to enact when in government. This is important to note as discursive shifts can lead to long-lasting effects on policy areas. Framing a group of people as "undeserving" of a measure due to their gender, country of origin, or disability can affect how they are judged by public opinion. Increasing emphasis on the priority of national sovereignty and national interests in international contexts—even between EU countries—paints a dark picture for any upcoming crisis that requires supranational cooperation, such as the climate crisis or immigration. The concurrent demonization of international actors—in conversations about education and cultural policies or in security-related questions—exacerbates this situation.

Furthermore, the apparently innocent, piecemeal use of tax benefits and loan forgiveness to construct "social policy by other means" can have dramatic implications. Such alterations create deep divides between a deserving "us" and an undeserving "them", which can result in considerable polarization within a country. The significance of such a shift is also confirmed by research that shows how this division is then reproduced and sustained through public debate, simultaneously mediating behaviour in other policy areas, such as humanitarian responses (Holzberg et al. 2018). Text analysis methods allow us to track parties' ideological positions across countries and policy areas *before* they are realized in policy, or even proposed in law or party platforms.

Lastly, our research has shown that immigration is a unique and notably worrisome policy area. While most policy areas show a clear difference between illiberal and liberal actors—with illiberal actors undermining democratic institutions and pushing anti-minority policy when they can—our analysis of immigration reveals a consistent trend across the political spectrum. The content of countries' National Security Strategies shows that government actors have

employed an increasingly illiberal framing regarding migration since 2014. Additionally, the analysis of immigration law and practises corroborates this story. Liberal and illiberal governments alike seem to challenge Europe's commitment to universalistic principles of natural, human rights. This trend connects with our earlier points about ideology, rhetoric, policy impacts, and institutional constraints. The discourse around migration frequently centers on immigrants' religion, country of origin, gender, and appearance, thereby shifting public opinion and resulting in real policy changes that disadvantage already disadvantaged groups. However, the destructive impact of elite discourse and public opinion on actual policy strongly depends on the institutional setting.

We anticipate that the salience—and urgency—of international migration will only increase. The number of refugees has grown each year for the past decade (UNHCR 2022). A World Bank report by Clement et al. (2021) expects that lower water availability and crop productivity caused by climate change could push the migration of as many as 216 million people by the year 2050. Global environmental factors combine with the increasing securitization and nationalization of immigration at the domestic level. This produces a vicious dynamic that makes migration cognate with crime (Bello 2022). Such attitudes encourage zero-sum thinking and impede integration and positive-sum development. Our report underlines that a securitized, nationalistic answer to migration is not only a problem of illiberal actors but connects all ideologies and actors in Europe's political arena.

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11. Appendix A

Country	Party	Period	Status (government /coalition partner)	Comment
Austria	FPÖ	2000-2005; 2017-2019	Coalition partner	
Czechia	ANO	2017-2021	Gov	
Greece	SYRIZA	2015-2019	Gov	In coalition with ANEL
Hungary	Fidesz	2010-	Gov	
Italy	Lega	2018-2019	Coalition partner	In coalition with M5S
Italy	FdI	2022-	Gov	
Poland	PiS	2015-2023	Gov	
Serbia	SNS	2012-	Gov	2012-2014: in coalition with Socialist SPS
Slovakia	Smer(-SD)	2006-2010; 2012-2020	Gov	Various coalitions except for 2012-2016
Slovenia	SDS	2004-2008; 2012-2013; 2020-2022	Gov	Various coalitions with junior partners
Turkey	AKP	2002-	Gov	

Table 4. Periods of Illiberal parties in power in Europe during the 21st century[9]

[9] The table has relied on the PopuList project (https://popu-list.org/) in identifying relevant actors in each country, however, focusing only on actors that assumed governing position, either alone or as part of a coalition.

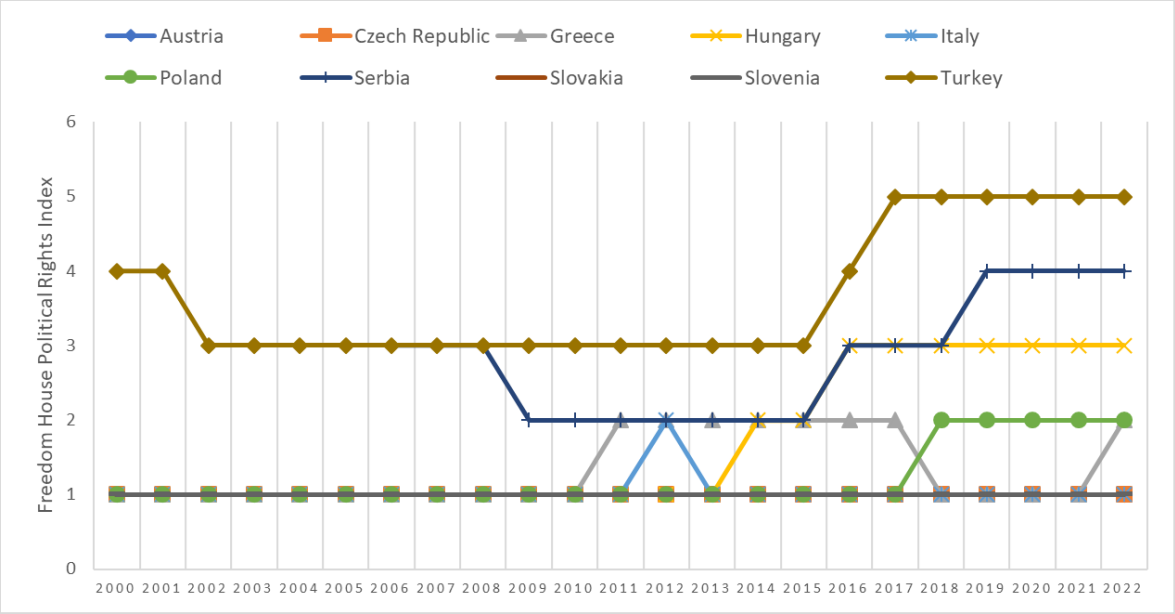


Figure 14 - Freedom House's Political Rights Index in selected country cases (2000-2022)

*Source: Freedom House. Data are measured on a 1-7 scale where "1" represents the greatest degree of freedom and "7" represents the smallest degree of freedom.

