
Explaining Access to Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe

ABSTRACT Against the backdrop of international migration and the rise of right-wing populism, debates on citizenship policies intensified. This article seeks to explain why some Central and Eastern European countries adopted more inclusive access to nationality rules for non-ethnic immigrants than others. Encompassing the period from 1990 to 2014, the analysis focuses on four factors: left-right ideological position of governments, electoral strength of far-right parties, the size of expatriate/kin minority populations, and the importance of national minority issues. Using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis, the article found that strong far-right parties, important national minority issues, and sizable expatriate/kin minority populations all contributed to restrictive citizenship policies in Central and Eastern Europe. However, none of these factors were necessary or sufficient. Meanwhile, inclusive access to nationality rules were adopted in those countries where far-right parties failed to register important electoral successes and national minority issues were relatively insignificant.

KEYWORDS citizenship policy, Central and Eastern Europe, national minorities, kin minorities

INTRODUCTION

It has been claimed that national citizenship is being gradually replaced by “a more universal model of membership, anchored in deterritorialized notions of persons’ rights” (Soysal, 1994, p. 3). However, despite growing globalization and the development of the international human rights regime, the world is still divided into mutually exclusive jurisdictions of sovereign states. The nation-state continues to be the main form of political governance, with the protection of human rights seen as one of its constitutive principles (Joppke, 1999b, p. 4). The resilience of the nation-state means that the implementation of full individual rights is inseparable from the citizenship status. Only citizens participate in the democratic process on the national level, enjoy full benefits of the welfare state, and have unrestricted access to public sector employment. Even more importantly, citizenship has a large symbolic value in that it confirms full membership in the national community. From the perspective of the state, citizenship remains an important tool for immigrant integration while the naturalization of foreigners can also relieve the shortage of workers and provide support for pension systems (Howard, 2009, pp. 6–8).

Despite their substantial implications for both individuals and the state, citizenship policies have attracted relatively modest scholarly attention. Significantly, comparative analyses of citizenship policies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are even rarer. Although the overall Eastern European tendency toward ethnicized citizenship regimes has been observed by many authors (e.g., Howard [2009]; Dumbrava [2014]), there is

substantial variation in the inclusiveness of citizenship policies between different countries in the region. While in most Western European countries recent changes in access to citizenship rules were primarily seen as an adjustment to the increasing number of immigrants, CEE countries present an interesting case of changing and varying citizenship policies in the context of low immigration. Therefore, analyzing and explaining access to nationality rules in the CEE region has the potential to generate new insights on citizenship policies and their determinants.

Drawing on the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) Access to Nationality dimension, this article looks for the explanation to the varying degrees of inclusiveness of access to nationality rules¹ for non-ethnics in the ten CEE countries that joined the EU in the first decade of the 21st century—Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The similarities between their individual post-1990 trajectories make CEE countries a suitable target for cross-national comparisons. After the end of communist rule, all of these countries started implementing democratic and market reforms, as well as seeking EU accession. As EU and NATO candidate countries and eventual members, these countries were highly receptive of Western influences in questions as varied as economic management, human rights, and—in some cases—citizenship policies.²

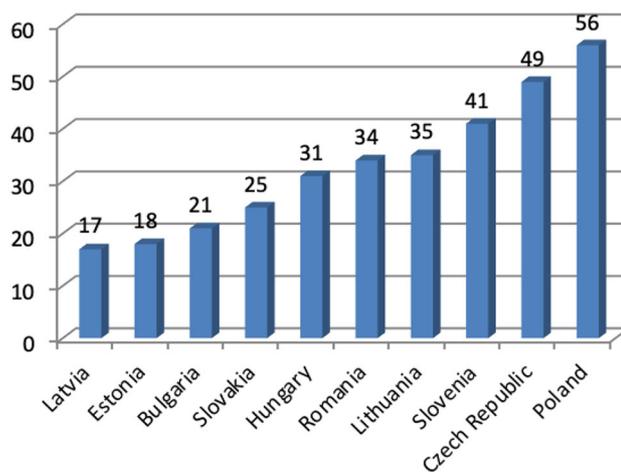


FIGURE 1. 2014 MIPEX Access to Nationality scores in CEE countries.

1. Citizenship policy contains a set of legal and administrative rules that govern the process of citizenship acquisition and loss. Among other relevant elements, inclusive (liberal) citizenship regimes tolerate multiple nationality, adopt a relatively short minimum residence period, and have a clearly defined and nondiscretionary naturalization procedure. In contrast, restrictive citizenship policy would entail the requirement for foreign nationals to renounce their first citizenship, a long minimum residence period, a discretionary naturalization procedure, and highly challenging language and civic integration tests.

2. The study sample does not include non-EU or/and nondemocratic countries in the Balkans and beyond. Since EU membership and the functioning of democratic institutions are important contextual factors of citizenship policies, it would have been necessary to include them in the explanatory model. However, the QCA design would not have allowed me to do this as it places clear limits on how many variables can be included given the sample size. Also, Croatia is not included in the study as its path to EU membership was longer than in the ten CEE countries included in the study.

While the “Westernization” of CEE societies could have been expected to lead to the convergence of their citizenship regimes, this did not materialize. The main research question is therefore the following: Why did some CEE countries adopt more inclusive access to nationality rules for non-ethnic immigrants than others? Figure 1 shows CEE countries’ 2014 MIPEX Access to Nationality scores. The values range from 17 to 56 (in a 0 to 100 scale), where high figures signify a liberal access to citizenship regime for non-ethnic immigrants.³

Encompassing the period from 1990 to 2014, the analysis focuses on four factors: the left–right ideological position of governments, the electoral strength of far-right parties, the size of expatriate and kin minority populations, and the importance of national minority issues. The main research method is fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA). The study found that those CEE countries where far-right parties failed to register important electoral successes and national minority issues were relatively insignificant had more inclusive access to nationality rules for immigrants in 2014 (Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia). Also, the QCA identified three different causal paths leading to restrictive access to citizenship regimes. The analysis pointed to the factors that rarely featured in previous cross-national citizenship studies. Importantly, the study found that sizable kin minorities and important national minority issues lead to restrictive access to citizenship rules, provided that other relevant factors are in place. Also, despite the obvious differences in agenda of far-right parties in Western and Eastern Europe, the analysis suggests that these parties have a similarly restrictive effect on citizenship policies in both parts of the continent. More generally, the article emphasizes the importance of analyzing multiple combinatorial causality in the study of citizenship regimes.

