Why Should They Be Friends? The Impact Of Ideological Proximity On International Cooperation: The Case Of The Visegrad Group

By Nastia Kovalska

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Supervisor: Inna Melnykovska

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Abstract

Does ideological proximity at the government level foster international cooperation between states? As the existing literature predominantly views cooperation as the actions of rational actors in a predictable environment, we remain underinformed regarding the impact that governmental ideological proximity may have on international cooperation. This study intends to fill this gap by analyzing international cooperation through bilateral trade and voting alignment at the United Nations among the four states of the Visegrad Group (V4), a platform of cooperation composed by Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary. These four countries have in the past decade displayed similar ideological standpoints, especially Hungary and Poland where the rise of the radical right has been particularly salient.

This thesis provides an answer to this question by conducting a log-linear regression analysis of relationship between bilateral trade, voting alignment and ideological proximity. The main findings that this work points to the existing correlation between ideological proximity and trade. Only Gal-Tan variable that measures ideological standing on Green/Alternative/Libertarian vs. TAN - Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist has proved to be an appropriate measure for the given research. Ideological proximity, however, did not demonstrate significant effects for voting distance, possibly pointing to the already high alignment between the V4.

Ultimately, this research aims to shed lights on the factors that are driving political behaviour on the international stage and contributes to our understanding of the role of ideology in international politics.

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1. Introduction

In a world marked by ideological polarization and disarray, the potential for cooperation remains an important area of focus. Existing literature predominantly views cooperation as the actions of rational actors in a predictable environment, leaving behind the brackets all factors that indirectly but no less significantly influence those actors (Axelrod, 1984; Keohane 1984; Snidal, 1991). One of them is ideological proximity of the states.

Understanding the impact of ideological factors on cooperation between the states is especially relevant in a current political landscape, characterized by the rise of the radical right in various countries, including in the European Union (EU). The Visegrad Group (V4), a platform of cooperation between Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary, has repeatedly demonstrated a remarkable level of cooperation, initially with their successful collaborative efforts to advocate for EU membership (Törő et al. 2013; Neuman, 2017). Almost two decades later, the cooperation of the V4 once again became a widely discussed topic, as they collectively refused to accept asylum seekers onto their territories, reflecting a peak in the ideological alignment of the respective Hungarian, Slovakian, Polish and Czech governments (Nagy 2017; Morillas, 2017).

However, following the outbreak of the war that Russia started in Ukraine, the V4 found itself facing significant challenges over their radically different views in relations to Ukraine and Russia. Already after 2014, attitude of the V4 towards Ukraine and Russia were distinct, reflecting their contrasting relations (Kucharczyk, 2015). With many questioning the stability of the V4 and even proclaiming potential end of the Visegrad Group, the question arises as to whether their ideological orientation would prevail over their disagreements.

Previous academic research has consistently widely demonstrated that similar systems tend to cooperate with each other more, due to the mutual perception of trustworthiness. While exchanging goods and services is beneficial for each state, a possibility of unilateral withdrawal from cooperation bears serious risks. For instance, when two countries agree to increase a particular tax, one-sided defection from this agreement would mean significant loss for another country. Therefore, establishment of cooperation is only possible given the solid guarantees that mitigate those possible risks, and mutual deeper trust which similar systems exhibit becomes fundamental for cooperation in any field (Snidal, 1991; Lipson, 1984).

However, this research asserts that states with not only similar systems, but similar ideologies perceive each other's systems as even more comparable, which in return encourages cooperative behavior. Ideology, thus, plays a crucial role in establishing trust and common norms that are fundamental for states to see each other as closely aligned, and therefore mitigate any uncertainties that come when actors enter cooperation (Leeds, 1999).

Ideological proximity is important not only on the governmental level, but it also matters for each individual actors of the society, especially in the domain of economic cooperation (Biornskov, 2005; Belloc et al. 2011). Market actors often make decisions that are also inherently imbedded in ideology. When a businessman decides whether to set up or expand a business aboard, she does not only consider the size of the market and possible revenues it would bring, but also potential risks she might encounter. Starting a business in a country where governmental ideology is very distant from the one of their own countries seems to be a riskier environment in comparison to the one which is ideologically close. Cuba and the US used to enjoy deep trading ties despite radically different ideologies, but soon after their ideological differences and consequently political confrontation changed the situation (Srivastava & Green, 1986). Additionally, consumers are also often driven by ideological perception of the country which products they buy. Boycott of the imported goods from "unfriendly" countries are one of the common ways how ideology penetrates the market (Stern, 1987). Another form of ideological cooperation between states is mutual support at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which is also often analyzed as an expression of governmental preferences, which may be driven by ideology. While the link between governmental ideologies of the country and its subsequent vote has been widely established, voting alignment between ideologically close countries is yet another phenomenon that requires further research.

I argue that in spite of various geographical and economic determinants, ideologies have a crucial impact for establishing cooperative behavior. Therefore, this thesis aims at answering the following research question: *does ideological proximity at the government level foster international cooperation between states?* International cooperation will thereafter be understood and measured through bilateral trade and voting alignment at the United Nations.

This thesis provides an answer to this question by conducting a comprehensive analysis of relationship between bilateral trade, voting alignment and ideological proximity within a case study of the four Visegrad states - Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Czechia. This work provides an in-depth analysis of ideological composition of each V4 government from 2001 until 2018, aiming to understand the overall ideological tendencies of this region. By undertaking a regression analysis of ideological proximity between four Visegrad states (independent variable), bilateral trade and their voting patterns at the UNGA (dependent variables), this study aims to understand to what extent ideology is salient for international cooperation.