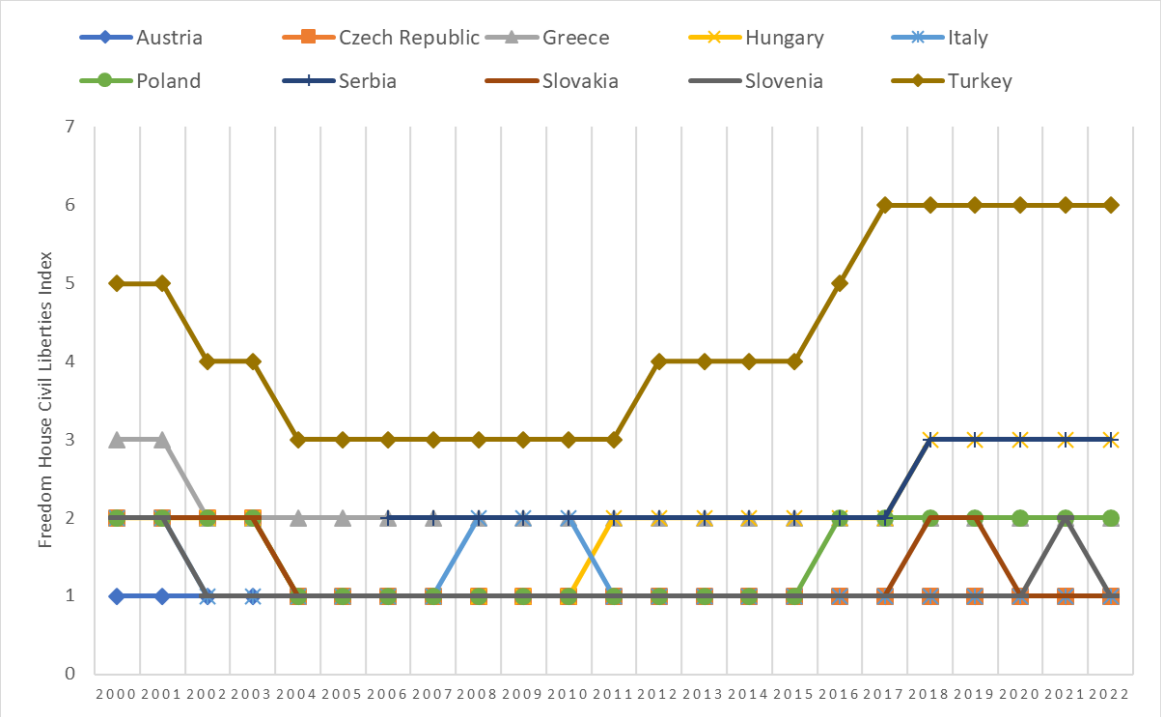


Figure 15 - Freedom House's Civil Liberties Index in selected country cases (2000-2022)

*Source: Freedom House. Data are measured on a 1-7 scale where "1" represents the greatest degree of freedom and "7" represents the smallest degree of freedom.

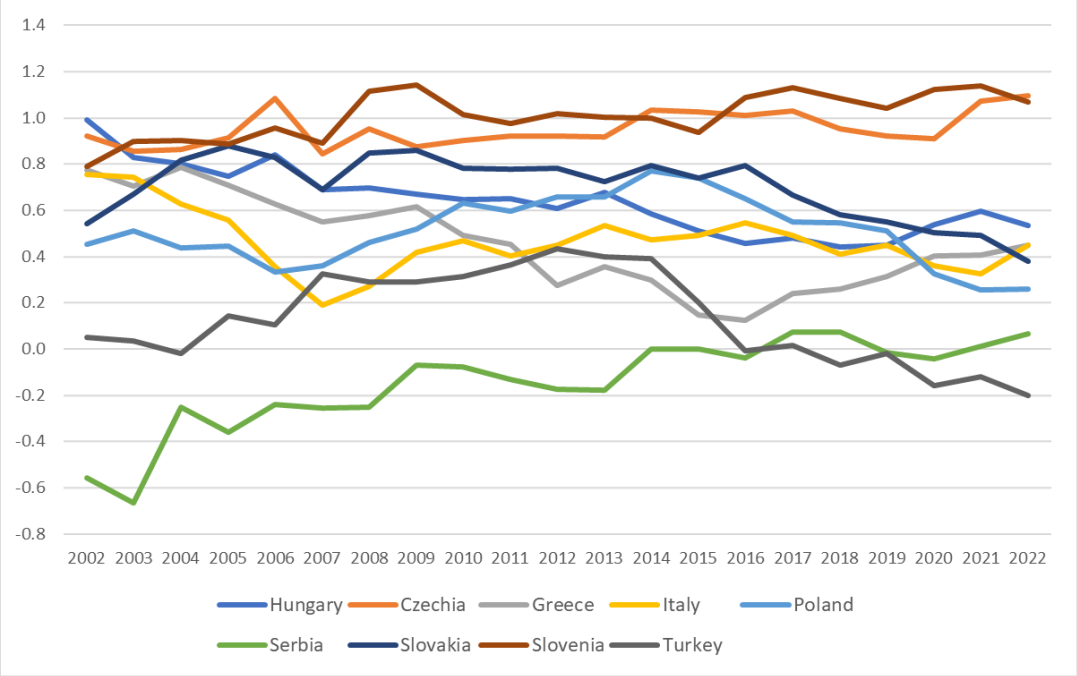


Figure 16 - Government Effectiveness measured by World Bank's WGI (2022-2022) ***

*Government Effectiveness captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies. Estimate gives the country's score on the aggregate indicator, in units of a standard normal distribution, i.e., ranging from approximately -2.5 to 2.5.
**2001 is not covered in the data; therefore, we omitted 2000, too, to avoid disruptions in the trendline.