PREVIOUS COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON CITIZENSHIP POLICIES

The scientific field of comparative citizenship was galvanized by Rogers Brubaker’s work on citizenship policies in France and Germany. In his classic book *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Brubaker showed how differing definitions of citizenship have been shaped and sustained by distinctive and deeply rooted understandings of nationhood (Brubaker, 1992, pp. x–xi). Brubaker’s main argument was that the state-centered and assimilationist understanding of nationhood in France led to the adoption of an inclusive citizenship policy, whereas the ethnocultural and “differentialist” conception of German nationhood conditioned a more restrictive type of citizenship regime. While Brubaker’s study sparked an increase in scholarly attention to citizenship studies, his conclusions have often been an object of criticism—especially after the liberalization of Germany’s citizenship law in 2000. In particular, Joppke (1999a) and Weil (2001) have noted that Brubaker’s historical account of citizenship regimes sheds little light on the determinants of recent developments in nationality laws.

3. Some CEE countries apply different access to nationality rules for non-ethnic immigrants and co-ethnics, with the latter group granted a facilitated path to citizenship. MIPEX Access to Nationality scores only reflect the inclusiveness of citizenship policies for non-ethnic immigrants.

Although Brubaker's analysis led to the renewed scholarly interest in citizenship, it was only in the late 2000s that multi-case, quantitatively oriented comparative citizenship studies started to spring up. One of the first such studies was conducted by Howard (2009), who used his own Citizenship Policy Index (CPI) to explore the differences in citizenship regimes in EU-15 countries. According to Howard, the liberal pattern of citizenship policies observed in France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom is the result of the combination of their colonialist past and early democratization. Howard also concluded that the key factor explaining different citizenship outcomes in shorter perspective is whether public opinion gets "activated" politically by a far-right party or movement. Meanwhile, Koopmans et al. (2012) found strong evidence of path dependence in the form of a powerful effect of the level of immigrant rights (including access to citizenship) in 1980 on subsequent levels. The authors also concluded that a high share of voters of immigrant origin leads to higher subsequent levels of immigrant rights whereas a high vote share of right-wing populist parties has an opposite effect. The summary of the main multi-case comparative citizenship studies⁴ is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Multi-Case Comparative Citizenship Studies

| Study | Cases | Conclusions on determinants of citizenship policies |
|---------------|--|---|
| Weil (2001) | 25 countries (mostly Western): Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States | <i>Determinants of inclusive citizenship:</i> high immigration in the context of "stabilization of borders and of the incorporation of democratic values." <i>Determinants of restrictive citizenship:</i> territorial disputes (instability of borders) or the presence of large diasporas. |
| Howard (2009) | EU-15 countries | <i>Determinants of inclusive citizenship:</i> being a major colonial power, early democratization. <i>Determinants of restrictive citizenship:</i> strong far-right parties or movements. |

(continued)

4. Only those studies that analyze more than five countries and treat citizenship policies as a dependent variable were included in Table 1. The studies that focus on the key policy outcome of nationality laws—naturalization rates—were largely omitted (with a sole exception of Janoski's study, which, among other factors, explores the effect of left-wing parties). Rather than aiming to provide an exhaustive list of studies, the table is meant as a broad overview of existing explanations of citizenship policies.

TABLE 1. Multi-Case Comparative Citizenship Studies (*continued*)

| Study | Cases | Conclusions on determinants of citizenship policies |
|--|--|--|
| Goodman (2009) | EU-15 countries | <i>Determinants of civic integration tests (as part of the naturalization procedure):</i> high volume of non-EU foreign populations within the context of traditional immigrant receiving states, popular pressures to “do something” about immigration. |
| Shevel (2009) | 15 post-Soviet states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan | <i>Determinants of “ethnically tinted” citizenship policies:</i> political majority of ethnic nationalists. <i>Determinants of civic citizenship policies:</i> unintended side effect of contested politics of national identity. |
| Janoski (2010) | 18 (mostly Western) countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States | <i>Determinants of high naturalization rates:</i> colonization and the decline of indigenous population (in the long term); left and green parties along with politically oriented welfare regime types, liberal access to nationality rules (in the short term). |
| Minkenber (2010) | 19 Western countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States | <i>Determinants of inclusive citizenship:</i> church-state separation. <i>Determinants of restrictive citizenship:</i> strong (conservative) Christian democracy. |
| Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel (2012) | 10 Western European countries: Germany, France, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway | <i>Determinants of high levels of immigrant rights (including access to citizenship):</i> high previous level of immigrant rights, high share of voters of immigrant origin. <i>Determinants of low levels of immigrant rights (including access to citizenship):</i> low previous level of immigrant rights, successful right-wing populist parties. |
| Sredanovic (2015) | EU-28 countries | <i>Determinants of restrictive citizenship:</i> incumbency of center-right parties (more so in EU-15 than in new member states) and successful far-right parties (although not a necessary factor). |

(*continued*)

TABLE 1. Multi-Case Comparative Citizenship Studies (*continued*)

| Study | Cases | Conclusions on determinants of citizenship policies |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Hosoki (2017) | 148-174 states (depending on statistical model) | <i>Predictors of short residency length requirements:</i> presence of democratic regime, citizens' membership in international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). <i>Predictors of long residency length requirements:</i> ethnic fractionalization. |
| Koopmans and Michalowski (2017) | 44 countries: EU-28 countries (except for Malta) and Argentina, Australia, Canada, Ghana, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, United States, Venezuela | <i>Determinants of high levels of immigrant rights (including access to citizenship):</i> colonial past, legacy of a settler country, democracy. |
| Shevel (2017) | 15 post-Soviet states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan | <i>Determinants of civic citizenship policies:</i> inability of domestic actors to agree on any other principle, concerns for territorial sovereignty, the goal to expand territorial control (or at least institutionalize influence) beyond existing borders. |
| Hansen and Clemens (2019) | 29 European countries: EU-28 (except for Malta) and Norway, Switzerland | <i>Determinants of inclusive citizenship:</i> positive change in population size. <i>Determinants of restrictive citizenship:</i> successful far-right parties, increase in the foreign-born population, presence of anti-immigrant sentiment. |