The case of the V4 allows us to compare the cooperative behaviour among states with a seemingly growing ideological proximity (Törő et al. 2014). As states that are geographically close to each other, share institutional similarities and political weight, their cooperation in terms of trade and voting alignment is expected to be already high. That allows us to observe whether cooperation between them would grow even more as they move closer to each other on the ideological scale.

In line with the research question, the first hypothesis (H1) of this work claims that with increased ideological proximity between each pair of the V4, their bilateral trade will grow. The second hypothesis (H2) of this work states that higher ideological proximity will increase the voting alignment between the V4 in the UNGA.

Bilateral trade will be measured as import and export share between pairs of countries, which indicates the respective share of trade for each partner; as well as total number of import and export trade flows in US dollars between pairs of states. All trade variables are extracted from the World Bank and United Nations Commodity Trade Information Database (Comtrade) statistical datasets. Voting alignment is calculated as cumulative distance in vote between pairs of V4 states, provided by United Nations General Assembly Voting Data.

Ideological proximity is derived from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Hooghe et al. 2020), and instrumentalized through three variables: overall left-right orientation ("lrgen"), economic right-left (lrecon), and GALTAN divide. GALTAN accommodates the progressive vs. conservative ideological standing of the party (Bekker at al. 2020, 15), and stands for: Green/Alternative/Libertarian, and TAN - Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist.

Ideological proximity is calculated using a seat share and its ideological orientation for each party that is included in the government for each given year. Hence, the formula returns a weighted ideological score of the government for each year and country.

Control variables, such as Voice Accountability, Government effectiveness and Rule of Law are based on the data compiled by the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project. Additionally, cultural distance variable is extracted from the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Values Study (EVS). Data on the population by national and/or ethnic group for pairs of countries was extracted from Demographic Statistics Database at United Nations Statistics Division.

This work uses a log-linear regression analysis, that builds separate regressions for ideological proximity (left-right, economic right-left and GALTAN variables) and 1) import share 2) export share 3) import in total 4) export in total 5) voting distance.

The main findings that this work point to is the existing correlation between ideological proximity and trade, confirming the first hypothesis of this work. As results show, ideology has a statistically significant effect on bilateral trade. However, only GALTAN variable has proved to be an appropriate measure for this case study and demonstrated significant effects on the independent variable. Ideological proximity, however, did not demonstrate significant effects for voting distance, possibly pointing to the already high alignment between the V4. Ultimately, this research aims to shed lights on the factors that are driving political trends. This work will be an important contribution to understand the impact that ideological proximity might have on some decisions at the international level.

2. Outline

The research will proceed as follows. The first chapter systematically reviews a concept and process of cooperation between states on the international arena. It discusses factors that push states to cooperate, reflecting on the prisoners' dilemma. It proceeds to analyze the importance of system similarity in establishing and deepening cooperation, emphasizing the potential increase in mutual trust and mitigation of risks in the states with similar political systems. This chapter also further explores the definition of ideology and its impact on cooperation, and in particular bilateral trade and voting alignment between the states with similar ideologies. The second chapter of this work discusses the relevance of the V4 case study for the research question. It elaborates on the history of the Visegrad Group, and its cooperative behavior in various fields, including trade and voting. Furthermore, second chapter analyses the ideological composition of the governments in Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia during last two decades, with a focus on their ideological alignment in the recent years.

The third chapter describes the relevance of the chosen method for this work's research question, elaborates on the model specifications and proceeds to introducing variables of this research and their instrumentalization. This chapter also includes the analysis of the log-linear regressions to analyze the impact of ideological proximity on trade and voting from 2001 until 2018 and discusses the significance of the regression results for this work.

The fourth chapter analyses the ideological composition of the V4 and their trading relations from 2001 until 2018. It confirms the validity of the regression analysis, and points to the validity of the link between the GALTAN ideological orientation in the V4 and increase in their mutual trade.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Cooperation between the democratic states

3.1.1. Factors influencing cooperation

Political scientists and international relations scholars have long been interested in understanding relations between states in the international arena (Axelrod, 1984). The political stage being as unpredictable as it is, it remains to a large extent defined by relations between the states - whether they are friendly or hostile (Keohane, 1984; Snidal, 1991; Lipson, 1984). A certain degree of cooperation between the states is a necessity for them to function. At the same time, states do prefer to cooperate with some countries, while refusing or reducing cooperation with others.

Cooperation as such occurs when "when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination, argues Milner (Milner, 1992). In this view, states are assumed to be rational and self-interested actors, and hence adjustment to the preferences of each other must bring more benefits than it bears potential risks (Axelrod, 1985). As rational actors, states aim to maximize their benefits by engaging in a proactive and mutual exchange in various fields. In reality it means trading commodities with each other, to focus on the most profitable spheres, while helping each other in exchange for other favours. Refusal to cooperate, on the other hand, in the simplified terms, means isolation and therefore less profits, according to realist accounts (Glaser, 1994).