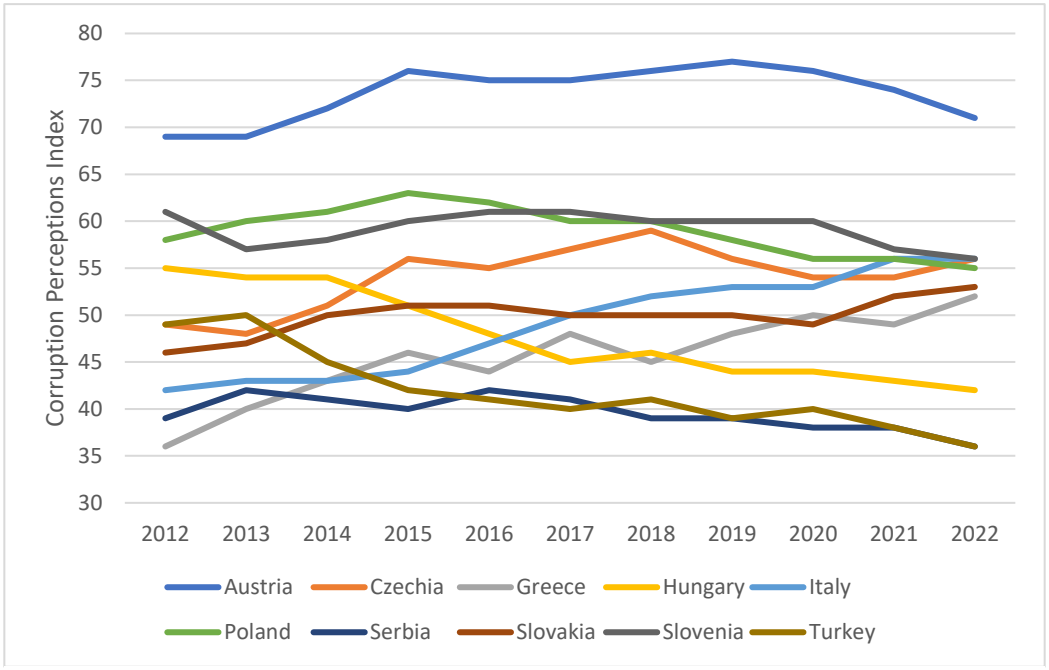


*Figure 17. Corruption Perceptions Index in selected countries (2012-2022)**

* Expressed on a 0-100 scale where higher values indicate larger resistance against corruption. Transparency International revised the methodology of the CPI in 2012, therefore, results before and after this date are not comparable.[10]

[10] For further details, see: See:
https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pressrelease/2012_CPIUpdatedMethodology_EMBARGO_EN.pdf

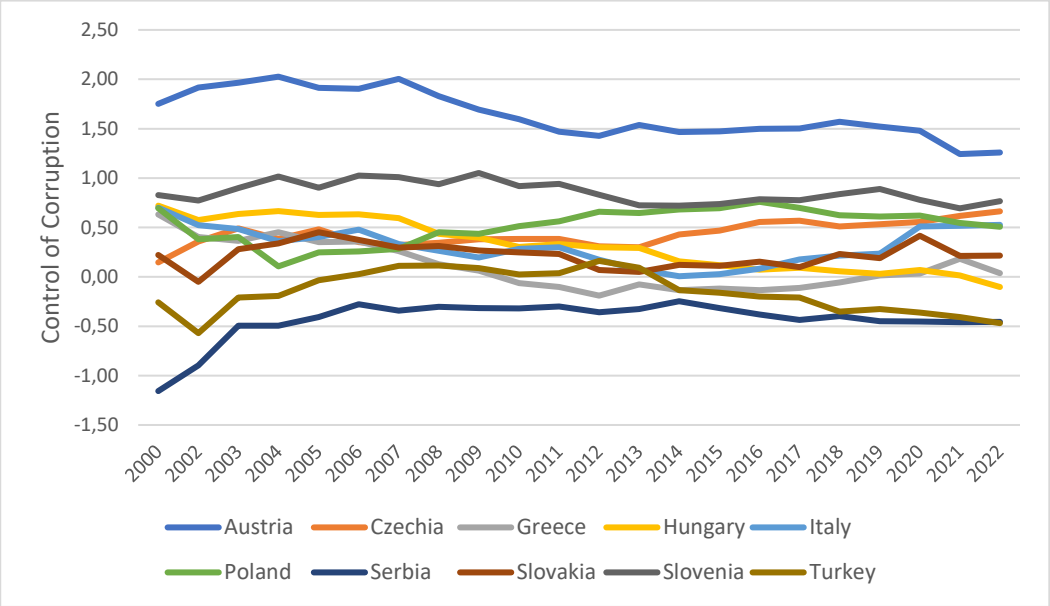


*Figure 18. WGI Control of Corruption Index (2000-2022)**

*Reflects perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests. Estimate of governance (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).

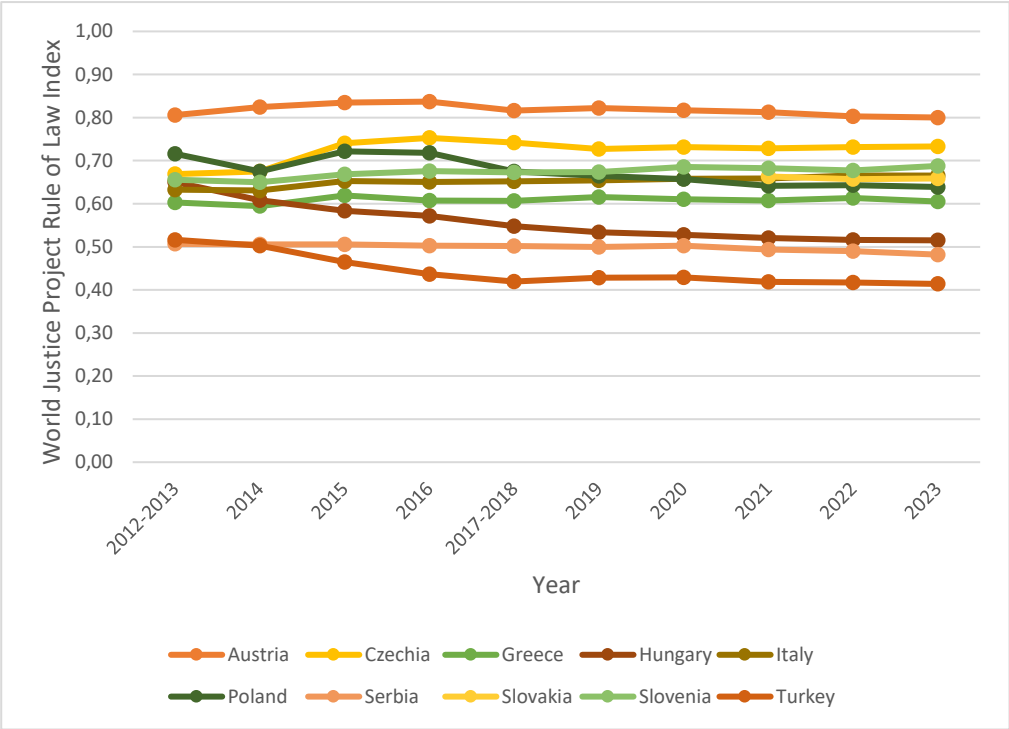


*Figure 19. World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2012-2023)**

*On the Rule of Law Index, 1 signifies the highest score (strong rule of law) and 0 signifies the lowest score (weak rule of law).