Despite the variety of explanations provided, two important limitations of existing comparative citizenship literature need to be mentioned. First, research on citizenship policies in CEE countries is still relatively scarce. As shown in Table 1, most studies either do not cover CEE countries or include them into geographically expansive research designs. However, the unique set of historical, political, and demographic traits found in CEE countries warrants the search for a tailored explanation of their citizenship policies. One of the few authors that focused specifically on the new post-communist states is Oxana Shevel (2009, 2017). In her work on the early development of citizenship policies in post-Soviet countries (including three countries that are covered in this article: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), shows how various domestic factors, such as contested politics of national identity, concerns for territorial sovereignty, and the goal to expand

territorial control beyond existing borders, may lead to the adoption of a civic citizenship regime. Shevel (2017) builds her findings around separate case studies and recognizes that the need to unravel “a systematic set of factors behind the extent of ethnicization of citizenship regimes in new states” is still to be addressed (p. 420). Meanwhile, Costica Dumbrava (2014) made a solid contribution to the literature by mapping the variety of citizenship regimes in CEE as well as analyzing preferential citizenship regulations for co-ethnics. However, comparing citizenship processes in the “West” and the “East” has been much more common than trying to account for the differences between countries in CEE (e.g., Liebich et al., 1995; Howard, 2009; Sievers in Bauböck et al., eds., 2009).

Another important limitation of comparative citizenship literature is its emphasis on separate factors and the resulting inability to fully account for the complexities in the formation of citizenship policies. This issue is particularly common for large-*N* quantitative studies that focus on measuring the strength of association between inclusiveness of access to citizenship and a set of independent variables. What is often missing is the understanding of how various factors combine and interact to lead to inclusive or restrictive citizenship policy outcomes. While some studies formulate conclusions in terms of combinatorial causality (e.g., Weil, 2001; Howard, 2009), none of them have used QCA—the method that is designed to unravel and analyze multiple combinations of factors. As such, QCA allows a focus on the complex sources of citizenship regimes in a way that has not been done previously.

Because most multi-case comparative citizenship studies focus on Western Europe or EU as a whole, some explanations put forward in those studies cannot suitably account for differences between CEE countries. For example, a string of arguments have been made linking the development of citizenship policies in Western Europe to immigration. According to this line of thought, changes in citizenship policy should primarily be interpreted as an adjustment to the challenges and consequences of post-war labor migration (Joppke, 1999a; Bauböck et al., 2007; Goodman, 2009). However, in most countries of the CEE region, post-communist immigration flows have been relatively insignificant. In 2014, eight out of ten CEE countries covered by this study were ranked in the bottom half of EU-28 according to the overall share of non-citizen population (Eurostat, 2021). Only Latvia and Estonia had sizable numbers of non-citizens within their territories—a consequence of a large-scale immigration of Russian speakers during Soviet rule. In six other CEE countries, non-citizen populations were marginal (ranging from 0.3% in Poland to 1.4% in Hungary). The only two CEE countries where post-communist immigration flows may have played a role in the development of citizenship policies were Slovenia (4.7%) and the Czech Republic (4.2%). However, this article will argue that the type of liberal effect that immigration flows in Slovenia and the Czech Republic had on the countries’ citizenship regimes was largely determined by the ethnically homogeneous character of these countries.

Modern histories of CEE countries share a lot of commonalities. Therefore, cross-national differences in access to nationality in the CEE region can hardly be

explained by pointing to historical factors, such as colonialist past (Howard, 2009), nationhood tradition (Brubaker 1992), the time of democratization (Howard, 2009), or the legacy of a settler country (Koopmans & Michalowski, 2017). This is because these factors are either irrelevant for the CEE region (e.g., none of the CEE countries fall into the category of colonial or settler countries), or there is too little variation between different countries of the region (e.g., all CEE countries have strong ethnic nationhood traditions⁵ [Přibáň, 2004, p. 416; Liebich in Bauböck et al., eds., 2009, pp. 27–28]).

However, some of the political variables used in previous comparative citizenship studies could potentially help explain the differences in CEE countries' citizenship regimes. Christian Joppke (2003) claimed that citizenship policy stances are coded in party ideologies. Universalist left-wing parties are expected to support inclusive citizenship policies while the particularistic right favors a more restrictive conception of citizenship. Therefore, the more dominant left parties are, and the more time they spend in government, the more likely it is that access to citizenship rules will be made more inclusive. Empirical research on this subject has produced mixed results (Howard, 2010; Janoski, 2010; Koopmans et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the relevance of political ideology for citizenship policies in CEE countries has not been examined in a multi-*N* comparative citizenship study.

The strength of far-right parties is another factor that has been used to explain citizenship policies in Western European countries (Howard, 2009; Koopmans et al., 2012). According to this argument, far-right parties mobilize anti-immigrant and xenophobic views, causing a rightward shift in the mainstream parties' positions and leading to tougher citizenship policy regulations. Although empirical data in Western European countries support this argument, it is unclear if the same applies for the CEE region. It has been noted that far-right parties in CEE countries are ideologically more extreme but electorally weaker and less stable (Minkenberg in Minkenberg, ed., 2015). The fact that far-right parties in CEE countries are different from their counterparts in Western Europe raises the question of whether their effect on citizenship policies is the same.

5. The dominance of the ethnic nationhood tradition was largely determined by the historical circumstances under which modern CEE nations formed. At the time when national consciousnesses were forming in the CEE region, none of the analyzed CEE states possessed independent statehood. Language, culture, and ethnicity were the key drivers of the CEE national movements in the 19th century, and the key pillars on which their claims to independence from imperial powers were based. However, the fact that CEE nations first came into being as ethnic entities does not mean that civic thinking was nonexistent in these countries. For instance, one of the Czech nation's "fathers," the journalist and democratic activist Karel Havlíček (1820–1856), envisioned the political community as "a voluntary association of free and equal individuals, bound together by a rational rather than an organic bond" (Nedelsky, 2003, p. 92). Meanwhile, Polish nationalism has been described as a discursive field where conflicting ideas on the nation compete and coexist (Zubrzycki, 2001, p. 654). Moreover, despite being guided by deeply rooted nationhood traditions, understandings of nationhood can undergo important changes in time (Janmaat, 2006, pp. 71–72; vom Hau, 2009). It has even been claimed that the post-communist democratic consolidation in the CEE region implied the refashioning of these countries according to the civic model (Kuzio, 2002, p. 35).