This academic literature often uses as a starting point an abstract thought experiment known as the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD). Under a typically constructed PD, states are players that face a situation of either mutual cooperation, mutual non-cooperation, or one-sided cooperation. The simplest form of PD consists of two players with their own preferences. As Lipson explains it, each of the players is assumed to be a self-interested maximiser of its profits, presumption which corresponds with a realist conceptualization of a state on the international arena (Lipson, 1984; Moravcsik et al. 1999). Lipson explains that under PD each player has a choice – to cooperate or to defect, where defection brings a reward regardless of what other player does. However, if they both defect, each player gets a smaller reward compared to the scenario where they both cooperate and receive a maximum reward.

Given the negative consequences if one player decides to cooperate while another refuses to, all sides are cautious to start a cooperative interaction. As a result, it poses a political dilemma, which, in Lipson's words, "is the ineluctable failure to coordinate despite the obvious possibility of joint gains" (Lipson, 1984, 3). Thus, the process of cooperation becomes possible only when a cumulative sum of potential gains prevails over the sum of potential risks, which is possible only if the latter are mitigated (Fearon, 1998). Mutual trust and guarantees that none of the actors will defect make this cooperation appear in the real world (Milner, 1992).

3.1.2. The role of institutional similarity in facilitating cooperation

In the current world order, the democratic peace theory has received a special attention (Przeworski, 1991; Oneal et al. 1996). The theory of democratic peace formulated the claim that democratic states do not go to wars with one another (Bremer, 1992; Mesquita, 1975). While there is no consensus as to why it is the case, most of the works name institutional and cultural factors as the principal origins of that peace. Gartzke, for instance, focuses on cultural norms, perceptions and practices (Gartzke, 1998). He argues that democracies share a common understanding of external relations, and this understanding is inherently peaceful (Gartzke, 2000). Doyle also demonstrates that democracies perceive each other as dovish and exhibit mutual respect, and hence do not go to wars with each other (Doyle, 2005).

Within the democratic peace theory, many scholars focus on the role of trade in peaceful relations between democracies (Leeds, 1999). Economic linkages between countries have been described to be a strong peace promoter and one of the reasons democracies do not go to war

with each other (Barbieri, 1996). Mutually beneficial trade creates incentives for peaceful relations, and states become more and more dependent on each other, argues Polachek (2007). However, even in the states with developed market economy, neither private nor state-affiliated actors can exercise a full independence in their choice of trading partners.

As Arthur Stein (1993) in his essay "Governments, interdependence, and International Cooperation" says, "even week governments have some ability to limit the movement of goods and services across borders", similarly to the way they collect taxes on income or import. In many cases, governments have a possibility to prohibit some categories of goods, and also discriminate the goods by their origins. For instance, during the Cold War selling high technology to the USSR was banned. As long as states have control over their borders, everything which crosses those borders can also be a subject to political decisions and state institutions regulations. Staley was among the first to observe that investments are commonly used as "tools of diplomacy", which rather "serve" the political cause instead of being its "master" (Staley, 1935).

It all leads to the point that common understanding and norms are a prerequisite even for trade, and not vice versa (Fearon, 1998). The same way as peace between democracies is dependent on mutual respect of liberal values and principles, cooperation can only be built on the same basis. Simultaneously, prospects of bilateral peace ensures trust between these states, which in its turn is a guarantee and prerequisite of any sort of cooperation (Leeds, 1999).

Risk of potential hostility, or simply a possibility of defection also bears serious consequences for the states (Bremer, 1992). Cooperation often requires paying some cost: in trade, giving up jobs in weak sectors to gain jobs in strong ones or raising interest rates to defend price stability at the expense of employment. As in the Prisoner's Dilemma, when it is brought to the real political world, costs of defections are high and actors are seeking guarantees for cooperation on both sides. Thus, the existence of a similar regime and political landscape in

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both states then becomes a guarantee which is more significant than only the agreement or promise (Davis et al. 1999). In addition to that, features that democratic regime possesses make it a more attractive actor to cooperate with.

There are, however, many examples of states with different political regimes intensively cooperating with each other, as well as authoritarian states cooperating with democratic states. European countries extensive trade with China in the last 20 years is a very vivid example of it, with Beijing being the largest importer of the EU goods (22.4%), and the third-largest exporter of goods (10.2%), according to Eurostat.

At the same time, as history of cooperation proves democratic states prefer to cooperate with other democratic states, and their links are more profound (Bliss et al. 1998). While throughout those thirty years China and the US have been major trading partners due to multiple reasons (Liua et al., 200)1. It has changed in 2018 when two biggest world's markets have exchanged rounds of import sanctions, also known as the US–China trade war (Itakura, 2020).

The so-called guarantees democratic state system provides are, among others, system of checks and balances, such as multiple stakeholders and independent actors in the society. It makes a decision-making process depend not only on one person or party which can shift the trajectory more easily. In the regimes in which power is centralized in the hands of a small group, decision-making process does not necessarily require any negotiations with other institutions or agreements with other stakeholders. Hence, it increases a risk of an unexpected move both in PD, and in a real-world cooperation. Furthermore, often multiple stakeholders also bear a greater responsibility for governments in case of defection (Mansfield et al. 2000).

Essentially, partner countries would rely more on each other if they know that they can trust each other and have strong reasons to trust. As Gourevitch (1996, 372) argues, "the credibility of international arrangements continues to rest on the convergence of domestic

interests and politics." Additionally, efficient, and independent functioning of the governmental branches make democracies more prone to respect law, both domestic and international.

While very few doubts emerge regarding a claim that democracies choose to cooperate with each other, the role of ideological proximity in this process, while fitting within the democratic peace theory, has remained underexplored.