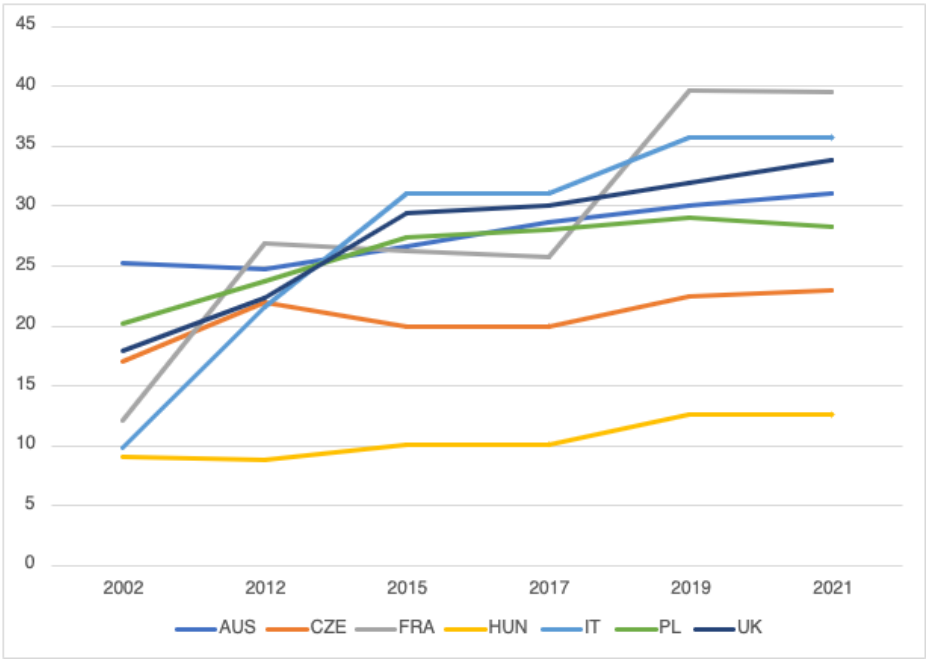


*Figure 20. The share of female politicians in the lower houses of the national parliaments**

*Source: OECD: Women parliamentarians. https://data.oecd.org/inequality/women-in-politics.htm

12. Appendix B: Text Analysis

Appendix B.1. Building the AUTHLIB index

The aim of the text analysis is to develop a method that can distinguish between different subtypes of illiberalism—such as nationalism, religious fundamentalism, or villainization of political opponents. We also wanted a measure that was sensitive to differences between political actors in different countries and could measure those differences across policy areas. On a conceptual level, our methodological approach is grounded in AUTHLIB's operationalization of illiberalism elaborated in Work Package 2. We use this approach to frame the policy area reports. We can place illiberal actors in different countries on the same liberal-illiberal scale and therefore compare them directly. Findings from the text analysis confirm some of the patterns identified in the policy sections regarding the depth, extent, and type of illiberal discourse present across the seven countries examined in this project.

The text analysis is based upon two major elements. First, we constructed eight **dictionaries**. Two are composed of terms that indicate a liberal and illiberal discourse, building on work by Maerz and Schneider (2020) and Schafer (2023). We identify *primary* and *secondary* qualities of illiberalism. The primary type of illiberalism refers to anti-minority, otherizing, and overall uncivil, non-rational rhetoric. Terms indicative of an illiberal discourse might be used when referring to a moral or ethnic other who are framed as not being a legitimate member of the polity. Words matching this discourse include "against the nation", "traitor", "disease", and "perverted". Such words might be used in an anti-Islamic discourse or in the constructions of refugees and immigrants as dangerous security risks. In essence, these are terms that refer to the construction of minority groups as deviant, inferior, and/or undeserving others, while prioritizing the dominant in-group (Van Dijk, 1993).

Regarding the policy dictionaries, we consulted national policy experts for each country and policy area. We work with narrowly defined policy areas. For instance, the foreign policy dictionary is based on terms related to the EU, Europe, treaties, and national security. Immigration and citizenship centers on migration, asylum, and the border. Gender is composed of two sub-dictionaries: traditional gender roles (such as male, female, mother) and queer identities (such as transgender and homosexual). The logic is that illiberal discourse is different depending on the kind of gender identity being discussed: with the former, illiberal speakers

would talk about the importance of the Christian nation, and traditional, hierarchical family structures, with the latter, illiberal speakers would adopt an otherizing, villainizing discourse.

The second element is **word embeddings.** We use a word embeddings approach to model the language of illiberal party actors in all of the AUTHLIB countries (Austria, Czechia, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom). Word embeddings encode the similarity between words based on the frequency of their co-occurrence in usage. Because we are interested in the speech of liberal and illiberal political elites, training sets for the word embedding models were divided by actor and time. This way the word embedding model captures the usage and meaning of words for each actor are sensitive to changes in actors' position or word usage.

We trained the word embedding models on parliamentary speeches of party members—both in government and opposition—for time periods when illiberals were in power. For Italy, this is the first Conte government (focusing on M5S and Lega). For Austria, we look at the First Kurz government (FPÖ and ÖVP). In Czechia, we are interested in the period of the Babiš government. In the United Kingdom, we focus on the period when the Conservatives were in government, particularly since 2021 as they have been moving farther to the right. In France, an illiberal party has never been in power, so we compare the FN/RN with other more mainstream parties like *En Marche.* For Hungary, the time covered is 2010-2022 when Fidesz—an avowedly illiberal party—was in power. We divided the corpus into the government (Fidesz and KDNP), the liberal opposition (MSZP, DK, LMP, Parbeszed, and Liberalisok), and the far-right party (Jobbik). Likewise, in Poland, we have data since 2016. We divide the speeches into three corpora: the government (PiS and PrzywrócićPrawo), the far right opposition ("Konfederacja", "Kukiz15", "UPR"), and the more liberal opposition ("KO","KP-PSL", "Lewica", "Teraz"). We chose to group sections of the opposition in the Hungarian and Polish cases because some very small parties have very few speeches, which we were concerned would not be enough data to get reliable estimates on our AUTHLIB Index. Such concerns, however, might not have been justified. While data scarcity is an issue with parties who do not speak much in parliament, we found that only occasionally does this produce measurement issues. The issue of data scarcity is an ongoing avenue of development for the AUTHLIB Index.