The following two hypotheses⁶ are therefore raised:

Hypothesis 1: Long period of left-wing government rule contributes to inclusive access to citizenship rules.

Hypothesis 2: Large average vote share for far-right parties contributes to restrictive access to citizenship rules.

Furthermore, the explanation of citizenship policies in the CEE region could not be presented without taking into account the regional context. It has been claimed that the main trend of citizenship policies in CEE countries has been “a call to kinship,” addressed to kin minorities and former citizens in neighboring states (Sievers in Bauböck et al., eds., 2009, p. 455). More generally, it has been argued that for liberal citizenship rules to be possible, the borders of the state must coincide with the boundaries of the nation (Joppke, 2003, p. 437). To support his argument, Joppke uses the example of Germany where the liberalization of citizenship legislation happened only after the German reunification in 1990. Before reunification, liberalization of access to citizenship for foreigners was precluded due to the dominance of an ethnically-defined citizenship that was seen as “the bridge to national unity and expression of (West) Germany’s homeland obligations toward the ethnic German diasporas in communist Eastern Europe” (Joppke, 2003, p. 438). Similarly, Weil (2001) claimed that the presence of sizable diasporas makes the liberalization of citizenship policy “unthinkable” (p. 34). Joppke (2003) claims that although a citizenship law that is generous to both immigrants and expatriates/kin minorities living abroad is theoretically possible, in practice either ethnicization (inclusive toward expatriates/kin minorities while restrictive toward immigrants) or de-ethnicization (restrictive toward expatriates/kin minorities and inclusive toward immigrants) prevails.

These studies provide enough grounds to hypothesize that policies of the sending/kin states toward their expatriates and kin minorities are closely linked to access to nationality rules. Also, the kind of citizenship policy that the sending or kin state adopts toward its expatriates and kin minorities is likely to depend on the size of these communities. Countries with large expatriate and kin populations should have stronger incentives to ethnicize their citizenship policies, and are therefore more likely to adopt restrictive access to nationality rules for foreigners. The following hypothesis is raised:

Hypothesis 3: The presence of large expatriate and kin populations living in foreign countries contributes to restrictive access to citizenship rules.

The second attribute of the CEE region that is worth considering in the context of its citizenship policies is national minority issues. Much like in the case of expatriate and kin populations living abroad, national minority issues may play an important role as

6. Since this study seeks to unravel combinatorial causality, it would be appropriate to formulate hypotheses in combinatorial terms. However, in the absence of previous literature that could be used to describe expected causal paths, the hypotheses refer to the workings of individual factors.

a region-specific factor, despite having received very little attention in previous literature on citizenship policies.

In his classic study on nationalism, Brubaker (1996) noted that the civic model of the state—“where ethnicity and nationality are not supposed to have any public significance—may have the best chances of working in the states that most closely approximate ethnically homogeneous nation-states, notably in the Czech Republic and Slovenia” (p. 105). If ethnic homogeneity has been seen as conducive to the civic model of the state, national minority issues can be viewed as a factor that fosters the ethnic understanding of nationhood. Brubaker (1992) has argued that in the Wilhelmine era (1890–1918) the “ethnocultural strand in German self-understanding was reinforced by the intensifying nationality struggle between Germans and Poles—both groups citizens of the German state—in the Prussian east” (p. 11). Having unsuccessfully tried to assimilate and secure the political loyalty of its Polish minority, the German state embarked on open discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, “treating ethnic Germans and ethnic Poles differently in an effort to ‘strengthen Germanism’” (Brubaker, 1992, p. 15). This serves as an example of how national minority issues can reinforce an ethnic understanding of nationhood—the understanding that finds its expression in restrictive access to citizenship rules for non-ethnics (Brubaker, 1992; Koning, 2011). Moreover, the association between ethnic fractionalization and long minimum residency requirements has been detected in a recent quantitative study (Hosoki, 2017).

Drawing on the existing literature, the following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis 4: The presence of important national minority issues contributes to restrictive access to citizenship rules.

MEASUREMENT

The last two decades have seen the proliferation of indices measuring access to citizenship (e.g., Howard’s CPI, Koopmans et al.’s Indicators of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants Index (ICRI), MIPEX, etc.). Since these indices have been shown to strongly correlate with one another, the usefulness of having a multitude of different measures for seemingly the same phenomenon has been questioned (Bauböck & Helbling, eds., 2011). The implications of choosing any of these indices of citizenship policies therefore seem unclear. Trying to come to terms with this issue, Helbling (2011) concludes that “the usefulness of an indicator can only be evaluated in the light of a specific research question” (p. 31).

This article draws on MIPEX Access to Nationality scores to measure the inclusiveness of access to citizenship in CEE countries. Access to nationality is one of eight policy dimensions of MIPEX, composed of 19 indicators reflecting both citizenship laws and administrative rules governing the acquisition of citizenship. These indicators are grouped into four dimensions: eligibility (required residence period, birthright citizenship of second-generation migrants, etc.), conditions (naturalization requirements, costs of application, etc.), security of status (discretionary powers of refusal, maximum duration

of procedure, etc.), and dual nationality. The scores for each indicator were given by MIPEX country experts.

There are two main reasons for using the MIPEX Access to Nationality Index in this research. First, MIPEX Access to Nationality measures the outcome variable of this study—inclusiveness of citizenship policies—in an adequate and exclusive manner. Whereas some other citizenship indices incorporate aspects that fall outside of the boundaries of this study, such as migrants' cultural rights (ICRI) or the outcome of citizenship policies (naturalization rates), MIPEX Access to Nationality exclusively deals with citizenship policies. Second, MIPEX Access to Nationality is a comprehensive index that not only covers the legal aspects of citizenship regimes, but reflects the administrative rules of access to citizenship as well (e.g., costs of application, degree of official discretion). The importance of administrative rules for the functioning of the citizenship regime should not be underestimated (Huddleston, 2013). This is particularly relevant given that some of the previous analyses of citizenship regimes in CEE countries have identified a discrepancy between citizenship legislation and the actual practice of granting citizenship (see, e.g., Kusá, 2013, p. 1).