Democratic systems have valuable incentives to cooperate with each other, such as mutual understanding, liberal norms, and finally, trust and respect (Morrow et al. 1998). Ideological similarity between the states should then also the incorporate the same principles.

The focal point of this work is to claim that ideology facilitates cooperation even more in comparable democratic systems. If trust, respect and mutual understanding enhance cooperation between democracies (Rathbun, 2011), it will be even higher between ideologically close democratic governments.

3.2. The role of ideology in enforcing cooperation

3.2.1. Operationalization of ideology

There have been different approaches in defining ideology as a concept. At the most fundamental level, it is defined as an organization of opinions, attitudes, values (Gerring, 1997). It is also categorized as a system of beliefs which are elaborate, integrated and coherent (McClosky, 1964; Adorno, 1950).

Within this framework, political ideology in the state is a perception of norms and values shared by government, law makers and majority of the citizens who elect state bodies (Dutt & Mitra, 2005). Kau and Rubin (1979) view political ideology as a sum of public interest and altruistic goals of politicians and political parties. Peltzman (1984) considers interests of the constituencies and hence political orientation of the politicians to be interrelated, with constituencies determining political behaviour. Thus, if the state is driven by the ideas which

most of its members share, this set of ideas and values becomes an important factor in analysing political behaviour (Gerring, 1997).

A significant body of academic literature is indeed dedicated to understanding the impact of ideology on the behaviour of the state on both domestic and international arena (Biornskov, 2005; Potrafke, 2010). Ideology of the government as a determinant of politics has been analysed from different angles (Kau & Rubin, 1993). In particular, a part of academic studies is dedicated to understanding the role of political ideology on international economic behaviour (Belloc& Nicita, 2011; Krause & Méndez, 2005). Some scholars have investigated some patterns specifically for left or right-oriented governments, emphasizing the economic policies they adopt (Dreher et al., 2015; Garrett, 1998). Potafke (2009), for instance, outlined the role of government ideology on the deregulation process.

The role of political ideology in the bilateral processes has also been studied through voting behaviour of the legislators. Following the phrase "Interests matter, but so does ideology", Milner and Tingey (2010, 2011) demonstrate that US legislators take into account not only material interests of their electorate, but only their ideological preferences when voting in favour of international aid or against it.

Political ideology as a system of beliefs and norms shape state policies. The same way ideology penetrates different aspects of the state apparatus and the society, it would influence the state behaviour on the international state, choice of alliances and trading partners.

Most of the existing theories explain impact of governmental ideology on states' affairs and trajectory from two main perspectives – "preference driven" or "institution driven" (Gourevitch, 1996, 350). "Institutions driven" theory tries to explain the behaviour of the decision makers through an institutional structure of the state. Ideology has an impact over the ways in which institutions function. For example, one of the main divisions between right and left ideologies was always how many responsibilities the government has in overseeing the market. Even though structural pillars of the democratic system hardly change after every election, ideological affiliation of the ruling government certainly shapes many aspects of the state bodies.

On the other hand, "preference driven" theory highlights ideological preferences of the society as the main driver of the decision-making process, argues Gourevich (1996). According to this theory, people have a direct influence over the incumbent authorities, particularly in the democratic states. This influence is primarily exercised through elections, and accountability of the decision-makers forces them to do as the citizens please if they seek to be reelected. Thus, when accountability clause is not efficient, actors of the society can still apply other methods to impact the state leadership, such as demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, etc. (Putnam, 1988).

This multiplicity of actors, such as society, stakeholders, politicians, governments and even institutions are all influenced by ideology. The aim of this research is not to prove which of those actors matters the most in influencing state behaviour. On the contrary, these theories together help understand the way in which ideology is embedded in society. Whether decision makers choose to move in some trajectory due to their electorate ideological preferences, or the existing institutions choose what countries are closer to them ideologically, it only emphasizes the fact that ideological affiliation of the country plays a major role in the decision-making process. Therefore, one of the ways to understand whether ideology facilitates cooperation, is to observe the state's behaviour in the international arena through voting in the UN, and through international trading relations.

3.2.2. Role of ideology in trading relations

Trade has long been viewed as an essential measure to understand cooperation between states (Polachek, 1980; Rogowski, 1989). International trade is a result of numerous agreements between the states, which does not always signify friendly relations between them. Yet, bilateral trade is one of the most salient forms of cooperation between the states. Trading relations are a complex phenomenon conditioned on multiple factors, among which are physical distance between the countries, GDP, population, state of economy in both countries. etc. Trade intensity between large countries with developed economies will prevail over small sized countries who are ideologically closer. Green and Srivastava (1986) and others find that GDP has indeed a significant explanatory power. Membership in the same economic unions or organization is also a variable proved to have influence on the trade flows.

Many studies have also focused on institutional and cultural factors which matter for trading relations (Linders et al. 2005). It has been generally accepted that large cultural distance also raises costs of trade, as they it complicates understanding the market and potential trade partners. In the same vein, similar institutional framework makes it easier to operate, as economic actors involved in bilateral trade are "better equipped to use each other's institutions" (Groot, 2004, 111).

Above other factors, distance is observed to be a significant determinant of the trade intensity: states located closer to each other would trade relatively more, than the ones far away from each other (Beckerman, 1956; Linneman, 1969; Yeats, 1969). Green and Srivastava (1986) demonstrate that distance explains around 50% of the total trade. Moreover, for all economic actors, geographical proximity, i.e., sharing a common border significantly decreases trading costs. Yet, as Green and Srivastava note, distance accounts for less than a half of the variation in bilateral trade flows, while other factors together play no lesser role. It makes us turn to other, less obvious factors to understand trade fluctuations.