The goal of the AUTHLIB Index is to measure whether the discourse of illiberal parties in power is, in fact, more illiberal, and how. We used the text2vec GloVe algorithm (Selivanov et al., 2022) to train the word embedding models. After trialing different word windows, dictionaries, and bootstrap values, we concluded upon a model with a 10-word window and 100 bootstraps. The corpora normally used to train word embeddings are extremely large, containing billions of words. Our corpora are relatively smaller. We, therefore, use a bootstrapping method shown by Rodman (2020) to stabilize model outputs and make analysis less vulnerable to bias produced by single documents.

To measure the similarity between words in the low-dimensional space of word embeddings we used **cosine similarity.** Specifically, we look at the cosine similarity between the set of words in our dictionaries. The cosine similarity between the liberal and illiberal dictionaries and each policy dictionary represents the degree to which each policy area is defined by a liberal or illiberal discourse. For example, when immigration terms used by the Hungarian government show a stronger similarity with the illiberal dictionary, this indicates that Fidesz and KDNP are more likely to mobilize an illiberal discourse when discussing immigration. We took the difference between the cosine similarity of the liberal and illiberal dictionaries to produce a single score for each policy area.

Validating the Model

Using a semi-supervised approach like word embeddings plus dictionaries to build a liberal-illiberal dimension begs the question: how do we know the word associations on which the dimension is based reflect meaningful differences in reality? How do we know these are more than "just words"? Can we be sure the association between dictionaries is capturing real discursive and policy positions? For this, we provide evidence of the model's internal and external validity.

Internal Validity. Examining internal validity requires us to identify whether the dictionary terms we chose belong to distinct discourses. Therefore, we looked at the "core" or "primary" liberal and illiberal terms. These are terms we deemed to be essential to either side of our liberal-illiberal dimension. Such terms should demonstrate a high level of consistency with their own group (i.e. liberal terms should cluster), and very little with their opposite. In usage this means that liberal terms are very likely to be used together in a speech and would very

rarely accompany illiberal terms. The figure below shows the "core" terms used in the model that generated the estimates for this report.

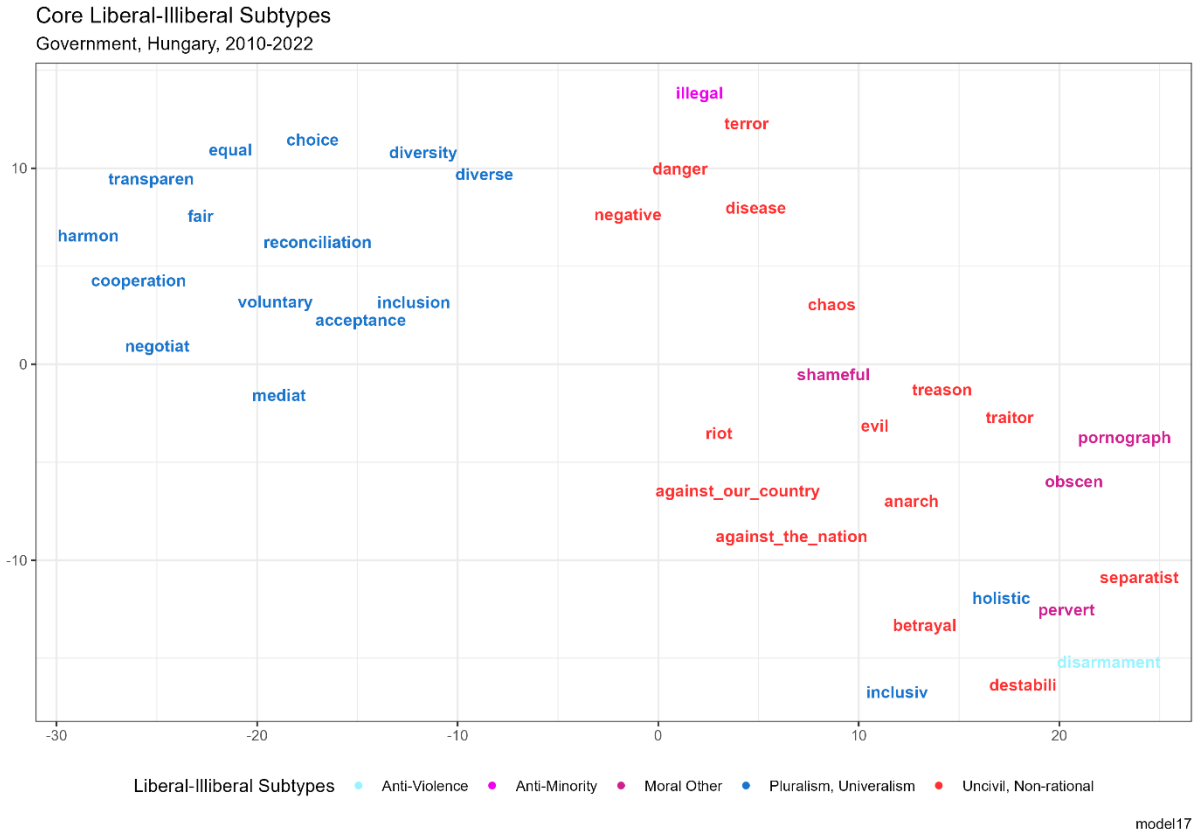


Figure 21. Core Liberal and Illiberal Dictionary Terms

Liberal terms—such as "acceptance", "voluntary", "reconciliation", and "negotiation"—form a tight cluster in the top left. Illiberal terms—"against the nation", "betrayal", "destabilize", "disease", and "terror"—cluster on the bottom right, though not as closely. We can see some words used in unexpected ways, indicating some areas for improvement with our dictionary approach. Fidesz appears to use words like "holistic", "inclusive", and "disarmament" in a negative, illiberal context. Such terms are likely an attempt at Fidesz to give a positive spin to their position on the Ukraine-Russia war, and cultural issues important to Hungarians who vote for them. Overall, these two dictionaries appear to define distinct discourses, and therefore we can be reasonably certain of the internal validity of our approach.