The duration of left-wing government rule was estimated by calculating the percentage of years under left-wing government in the post-communist period.⁷ To establish the ideological position of each government each year, the author used the right–left (RILE) scores of the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) data as well as the assessments found in the academic literature. If the majority of government ministers were appointed by one political party,⁸ that party's RILE score was used to determine the ideological position of the government. If there was no single party with the majority of government ministers, the RILE scores of each government party were weighted by the share of delegated government ministers and added up.⁹ In those rare cases when the government's RILE score clearly deviated from the accepted ideological categorization of constituent party/parties, the qualitative judgment was made on the basis of existing academic literature. For instance, if the RILE scores had been followed, the 1998–2002 minority government of the Czech Social Democratic Party would have been coded as right-wing. Nevertheless, it was coded left-wing in this study due to the accepted view that ČSSD represents the center-left of the Czech political spectrum (e.g., Bakke & Sitter, 2005, p. 246). All instances where qualitative knowledge of cases was favored to RILE scores are marked in the project dataset.

7. The time period varies a little for different countries depending on the starting date of the first democratic government. The government's RILE score was prescribed to a particular post-communist year if that government was operating for more than six months during that calendar year.

8. Data on the composition of governments were taken from Berglund et al. (2013) and the *European Journal of Political Research* "Political Data Yearbook Interactive."

9. The following formula was used to calculate a three-party government's RILE score if there was no single party with the majority of government ministers: (party1 RILE score) × (party's share of government ministers (0.3, 0.4, etc.)) + (party2 RILE score) × (party's share of government ministers) + (party3 RILE score) × (party's share of government ministers).

The average vote share for far-right parties in general elections in the 1990–2014 period was used as an indicator for the strength of the radical right. This variable—estimated as the sum of far-right vote shares divided by the number of general elections—therefore provides a summary measure for the strength of far-right parties during the whole post-communist period, avoiding the overestimation of one-off success stories.¹⁰ The assumption is made that the more sustained electoral power far-right parties have, the bigger direct and indirect policy influence they acquire. This article largely draws on Lenka Bustikova’s categorization of far-right parties in the CEE region (Bustikova in Minkenberg, ed., 2015, p. 60). Once again, in certain rare cases I relied on other academic literature to question the aforementioned attribution of parties to the group of far-right actors (see the project dataset).

To control for the country size, the size of the expatriate and kin population living abroad was measured as a percentage of a country’s home population. Due to the limited data availability, the percentage of expatriate and kin populations was captured at only one point in time for each country, and these time points differed across countries. The assumption is therefore made that any fluctuations in the size of expatriate and kin populations throughout the post-communist period were not large enough to question a country’s attribution to the particular membership set of the QCA analysis. While only reliable data sources were used, almost all of them provided approximate numbers of expatriate and kin populations living abroad rather than precise figures. The numbers used in this study should therefore be taken cautiously.

To assess the importance of national minority issues in each country, data from the European Social Survey (ESS) were used. The percentage of national minority respondents who feel discriminated on at least one of the five grounds—color or race, nationality, religion, language, ethnicity—was estimated for each country. Respondents were treated as members of national minorities if they indicated that they belonged to an ethnic minority group and were born in the country or first came to live in that country more than 20 years ago. To obtain larger sample sizes, pooled cross-sectional data from six survey rounds stretching from 2002 to 2012 were used.¹¹ The discrimination measure was then weighted by the percentage of the population that does not belong to the titular majority.¹²

The operationalization of the last causal condition requires a more detailed explanation as the obvious choice would be to simply measure the size of national minorities in different countries. However, the main interest of this article lies in the policy relevance of national minority issues. The key assumption is that if a country has a sizable national minority that

10. This estimation formula implies that the times when elections occur more frequently acquire a bigger weight than regular times. However, this had little practical implications in this study as all CEE countries showed a relatively high degree of political stability in the post-communist period. Moreover, those rare cases when early general elections were called did not decide the attribution of CEE countries to the set of countries with strong/weak far-right parties.

11. Not all CEE countries participated in all six ESS survey rounds.

12. The average percentage of the nonmajority population in the post-communist period was estimated for each CEE country, using data from three different censuses (the first one taking place around 1990, the second around 2001, and the third around 2011). The importance of national minority issues was estimated using the following formula: (percentage of national minority respondents who feel discriminated × percentage of nonmajority population) ÷ Average percentage of nonmajority population in the enlarged sample of 22 EU countries.

feels discriminated against,¹³ national minority issues are likely to have an effect on the country's policies (including citizenship) and can therefore be categorized as important. It is assumed that the extent to which national minority issues affect citizenship policies depends not only on the size of nonmajority population, but also on the degree of tension that characterizes the majority–minority relationship. ESS discrimination measure is used as a proxy for measuring these ethnic tensions. For example, viewed solely in percentage terms Finns in Sweden and Turks in Germany are similar minority groups, but they generate very different degrees of tension. In the CEE context, the post-communist dynamics of majority–minority relationship in Bulgaria have been seen considerably more problematic than in Romania, despite the fact that the proportion of nonmajority population in the former country is only slightly higher than in the latter¹⁴ (Rechel, 2009).

The quantitative data on the outcome and each causal condition are provided in Table 2.¹⁵

TABLE 2. CEE Countries' Scores on Each Causal Condition and the Outcome

| Country | 2014 MIPEX Access to Nationality | Percentage of years of left-wing government rule | Average percentage of votes for far-right parties in parliamentary elections | Expatriate and kin population living abroad (as percentage of country's population) | Importance of national minority issues |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Bulgaria | 21 | 40 | 3.4 | 40 | 24 |
| Czech Republic | 49 | 44 | 2.5 | 17 | 20.8 |
| Estonia | 18 | 5 | 5.3 | 15 | 64 |
| Hungary | 31 | 48 | 5.1 | 57 | 14.1 |
| Latvia | 17 | 5 | 11.5 | 18 | 99.8 |
| Lithuania | 35 | 45 | 2.2 | 20 | 21.5 |
| Poland | 56 | 32 | 3.9 | 53 | 0.3 |
| Romania | 34 | 68 | 11.2 | 48 | 9.3 |
| Slovakia | 25 | 36 | 8.1 | 37 | 24.1 |
| Slovenia | 41 | 41 | 5 | 25 | 6.5 |

13. Importantly, high degree of subjective discrimination felt by the members of national minority does not necessarily mean that the country in question pursues nationalist policies. Rather, the extent of subjective discrimination is closely related to the type of national minority demands, majority attitudes, ethnic histories, minority size, and many other factors.