A large share of literature shows the relation between trade and political factors, including ideological ones (Lipson, 1982). In his research, Pollins argues (1989, 737), "Changes in international political relationships affect trade ties virtually on a daily basis". In his work, Pollins also concludes that that political cooperativeness or hostility between two countries indeed impact trade. Political cooperativeness is, thus, present more often in the similar

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systems, and similar systems are also associated with more significant trade flows. Cooperativeness would grow even more, as well as the state system will get closer.

Ideology of the government shapes the economic system, that would also have effect on trade. As Smith et al. argues (2004, 593), leadership turnover has impact on trading relations, even though in the democracies it is less pronounced. Domestic ideology also might change economic trajectory of the state by changing policies and shaping institutions, which would unavoidably have an impact on trade. While analyzing 21 OECD countries, Potafke (2010) demonstrated the strong link between government ideology and the market deregulation process in the OECD region in the 1980-2003. As Potafke notes, in the post-communist space of Central and Eastern Europe privatization was similarly led by market-oriented right-wing governments. These findings also go along with Bortolotti and Pinnoti (2008) who argue that it was right-wing governments which forced the process of privatization. At the same time, new economic policies which governments introduce will impact trade, and potentially the choice of economic partners.

Even in the market economy, governments' ideology can change the way business functions in various ways. For instance, government could increase costs of trade by including costs of eliminating pollution or introducing tariffs on some goods (Conybeare, 1987; Deardorff et al., 1998).

Cooperativeness and political proximity between states is quintessential for trade, primarily as it creates trust between governments and private actors. Whereas successful partnerships and eventual profits are largely determined by trust and amity between trading partners. Among others, these factors help sustain low levels of instability, which is crucial for trade intensity (Srivastava & Green, 1986).

Mutual trust provides partners with certainty that political conflict is impossible in the foreseeable future. Political conflict between countries, on the other hand, often threatens trade.

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Trade restrictions and barriers are a very common measure, imposed by the state as an act of hostility. Yet, private trading and already established partnerships could equally become a subject of potential restrictions, sanctions, logistics disruptions, etc. One of the examples to support this claim is economic relations between US and Cuba which used to be major trading partners, while remaining on the different ideological ends. However, as their political relations deteriorated, significant trade restricting measures were imposed, such as introduction of embargoes that made it illegal to bring the Cuban cigars to the US.

These considerations will push private actors towards avoiding trading with adversary nation, or nation where hostilities might take place due to the political and ideological differences. Thus, when all other factors, such as price and quality are similar, private actors will prefer trading with friendly state to avoid potential disruption (Pollins, 1989).

In addition to that, ideological preferences can also play a major role for private business actors. Ideological convictions and reputation have indirect but often significant effect on business cooperation and potential trade. Consumers might refuse to buy goods produced in the state, which political they do not support, or on the opposite, express solidarity with producers in friendly nations (Pollins, 1989b). Pollins gives an example of West Germans boycott of South African grapes, Americans of Stolichnaya vodka after the invasion of USSR of Afghanistan. More recent extreme example was a boycott of Russian goods in Ukraine following the Russian invasion in 2014.

3.2.3. Ideological voting in the UNGA

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has long been a focal point of studies aiming to understand international cooperation, including aspirations to understand ideological aspect of this cooperation (Ball, 1951; Lijphart, 1963; Vengroff, 1976). Bailey et al. (2017) found that between 1998 and 2012 voting in UN was used to measure national preferences in seventy-five articles. For instance, voting in the UN was used to measure whether the joint membership in the international organizations impact the state's interests' change (Bearce & Bondanella, 2007); or whether the leadership change affects the voting patterns and overall country's foreign policy orientation.

The reason for it is that The United Nations General Assembly is the closest version of a global parliament which provides states with a platform to operate democratically as sovereign states. Thus, voting in UNGA could have an impact on the distribution of the resources, as some of the UN resolutions managed to affiliate financial resources to the climate change matters.

While wealthier and more established powers can convey their foreign policy stance via use of force, economic aid or sanctions, for less privileged states UNGA is a valuable chance to communicate their position and be heard (Vengroff 1976, Mattes, 2015). Some scholars claim that the importance of the UN bodies is emphasized by the fact that governments and non-governmental actors affiliate significant investments and provide regular lobby presence to promote their preferred outcome (Hanania, 2019).

Unlike the Security Council, the Assembly General resolutions do not have a binding nature. The non-binding character is considered to be a peculiar feature of voting in UNGA which reflects more the actual true preferences of the states than the strategic. Voting in UNGA also emphasizes the importance of the symbolic stance on a particular policy issue (Carter, 2010; Carter, D., & Stone, 2015).

As many scholars observe, the symbolism present in the international organizations, clearly divides liberals and conservatives (McLaren & Johnson, 2007). Furthermore, Gries (2014) argues that the most divided liberals and conservatives are in the way they feel in the United Nations. Despite to what is referred as Mills law, which says "where you stand depends on where you sit" (Bertolli et al., 2019; Koch & Sullivan, 2010), implying a direct link between

the position of a politician on the topics they stand for, most scholars prioritize an ideological aspect in foreign policy agenda.