External Validity. The next question is whether our method travels across countries and cases, and whether it captures meaningful patterns in the world observed by political scientists. Therefore, to test the external validity of the AUTHLIB Index, we compare it to two different expert surveys. We use two validated measures for liberalism-illiberalism. The first is from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). Their GALTAN score measures parties' views on social and cultural values on a 0 to 10 scale (Jolly et al. 2022). The low end of the index (here, starting at zero) indicates that parties favor expanded personal freedoms, such as abortion rights, and same-sex marriage. On the other end more "traditional" or "authoritarian" parties means that parties prefer order, traditional, stability and the role of government as a moral authority. The second is the Anti-Pluralism Index from V-Dem (Lindberg et al. 2022). This index measures the extent to which a party shows a lack of commitment to democratic norms prior to elections.

We directly compare these two expert survey measures with our AUTHLIB Index. The AUTHLIB Index is the aggregate, averaged score of each of the policy areas. If our index correlates with these expert surveys, that is a good indicator of its external validity.

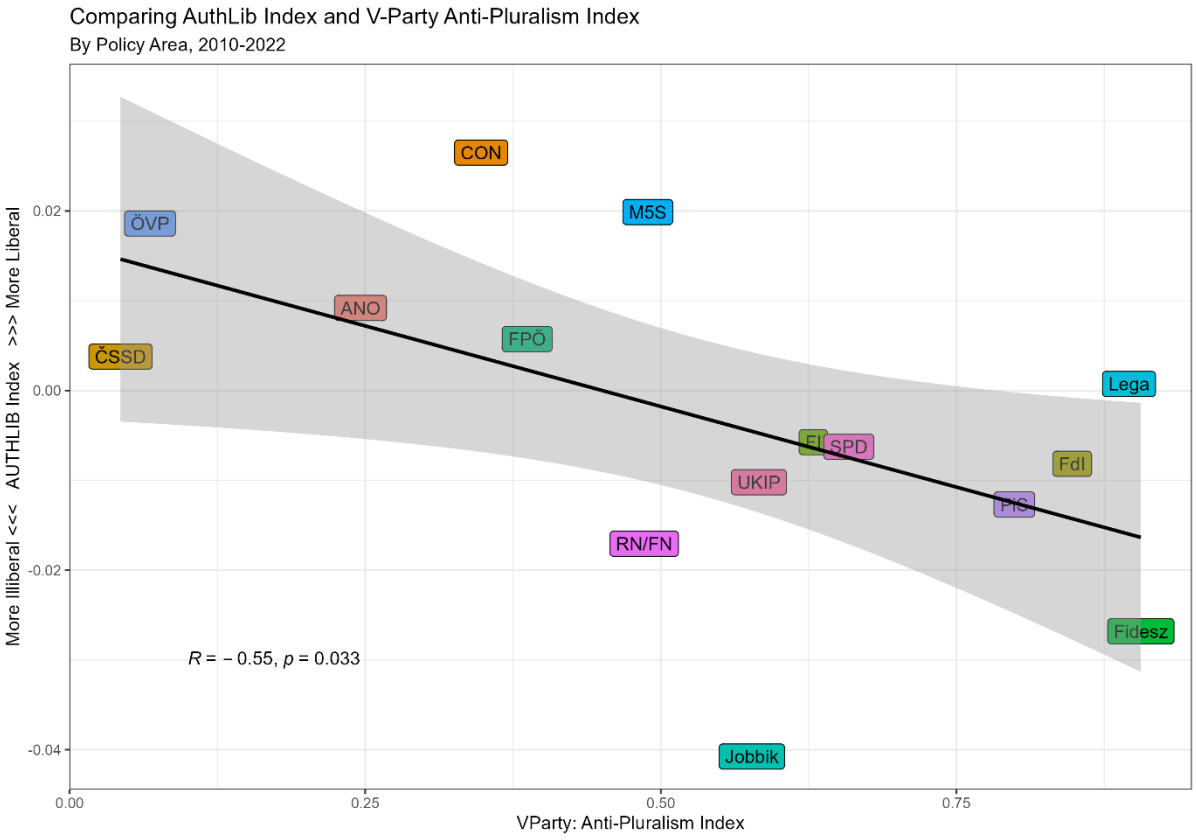


Figure 22. Comparing AuthLib Index and V-Party Anti-Pluralism Index

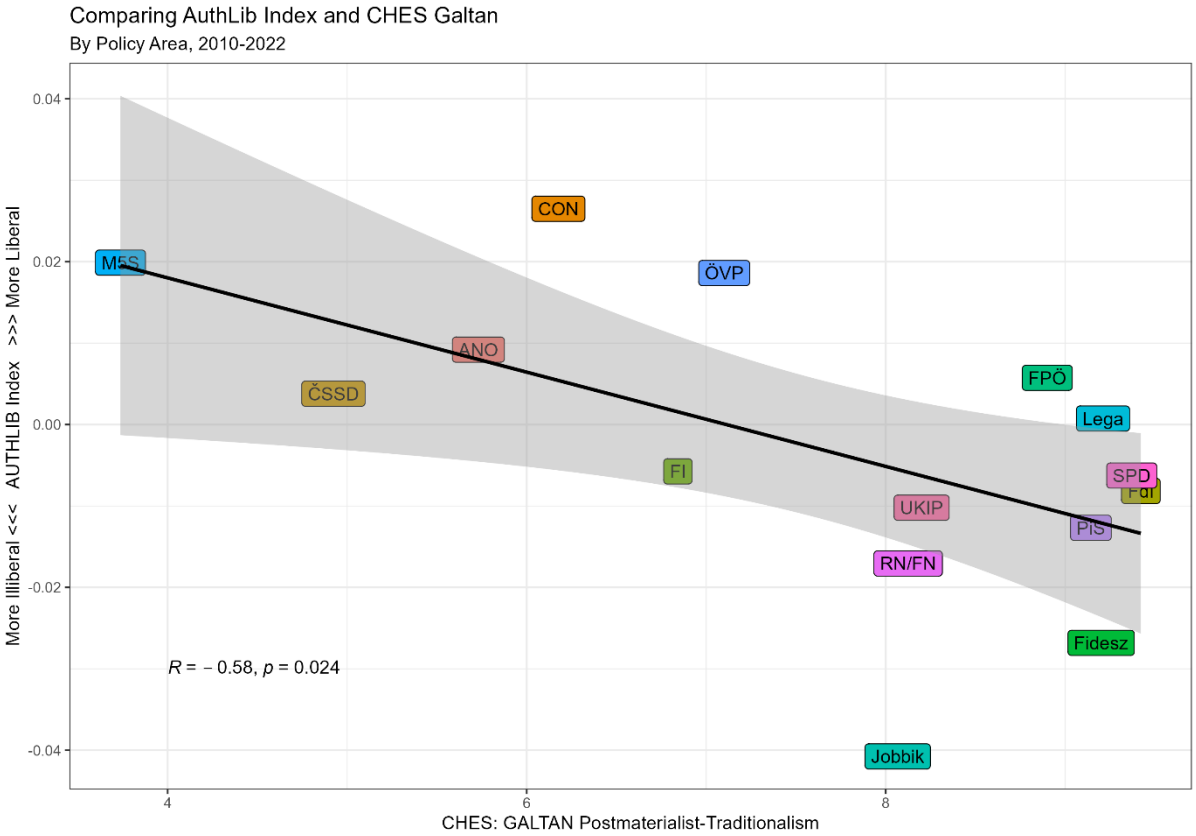


Figure 23. Comparing AuthLib Index and CHES Galtan

The AUTHLIB Index correlates well with both the CHES and V-Party measure. The correlation is strong (greater than .60) and significant at the 0.05 level. We can see a cluster of parties at the most illiberal end of each the measure. Possibly, our measure is harsh on Fidesz, giving it a more illiberal score than CHES and V-Party. On the other hand, the AUTHLIB Index tends to give Lega a more liberal score. However, we argue that Fidesz, having been in power for over a decade and dismantled many democratic institutions, is less restrained in speech and action and therefore genuinely more illiberal than a party like Lega.