14. It is clear that importance of national minority issues is a very difficult concept to measure. One other way to attempt this would be to focus on public visibility of these issues by conducting a thorough review of public/media discourse in each country. However, this would have been very difficult to do in ten countries (not to mention the language difficulties). Moreover, while the proposed measurement method is by no means exhaustive or ideal, it is based on hard figures and therefore offers a degree of objectivity.

15. The full data used in this study can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.12046152>

While the outcome variable—inclusiveness of access to nationality rules—is measured at a single time point (2014), all four causal conditions are operationalized in such a way as to summarize the general trends observed in each CEE country under study during the post-communist period (1990–2014).¹⁶ Therefore, the key methodological assumption made in this study is that the 2014 access to nationality rules can be explained by pointing to the general trends or key structural characteristics of the CEE states that have emerged in these countries since 1990.

METHOD

The main method used in this study is fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (*fs/QCA*). The key attribute and virtue of *QCA* is that it allows a researcher to arrive at multiple combinations of causal conditions that generate the same outcome. In this way, *QCA* provides elaborate explanations of complex social phenomena—something that is often missed by purely quantitative research designs.

QCA is particularly well suited to this research for two reasons. First, the literature review has confirmed that cross-national differences in access to citizenship do not lend themselves to simple explanations. Restrictive and liberal citizenship regimes almost certainly result from a combination of factors, and *QCA* is a suitable tool for identifying them. Second, the number of cases analyzed in this study makes *QCA* a natural choice since ten countries is more than can be handled in qualitative research and less than is required for statistical analysis. It is worth noting that *QCA* has not been used in the field of citizenship studies so far, making this study the first attempt to use this increasingly popular method in this research area.

While conventional crisp-set *QCA* relies on dichotomous variables, fuzzy-set *QCA* uses continuous variables in the interval between 0 and 1. The value of 1 signifies full membership in a set (e.g., a set of countries with liberal access to citizenship rules) while 0 indicates full nonmembership. Crucially, *fs/QCA* enables the analysis of cases with intermediate scores, grading them in a so-called membership scale (e.g., countries with relatively liberal access to citizenship rules may acquire scores of 0.6 or 0.7, while those with rather restrictive citizenship regimes—0.2 or 0.3). The rationale for using *fs/QCA* in this research lies in the fact that all four causal conditions as well as the outcome variable included in the analysis have more than two values.

The calibrated scores are provided in the table below (Table 3).

16. Technically, this does not apply to the size of the expatriate and kin population living abroad—the causal condition that was also measured at only one point in time. However, the assumption is made that any changes in the size of this population in the course of the post-communist period were not large enough to change the ranking order of the CEE countries.

TABLE 3. CEE Countries' Calibrated Scores on Each Causal Condition and Outcome

| Country | 2014 MIPEX Access to Nationality | Percentage of years of left- wing govern- ment rule | Average percentage of votes for far-right par- ties in general elections | Expatriate and kin popula- tion living abroad (as per- centage of country's population) | Importance of national minority issues |
|-------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Bulgaria | 0.05 | 0.48 | 0.23 | 0.56 | 0.6 |
| Czech Republic | 0.79 | 0.63 | 0.14 | 0.04 | 0.48 |
| Estonia | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.54 | 0.03 | 1 |
| Hungary | 0.21 | 0.76 | 0.51 | 0.95 | 0.13 |
| Latvia | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.98 | 0.05 | 1 |
| Lithuania | 0.32 | 0.67 | 0.11 | 0.07 | 0.51 |
| Poland | 0.92 | 0.22 | 0.3 | 0.9 | 0 |
| Romania | 0.29 | 0.99 | 0.98 | 0.81 | 0.04 |
| Slovakia | 0.1 | 0.34 | 0.86 | 0.45 | 0.6 |
| Slovenia | 0.54 | 0.52 | 0.49 | 0.13 | 0.02 |

The goal of fuzzy-set QCA is to identify the causal combinations that are *sufficient* for the outcome to occur. The key parameter for assessing the validity of sufficiency claims in fuzzy-set QCA is *consistency*. Consistency measures the degree to which membership in each solution term (or the set of solution terms) is a subset of the outcome. Usually, values below 0.75 indicate substantial inconsistency, leading to doubts as to whether the causal combination in question is sufficient for the outcome to occur. Another important fuzzy-set QCA parameter is *solution coverage*, which measures the proportion of memberships in the outcome that is explained by the complete solution.¹⁷

The fuzzy-set analysis was carried out using the “truth table” algorithm, which derives QCA solutions by applying the minimization rule.¹⁸ Using the truth table algorithm, three different types of solutions can be generated: complex, parsimonious, and intermediate. The main difference between them lies in the way logical remainders—the possible causal combinations that have not been observed—are treated in the minimization procedure. Since only 6 of 16 possible causal configurations were empirically observed, there are as many as ten causal combinations without empirical instances. A complex solution is generated if no assumptions on logical remainders are made. On the other extreme, a parsimonious solution permits the use of any logical remainders that help to generate simpler (or fewer) causal recipes (Ragin, 2008a, p. 111). Providing a middle way,

17. For a more detailed description of how these parameters are calculated, see Ragin (2008a, p. 86).

18. For more information on the technical aspects of fuzzy-set QCA, see Ragin (2000, 2008a, 2008b), and Schneider and Wagemann (2007).

intermediate solutions only use those logical remainders that correspond to the substantive and theoretical expectations of a researcher. Only intermediate solutions are reported in this study.

QCA RESULTS

QCA was run separately for each type of outcome. As shown in Table 3, most CEE countries had a relatively restrictive citizenship policy in 2014. Calibrated MIPEX Access to Nationality score was higher than 0.5 only in three countries—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia. To use QCA terminology, those three countries belonged to the set of countries with inclusive citizenship regimes, whereas the remaining seven countries covered by this study were members of the “restrictive set.” The uneven distribution of calibrated MIPEX Access to Nationality scores had important methodological implications as it is generally easier to generate reliable QCA solutions for the outcomes that are observed more frequently. In this analysis, this is reflected by higher consistency scores of the causal combinations explaining policy restrictiveness. The only CEE country that was not covered by any of the QCA causal paths was Lithuania.¹⁹

Inclusive Citizenship Policy

The following results were generated in the analysis of liberal access to citizenship rules (Table 4).