When analyzing voting in the UNGA of five anglophone democracies, Hanania (2018) confirms the impact of governmental ideology of voting patterns. He claims that left-wing governments are prone to vote along with other states, while the conservative governments are more distant from other member states. Hanania went even further, claiming that the difference between conservatives and liberals is present among both elite groups and masses. In general, it is argued that ideological cleavages impact foreign politics in various ways, and they certainly matter when it comes to the voting in the UN.

Ideological voting in the UNGA is also possible due to a wide diversity of issues discussed, including weapons non-proliferation, human rights, nuclear issues, economic development. Some issues do not directly refer to the domestic audience and cleavages, and do not call upon the state to take a firm stance. These resolutions might then not demonstrate the adjustment of the government to the domestic audiences, but instead point to the ideological alignment between the states, the image of the country which government aims to create and position it can publicly take (Leeds and Carroll, 2015). It highlights the importance of symbolic positions and allows the governments to act without a fear of domestic (dis)approval. In other words, if the government is not accountable to its citizens on a particular issue which is of no interest to them, it is willing to benefit from allying with other countries and/or trading its votes. Therefore, even if the vote trading takes place, it can be interpreted as a state's willingness to trade a vote on this particular topic.

Essentially, ability to unite on the international arena, empowers states. Speaking one voice makes these states sound louder, and even more so in the organizations which do not prioritize some states over others via quotas, for instance (Panke, 2017). As the UNGA rules

imply an equal treatment of all states, despite their wealth or size, uniting in informal groups help both big and small countries receive success in negotiations.

Alliances are crucial in the UN, and often groups of states tend to allocate the same vote for resolutions to support it other. The empirical analysis of voting of Visegrad countries revealed that during the Cold War they were rather predictably voting in alignment with Soviet Union (Onderco 2014). Therefore, ideological alliances, as well as the ideological vote in the United Nations General Assembly pose a valuable measure of influence of ideological proximity on cooperation.

3.3. Conclusions

International cooperation is a complex interaction between profit-seeking states, which is driven my multiplicity of factors. While size of economy, geographical proximity and membership in international organization are a foundation for cooperation between the states. Thus, as this chapter unveils, cooperation is only possible between states that perceive each other as trustable partners in light of possible risks of one-sided withdrawal from cooperation – trust and common norms become determinants of successful mutual cooperation. The focus of scholarly research in the past decades has largely been dedicated to the systematic similarity between states that enables cooperation. This chapter, on the other hand, adds to the placement of ideology as factor that makes systems even more comparable, thus more attractive to increase cooperation with.

Ideology has proved to be an efficient method in influencing trade through consumer preferences, and reduced risks for business establishment. Additionally, ideology of the government has shaped domestic institutions, that unavoidably had impacted their trade behavior. Voting alignment on the international arena, on the other hand, is less dependent on domestic factors and ideological preferences of the society but is significantly driven by the governmental ideology of states (Mattes Leeds and Carroll, 2015). In other words, ideological voting is a prominent form of cooperation, as it is often observed during the UNGA sessions. Finally, this chapter has established the relevance of ideological factors for different forms of cooperation between states, but primarily for bilateral trade and voting behavior on the international scene. Those theoretical findings provide us with solid foundation to further explore the significant of ideology in our case study of the Visegrad states.

4. Cooperation in the Visegrad states

4.1. The V4 as a coherent body

4.1.1. History of the V4

The Visegrad Group, comprised of Poland, Hungary, modern Czech Republic and Slovakia, are widely known for their long-standing cooperation in a variety of areas. As the democratic states, that share membership in a number of political and commercial alliances, Visegrad members are expected to have a high volume of cooperation. However, the Visegrad states have already persuaded many scholars of their unique scope of cooperation in the past.

They share geographical proximity, similar historical paths, which resulted in extensive cultural and ethnic exchanges throughout centuries. Equally important factor of their cooperation is, thus, their comparative political weight, which makes the informal alliance a convenient tool on the international arena. Visegrad states' incentives to cooperate are solid and predictable, but scope of this cooperation is not, which makes Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic a well-fitted case study to understand whether cooperation is driven ideologically.

Developments of the recent past demonstrate that Visegrad countries have been following a similar ideological pattern. Right-wing tendencies in the region have been reaching the before unseeable growth, and most of all in Hungary and Poland. Ideological, and hence political similarity prompts similar interests in some domains, which in its turn, facilitates cooperation even more. This work proceeds to explore the history of the Visegrad Group, its cooperation on the international arena, economic characteristics and trade.

4.1.2. Cases of cooperation within the Visegrad Group

While the V4 traces its origins to 1990s, these four countries shared a similar path before that. United within the Warsaw Pact, the Poland, Hungary and then Czechoslovakia found themselves in the east side of the Iron Curtain. Neighbouring countries in the essence of Central Europe were in a direct alliance with the Soviet Union, and its capital Moscow (Pakulski et al. 2016). Then, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they were again united as the members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Cabada& Šárka, 2018). The V4 together undergone major transformation – every country in its own way made its road of reform. In this context, the Visegrad Group came to its existence in 1991.

The primary purpose of establishing the V4 was to join efforts and become full members of the European Union and NATO. However, with Poland, Hungary, Czechia and later Slovakia joining NATO, their cooperation as well as the existence of the Visegrad Group have not disappeared. As some scholars even claimed, their ties deepened (Cabada & Šárka, 2018).