Certain outliers are informative of the goals of each index. The ÖVP is an outlier when comparing with the CHES index, whereas M5S is an outlier when comparing with VParty. This reflects the expert opinion that ÖVP is conservative, but not explicitly anti-pluralist, and M5S is populist but not socially conservative. Our AUTHLIB Index combines qualities of each.

Because the AUTHLIB Index aggregates attitudes on several dimensions—gender, ethnic minorities, the EU, social policy, and education—it reflects parties' cultural conservativism as well as exclusivist nationalism. Moreover, Jobbik is an outlier in both comparisons. Aggregate scores over a long period of time (2010-2022) disguise the discursive shifts of the party over time, as seen in Figure 24. In the last few years, Jobbik's discourse has come to more closely resemble the rest of the opposition.

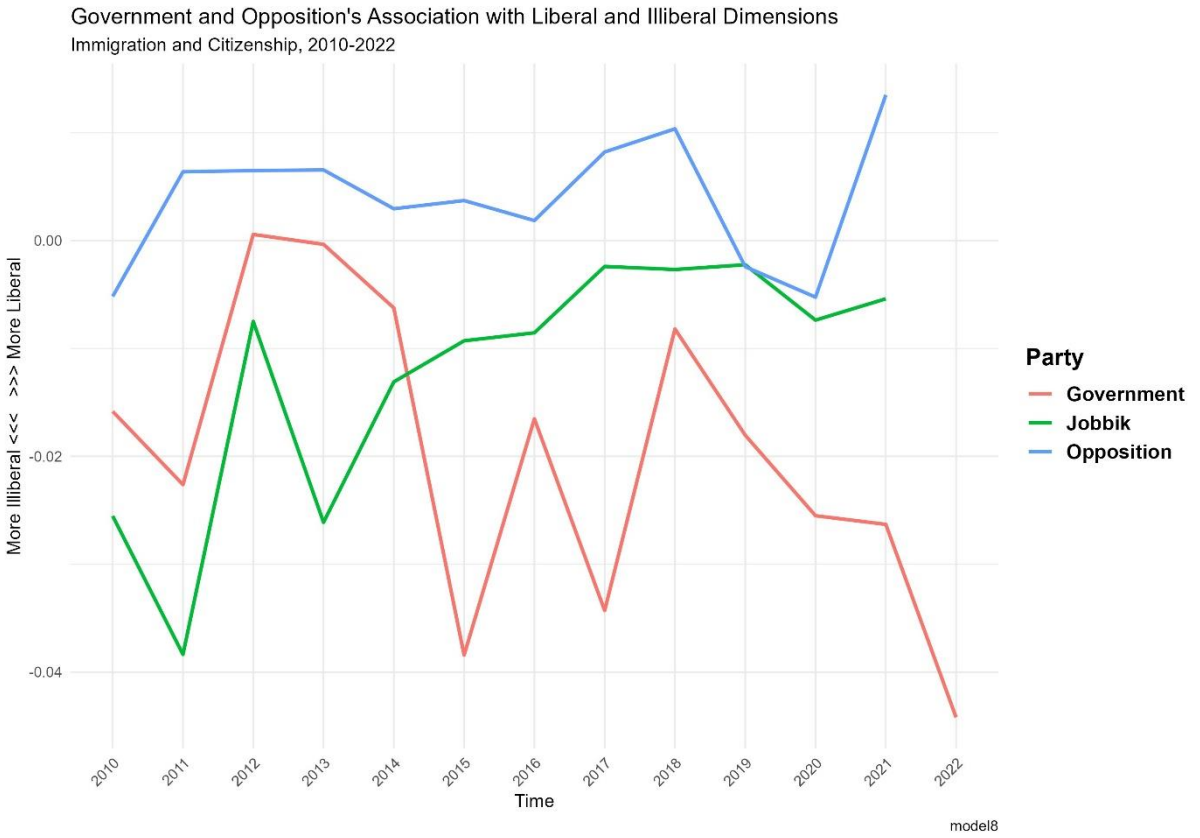


Figure 24. Over time developments of Hungarian government and opposition

Appendix B.2. Text Analysis for Foreign Policy Section

For the former approach, they used word embeddings to identify the semantic association between the three discourses and selected foreign policy terms such as *European Union* using cosine similarity measures and normalizing it between -1 (complete disassociation) and 1

(complete association). To construct the dictionary of illiberal terms the researchers used the words “sovereign”, “respect,” “independence” for ethnopluralism since associating any of these terms is likely to imply a rejection of the EU’s influence in defense of a homogeneous national interest. For example, if a document indicates that the country expects the EU to respect its sovereign decision to buy military equipment from country X or indicates that it takes independent positions from the EU towards country X, these could be considered an ethnopopulist argument. For nationalism, they used the terms “migration,” “identity,” and “nation” since these words might indicate the country’s political stance on national in-group and out-group distinctions as a security matter. For instance, if the document indicates protecting national identity vis-à-vis further EU integration, this could be considered a nationalist argument. For populism, they used the terms “culture”, “unity”, and “people” since these terms might refer to the people of the country as an authentic, homogeneous unit to be protected.