The QCA shows that inclusive citizenship policies were adopted in those CEE countries that had weak far-right parties and relatively low importance of national minority issues. The raw consistency score of this QCA solution stands at 0.743 and is just below the accepted minimal threshold of 0.75. Nevertheless, given the low number of liberal cases, the consistency score of 0.743 was viewed as acceptable. The raw coverage of this causal path (0.739) is relatively high.

The identified QCA solution consists of two absent conditions that can be interpreted as barriers for the liberalization of access to nationality rules. Based on the QCA,

TABLE 4. QCA Solution: Inclusive Access to Nationality Rules

| Causal combination | Countries | Raw coverage | Raw consistency |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Absence of strong far-right parties and absence of important national minority issues | Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia | 0.739 | 0.743 |

19. Although theoretical conditions were favorable for the liberalization of access to nationality rules, the issue struggled to enter the Lithuanian public debate as the attention of both politicians and the general public was firmly focused on emigration. Moreover, the possibilities to liberalize the country’s citizenship policy were severely limited by the constitutional ban on multiple nationality.

both strong far-right parties and important national minority issues need to be absent for inclusive citizenship policy to be adopted. Interestingly, the two components of the QCA solution can be seen as interdependent. Since far-right parties in the CEE region often rely on national minority issues to mobilize political support, the absence or low importance of these issues should make it more difficult for far-right actors to achieve electoral success. The relationship might also work the other way around: the absence of strong far-right parties may lead to lower escalation of national minority issues, reducing the tension and making these issues less important. However, the analysis shows that liberal citizenship policies cannot be explained by the duration of left-wing government rule (rejecting Hypothesis 1).

In all three post-communist countries covered by this causal combination, nation was primarily perceived as an ethnic category. Nevertheless, the debates on nationhood in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia have been more open and less biased against the ideal of a civic nation than in most other CEE countries. In Poland and the Czech Republic, this flirting with the “Western” form of nationalism was embodied in the countries’ constitutions, which made no reference to the ethnic basis of the nation, and in the intellectual climate that created space for the free development of a civic thought (Zubrzycki, 2001; Nedelsky, 2003). Although by no means the only factor, the absence of important national minority issues provided a good environment for the discourse of civic nationalism to develop. The legitimacy of civic discourse was strengthened by the fact that it had fewer practical implications than in some other countries in the region where it would have necessitated the radical revision of policies regarding large national minorities (e.g., Latvia, Estonia). Therefore, in the absence of important national minority issues, the civic discourse could not be portrayed as a threat to the dominant position of the titular Czech, Polish, and Slovenian nations. In the context of relative ethnic homogeneity, rising immigration rates acted as a stimulus to make citizenship policies more inclusive to newcomers (instead of causing an anti-immigrant backlash). The civic component of national self-understanding—while not as strong as the dominant and historically rooted ethnic conceptions of nation—was reflected in the partial liberalization of access to nationality rules in these three countries. Moreover, the prospects of liberalization were helped by the fact that the main political defenders of ethnic nationalism—far-right parties—were electorally weak.

Restrictive Citizenship Policy

The QCA revealed three different causal combinations leading to restrictive citizenship policies in the CEE region (see Table 5). Owing in part to the higher number of countries with restrictive access to nationality rules, the raw consistency scores of each causal path are well above the minimum threshold of 0.75. The overall consistency of this QCA solution stands at 0.927, and the solution coverage is relatively high (0.642).

The first causal path is characterized by the combination of electorally strong far-right parties and large expatriate/kin populations abroad. This path was observed in Romania

TABLE 5. QCA Solution: Restrictive Access to Nationality Rules

| Causal combination | Countries | Raw coverage | Raw consistency |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Strong far-right parties and large expatriate/kin minority population | Hungary, Romania | 0.344 | 0.875 |
| Short period of left-wing government rule, electorally strong far-right parties, and high importance of national minority issues | Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia | 0.41 | 0.996 |
| Short period of left-wing government rule, large expatriate/kin minority population, and high importance of national minority issues | Bulgaria | 0.198 | 1.00 |

and Hungary—countries that have sizable kin minorities in neighboring countries. Citizenship policies in these countries were permeated with a kin-state agenda. Although the rationale and the official justification of these policies was different in the two countries,²⁰ both Hungary and Romania offered facilitated naturalization procedures and nonresident citizenship for co-ethnics living in neighboring countries. Through these measures, citizenship status was unambiguously tied up with descent, language, and culture. In other words, Hungary's and Romania's citizenship policies—primarily driven by the kin-state agenda—reflected and reinforced the ethnic model of nationhood. Within this model, there was no space for the liberalization of access to nationality rules for non-ethnics—a move that would rest on a conflicting (civic) logic that decouples ethnicity from citizenship.

The electoral success of far-right parties also contributed to restrictive citizenship policy outcomes. In Hungary, the far-right party Jobbik was a key proponent of active kin-state policies toward ethnic Hungarians living in neighboring countries. While Jobbik was not the only political party in Hungary to use traditional nationalist themes (the “Trianon trauma,” the “divided nation”), no other party attributed such high importance to these issues. Apart from its direct political leeway, Jobbik also managed to affect the policy stances of Fidesz—the conservative party that removed the residence requirement for naturalizing ethnic Hungarians in 2010 (Pirro in Minkenberg, ed., 2015, p. 96; Pytlas, 2013). In Romania, where the facilitated naturalization of co-ethnics was supported across the Romanian political spectrum, the far-right Greater Romania Party played an important role in the adoption of stricter naturalization requirements for immigrants (Barbulescu, 2013, p. 2).

20. The Romanian case is different from the Hungarian one in that the rationale for Romania's ethnically-oriented citizenship policy was phrased in the legal language of citizenship restoration and not in the symbolic language of a “divided nation” that was used in Hungary. The “impartial” legal rationale helps to explain why the policy of nonresident citizenship enjoyed broad political support and did not require an extra “push” from the country's far-right parties.