V4 is an alliance without formal bodies (with exception of the Visegrad Fund for cultural and educational programmes), and the nature of its decisions or resolutions is not bonding. At the same time, the Visegrad alliance offers a unique platform for those four countries to discuss and coordinate with each other when they deem useful (Dangerfield, 2008). They are not limited by a particular policy domain, which means that agenda can comprise of a broad range of topics on which they decide to cooperate (or not cooperate). Under the V4 umbrella, meetings on different levels are held – from presidents to experts. Later, the V4 heads of governments started to have regular meetings, also referred to as "congregations' which would take place before the European Council meetings (Neuman, 2017). While being practical, they also carry a significant symbolic value and message. The work of the V4 during the EU accession talks was one not only the *raison d'etre* of the organization, but the first

example of their close cooperation. During that period, the Visegrad Group enabled many meetings to formulate and lobby joint positions (Strazay, 2009; Drulakova, 2007).

Töró et al. (2014) illustrates their cooperation with successful lobbying of the EU agencies placement in the V4. As of 2009 only two CEE states hosted the EU agencies out of 30. European agencies are prestigious institutions which offer often bring high-paid workplaces and attract many skilled personnel to the hosting country. Often it also helps broadcast a particular policy focus of the state on the EU level. As a result of their active cooperation, seven agencies were then located in the region. As Töró accentuates, this success was partly attributed to the joint actions of the V4.

Another example, as Töró puts it, was the V4 active stance and joint effort in energy policy promotion. In the beginning of 2000s, the Visegrad counties enhanced their cooperation to achieve the gas networks further integration and routes diversification. While acknowledging their mutual interests, the V4 committed to annual meetings of the V4 energy ministers. The main achievement of those meetings was a formulation of joint position for the EU decision-making institutions, which resulted into the EU adherence to fully integrate the CEE in the European energy market (Törő et al., 2014).

4.2. Voting patterns of the V4

The Visegrad Four cooperation also goes beyond their joint lobbying on the EU arena. Their cooperation in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has also received attention among scholars. Despite its non-binding nature, the UNGA is considered indicative of the overall foreign policy orientation of the states. As Michal Onderco points out (2014), the voting agreement between the V4 is strikingly high.

He also reveals that the voting agreements of the Visegrad states are in line with their political partners voting preferences. Analyzing historical cleavage of the Cold War, Onderco

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concludes that the V4 as a group used to vote in alignment with the Soviet Union, and then they still tended to vote closer to Russia than the US. He, thus, argues than the agreement with Russia has decreased after the dissolution of the USSR, but have not disappeared. While during the Cold War, the V4 were exhibiting different voting tendencies than the EU members, after its end they behaved more alike other European states.

Kalhousová et al. (2020) also confirms the similarity voting patterns of the V4 on the Israeli–Arab/Palestinian Conflict. The status of Jerusalem became an important subject in the UNGA, used as a benchmark to observe wider political tendencies. Similarly, to Onderco, she confirms that whenever the Visegrad states "take a stand on an important resolution, they always stand together" (Kalhousová et al. 2020, 472). While she demonstrates a high vote resemblance of the V4 to other EU states, the vote similarity within the V4 still outstanding.

Voting unity within Visegrad could be addressed through its common political path, but also their similar roles on the international stage. While Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia are hardly the same size, GDP or population, they share crucial features of small powers (Archer & Nugent, 2002), and participation in voting alliances allows them to lobby more efficiently.

As we already discussed, the alliance in voting is often determined by the domestic agenda. More than trade, it is directly dependent on the political and ideological preferences of the domestic groups which dominate in the given period. For instance, as Kalhousová (2020) argues, since 2017 Orban's attempt to deepen ties with Israel impacted Hungary's voting patterns. She believes, that Fidesz's position might also be explained by their consistent effort to improve relations with Trump's regime, with its vocal pro-Israel narrative (Kalhousová et al. 2020).

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the more mutual interests the Visegrad states have in the UNGA, and the closer is the ideological agenda of their governments – the clearer would be their tendency to vote together. It leads us to the hypothesis of this work – the lesser

is the ideological distance between Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the shorter is their voting distance.

4.3. Trade dynamics among the Visegrad states

After World War II, as political members of the Warsaw Pact, economically the Visegrad Four was united within the COMECON (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), create to facilitate trade in the region. In spite of being a part of mutual economic alliance, the trade between them was substantively limited. Yet, in 2003 together with six other CEE countries, the Visegrad states signed the EU Accession Treaty, which was followed by their integration into the EU economy (Kowalska et al. 2015).

The newly accepted members offered a qualified labour for low costs, as well as growing market with increasing purchasing capacity. Thus, the radical change of the economic system was accompanied by the inflow of foreign direct investment into the V4 markets (Melikhova et al. 2015). The mutual trade between the V4 has also demonstrated an unprecedented growth. The overall trade of the V4 was almost 2,5 times higher than in 2003, according to Hunya et al. (2011). At the same time, the aggregate trade of the V4 with older EU member states accounts only for a half of that variation. As he argues, the elimination of trade barriers associated with their membership in the Warsaw Pact could only partly explain this upturn. Another reason is the similarity of their markets and levels of development. They also share similar resources, as well as technology structure (Hunya et al., 2011).

Thus, even though the mutual trade of the Visegrad states is high, their trade with bigger economies surpasses the trade flows within the V4. Yet they share same trading partners. For Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary, export and import flows with Germany and China are the highest in total value, as well as the trade share. Historically, presence of German capital was always dominating in the region, while their trading relations with China have been actively developing only recently.