After constructing the dictionary for illiberal terms (see Table 5), their semantic relationship to the term *European Union (EU)* has been measured. Additionally, the researchers also tested the relationship between the term migration and immigration with illiberal terms. By focusing on those two highly salient foreign policy issues, we are able to better understand whether populist and/or nationalist leader engage in any form of populist policy-making at the international level in either content or in practices as well as the direction of engagement.

List of Illiberal Terms			
Ethnopopulist terms	**Nationalist terms**	**Populist terms**	**Illiberal migration-related terms**
Sovereign	Nation	People	Threat
Respect	Migration	Unity	Illegal
Independent	Identity	Culture	Destabilize

Table 5. List of terms by category

Document	N of Paragraphs
Austria-2001	31
Austria-2013	55
Czech-2003	44
Czech-2011	53
Czech-2015	59
Czech-2023	45
France-2008	623
France-2013	328
France-2017	8
France-2022	94
Hungary-2004	90
Hungary-2012	55
Hungary-2020	121
Italy-2015	142
Poland-2007	84
Poland-2014	33
Poland-2020	115
UK-2008	142
UK-2009	412
UK-2010	81
UK-2015	176
UK-2021	268

Table 6. N of Paragraphs by document - Foreign Policy Analysis

13. Appendix C: Summary table of the most important findings per policy area

Policy area	Austria (FPÖ)	Czechia (ANO, SPD)	France (RN)	Hungary (Fidesz)	Italy (Lega, FdI)	Poland (PiS)	UK (BC, DUP, UKIP)
Position in party system	Junior position in government	Government, Dominant in party system	Dominant in party system	State	Junior position in government, Senior position in government	Government	Government, Dominant in party system, Dominant outside party system
Social Policy	Unification of social insurance Exclusion of immigrants from social transfers Family-focused policies Subsidies to poor pensioners Work incentives			Promoting families with above-average income Stopping private pension scheme Restrictive Labour Code Public works Minimum wage increase	Early retirement option for women ("opzione donna") Incentives for the labour market integration of youth and mothers Deserving-undeserving distinction	Universal benefits Decreased pension age Promotion of single mothers Pro-natalist and anti-child poverty policies Mothers' early retirement Minimum wage increase	
Gender	Abolishing tax-deductibility of childcare and child allowance Child support geared toward high-income families Reduced budget to women's organizations	Maintaining flexible parental benefit scheme Refusal to introduce parental leave Reluctance to legalize same-sex marriage	Abortion policy based on "real choice" Promotion of working mothers Pragmatic position on same-sex marriages Promotion of anti-Muslim attire legislation	Enshrining traditional family and heterosexual marriage in the constitution "Child Protection Law" in 2021 Hostility towards LBTQI communities and women's organizations	**Lega:** Early retirement for women Restricting abortion access Increased natality benefits **FdI:** Criminalization of surrogacy Refusal to register children of same-sex couples	Early retirement for women "LGBT-free" zones in several cities Restriction of abortion rights Defunding women's organizations	
Education and culture	Promotion of German language Subsidization of regional customs and traditions	SPD: promotion of Christian and European culture	Promotion of national history and language school curricula	Centralization of national curricula	Promotion of private sector involvement in culture and the	Shifting education system back to 8+4 years	

	Increasing funding for public broadcasting	as opposed to "foreign" culture	Voluntary "patrimonial service" French flag on all public buildings	Nationalization of school management and budget Setting up alternative cultural institutions Defunding independent cultural initiatives Increased funding to public media	management of public sites	Excluding LGBTQ NGOs from education Reinstalment and reinterpretation of Polish history in curriculum Setting up alternative cultural institutions Increased funding to public media	
Foreign policy	Support for joint military and border defence at the EU level Opposition to EU immigration and monetary policies 2018: Abstaining to vote on the UN's Global Compact for Migration Mobilization against EU sanctions against Russia	Pragmatic trade relations with Russia Formally leaving pro-Western Strategic Framework, while remaining Europeanized in practice Fostering Chinese investment Strengthening ties with Germany and Hungary	Advocacy for protectionist trade policies Development aid to lower probability of immigration Support for military interventions to fight terrorism Rejection of the "Washington consensus" and liberal international order, pro-Russia stances	"Eastern opening" – intensified relations with Turkey, China, Russia, and CIS states 2013-2017: visa bond scheme to attract foreign investors 2018: joining the Turkic Council Threatening to veto EU policies on migration, sanctions against Russia, aid to Ukraine	**Lega-M5S:** Implicit support to Russia Confrontational stance in multilateral organizations Joining Chinese BRI in 2019 Resistance towards EU migration policies **FdI:** Weakening ties to China Alliance with other illiberal actors in Europe (Vox, Fidesz) Support for EU aid to Ukraine	Atlanticist, pro-NATO orientation maintained Anti-EU discourse Vetoing EU refugee quota policy and banking union Strong anti-Russian and anti-German rhetoric	
Immigration and citizenship				21 amendments to the Asylum Act – increasingly restricted access Extending police power through Police Act and Act on National Defence	Forbidding the landing of several rescue ships to Italy during 2018-2019 2023: Memorandum with Albania to relocate migrants	2021: instalment of razor-wire fences on parts of its border with Belarus	2022: UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership –› annulled by the Supreme Court in 2023

				2015: Construction of border fence on the Serbian border 2018: Act to criminalize aiding “illegal migrants”			2023: Immigration Bill –› points-based system to evaluate asylum claims