The second path toward restrictive citizenship comprises a short period of left-wing government rule, electorally strong far-right parties, and the high importance of national minority issues. This causal combination was present in Estonia, Latvia, and Slovakia—countries that faced important difficulties in the integration of national minorities and had right-leaning party systems. In Estonia and Latvia, large numbers of Russian speakers who had immigrated during the Soviet occupation were seen as a threat to the sovereignty and the “cultural survival” of titular nations (Barrington, 2000). In both of these countries, Soviet-era settlers were denied automatic citizenship and made subject to a difficult naturalization procedure in the early post-communist period (Bauböck et al., eds., 2009). Concerns about the high number of Soviet-era settlers potentially becoming citizens in a short period of time placed limits on the extent to which Latvia’s and Estonia’s access to nationality rules could be liberalized. In Slovakia, the presence of an ethnic “Other” in the shape of the Hungarian minority contributed to the early consolidation of an ethnic definition of sovereignty, as illustrated by the preamble of the country’s constitution (Nedelsky, 2009). Promising a special status for the state-forming nation of ethnic Slovaks, the ethnic model of the state found its expression in restrictive access to nationality rules for non-ethnics.

While important national minority issues were a key structural factor behind the restrictive nature of Estonia’s, Latvia’s, and Slovakia’s citizenship regimes, agency also played its role. In all three countries, far-right parties acted as important shapers of citizenship policies. In Estonia and Latvia, the radical wings of the countries’ independence movements were instrumental in portraying Russian speakers as a cultural and political threat and setting the countries’ citizenship policies on restrictive paths (Smith, 1996; Kask, 1994). In Slovakia, the far-right Slovak National Party (SNS) had a direct effect on the country’s access to nationality rules by supporting the introduction of stricter naturalization procedures later on in the post-communist period. In March 2007, the head of the SNS, Ján Slotá, greeted the proposed amendment to the citizenship act as something that would supposedly limit the immigration of Muslims to Slovakia (*Slovak Spectator*, 2007). The fact that all three countries had right-leaning party systems further reduced the chances of the liberalization of access to nationality rules.

Finally, the third path toward restrictive citizenship legislation was identified in Bulgaria, where a short period of left-wing government rule was combined with large expatriate and kin populations abroad and high importance of national minority issues. Like Hungary and Romania, Bulgaria “ethnicized” its citizenship policy by introducing a facilitated naturalization procedure for persons of Bulgarian origin (Smilov and Jileva in Bauböck et al., eds., 2009, p. 223). Here too, Bulgaria’s orientation toward co-ethnics living in neighboring countries provided a clear indication that a historically-rooted ethnic conception of nationhood was reaffirmed in the post-communist period. The dominance of Bulgaria’s ethnic definition of nation was further reinforced by the recurring tensions between the Bulgarian majority and the sizable Turkish minority. Issues around the Turkish minority accentuated the dichotomy between ethnics (“us”) and non-ethnics (“them”). This was particularly evident in the debates on dual citizenship

and external voting rights. While the dual citizenship status and the external voting rights of Bulgarian Turks were frequently contested, the same questions were not seen as problematic in relation to persons of Bulgarian origin (Özgür-Baklacioglu, 2006, p. 336). In the country where ethnic nationhood was reinforced by ethno-demographic factors, the liberalization of access to nationality rules for non-ethnics was not seen as a priority. Meanwhile, ideological orientation of governments seems to have played a secondary role in determining Bulgaria's citizenship policy outcome.

These findings provide support for Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4. As hypothesized, strong far-right parties, important national minority issues, and sizable expatriate/kin minority populations all contribute to restrictive citizenship policy outcome. Nevertheless, none of the three causal conditions were necessary or sufficient in CEE countries. For example, citizenship policy characterized by a high degree of restrictiveness can be in place even if far-right parties have not been strong (Bulgaria). Moreover, the electoral success of far-right parties would only translate into restrictive access to nationality rules if other relevant conditions were present. Therefore, each of the three examined causal conditions assumes its significance in certain national contexts, and within a particular constellation of factors.

CONCLUSION

Citizenship policies in post-communist CEE developed in, and were affected by, country-specific historical, demographical, and political contexts. However, despite the obvious differences in these contexts across countries, the key debates on citizenship were almost universally linked to a deeper and a more far-reaching discussion on nationhood and the definition of nation. For example, in Latvia and Estonia the question on Russian speakers' citizenship status was essentially a question about the self-understanding of the Latvian and Estonian nations. Meanwhile, the citizenship policies implemented in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania were motivated by the drive to keep kin minorities in their ethnically-defined nations. This article showed how ethno-demographic factors—the importance of national minority issues and the size of kin minority population—combined with political characteristics to influence those nationhood debates, strengthening either civic or ethnic understanding of nationhood and leaving a mark on CEE countries' citizenship policies. Although the claim that citizenship is closely bound up with nationhood and national identity is by no means new (Brubaker, 1992), this side of citizenship policies is often overlooked in comparative citizenship studies.

The findings of this article point to the importance of multiple combinatorial causality in the analysis of citizenship policies, and in the political science discipline more generally. In the studies of public policy, the focus should be on country-specific constellations of factors as it is at the heart of these constellations that policies are shaped. The article showed how citizenship policy outcomes in the CEE region were affected by the synthesis between ethno-demographic conditions mentioned above and the political factors, most notably the strength of far-right parties. The QCA showed that sizable kin minorities, important national minority issues, and electorally strong far-right parties all

contribute to restrictive citizenship policies in the CEE region. However, none of these factors were necessary or sufficient—instead, they become important as parts of specific causal configurations. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that those CEE countries where far-right parties failed to register important electoral successes and national minority issues were relatively insignificant had more inclusive access to nationality rules. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the explanatory model developed in this article could be used for accounting for citizenship policies beyond the CEE region. Due to differences in historical development and traditions of nationhood, the ethno-demographic factors analyzed here are unlikely to carry the same importance in Western Europe. However, the causal paths revealed in this article could be tested in non-European countries, particularly those in which—as in CEE—the dominant nationhood tradition is ethnic.

This article joins the group of studies that seek to operationalize the conceptually “thick” categories of civic and ethnic nationalism. It is hypothesized that major changes in the inclusiveness of access to nationality rules signal the changes in the conceptions of nationhood. While dominant understandings of nationhood are often presumed to be static and fixed, there is no reason to believe that they remain stable at all times, especially during times of major political, economic, and social transformation. The article maintains that the manifold post-communist transition in CEE—and the processes of democratization and nation-building in particular—created the environment in which deeply rooted ethnic understandings of nationhood could be reinforced or redefined. While no CEE country had adopted a civic understanding of nationhood by 2014, the analysis of their citizenship policies clearly indicates that some countries in the region have moved much closer toward it than others. From this perspective, the study invites the discussion about the specific political and ethno-demographic conditions under which the existing understandings of nationhood are reinforced or reshaped. ■

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