While it is still important to acknowledge that Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia do not have identic markets, nor is the composition or size of those markets. The GDP of the Visegrad members also differs in accordance with their size; Poland has 38 mln inhabitants, Czech Republic has 10,5 mln inhabitants, Hungary has 9,8, and Slovakia 5,4 mln inhabitants, according to the United Nations. Therefore, the total GDP in Euro is the highest in Poland, then Czechia, Hungary and finally the last place is taken by Slovakia. They also have substantial differences in their manufacturing areas, innovation indexes, even resources distributions.

Yet, they still pose a coherent case study to compare due to a lot of similar traits of the economic situation in their countries. Their mutual economic relations are high due to many reasons mentioned above. Even more importantly, they are all located close to each other which enables easier logistics, and it is one of the primary determinants of trade.

The Visegrad Four are expected to have extensive bilateral trade relations. At the same time, since the greatest share of the trade flows of the VG are countries with bigger markets, they are not as dependent on the trade within the V4 itself. Furthermore, their proximity to trade with each other and similarity of their economic systems would make it possible to analyze the increases and decreases in trade flows between the states. As they also share political and institutional similarities, it also allows to observe whether the trade is dependent on the ideological paths these countries take.

4.4. The evolving ideological landscape in the V4

The unanimity of the Visegrad Four on the political agenda has not always been the case (Törő et al., 2014, Morillas, 2017; Dangerfield, 2008). Yet the rise of the illiberal right

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politicians in the region during the last decade has been a prominent tendency, which inspired many scholars to talk about the new stage of the Visegrad Group cooperation. Notably, the position Visegrad states took during the 2015 migrant crisis, and subsequent Dublin Agreement (Nagy, 2017).

The conflict emerged as such when Hungary, Poland, Czechia and Slovakia came with a joint position against the refugee relocation quotas amidst the migrant crisis as a result of Syrian conflict in 2015. The decision to accommodate migrants from Greece and Italy was first refused by Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Poland at first supported the decision with its vote, but after the governmental change they joined the V4 in refusing the proposal of the European Commission (Szalai et al. 2017).

The right-wing tendencies in CEE region have, thus, been only growing (Pytlas, 2015). In Czech Republic the radical right party Dawn - National Coalition (Úsvit Národní Koalice), which was created right before the elections, gained around 7% of the votes in 2013. While their influences were rather marginal, the main parties which were dominating in Czech Republic were center-left Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS). However, in 2017 the populist right ANO 2011 had overturned the ruling parties and has been governing even since.

While in Slovakia People's Party – Our Slovakia received only 1,58% in 2012, while increasing its vote to 8.4% in 2016. In the recent years, its political realm was dominated by the right-wing party Direction– Social Democracy (SMER), which shared a populist radical discourse and often engaged in antimigrant discourse (Pakulski et al., 2016).

Poland and Hungary were the states which are more often called out for their illiberal tendencies recently. Indeed, the prevalence of radical right in those countries if followed by attacks on freedom of media, human rights and civil society. Starting from 2010, right wing Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance has gained a majority of votes in the Hungarian Parliament,

which was a huge victory for Victor Orban. Even though, Fidesz already was a ruling party from 1998 until 2002, their dramatic "return" was also marked by the illiberal turn. Jobbik (the Movement for better Hungary) also increased its vote from almost 17% to 23% from 2010 till 2014. Progressively, Fidesz was able to successfully promote the national conservative narrative, modify Hungarian constitution and strip opposition and civil society of their voices.

In Poland, the strongest anti-migration stance took Law and Justice party - Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS). They won elections in 2015, overpassing the formerly governing party, Civic Platform. The PiS has already been forming the government as a part of coalition in 2005 and 2007 (Pakulski et al., 2016).

The right and often illiberal tendencies within the V4 have been already the case for some time and only progressing. As it could be observed, after the migrant crisis only surfaced the position of the right-wing parties in the region for the wider audience (Végh, 2018). The ideological proximity of the V4 has certainly been a driving force behind their joint anti-migrant position (Pytlas, 2015; Nagy 2017). As it is observed by some scholars, the V4 is primarily a group of interests. In those cases when they choose to act together, they are consolidated by interest exhibited by all four countries (Törő et al., 2013). The Visegrad states have recently been sharing a close political agenda and would hence be more prone to cooperate and support each other, as their interests would move closer to each other.

However, not always did their preferences coincide, despite their overall similar political and ideological orientation. Yet, the most controversial point between the V4 since 2014 has been their position on Ukraine, and even more importantly their stance towards Russia (Dangerfield, 2012).

Even though in the aftermath of the Soviet Union dissolution, Hungary, Poland and then Czechoslovakia were distancing themselves from Russia while advocating their way to the EU. Twenty years after, their relations with Russia became less similar. The dividing point within the Visegrad Four became their attitude towards Russia following Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2014, and subsequent annexation of Crimean peninsula. Since the beginning of the conflict Poland became an outspoken critic of Russian ruling elites and its aggressive foreign policy, while advocating for sanctions against Russia (Kucharczyk et al. 2015).

However, as opposed to Poland, political leaders in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary either took a moderate or supportive stand towards Russia. While in Slovak and Czech politics pro-Ukrainian voices were also rather influential, Hungary pursued to strengthen its relations with Russian even more (Kucharczyk et al., 2015).

After the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, the divergence of the V4 has only deepened: Hungary found itself standing alone vis-à-vis Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia (Walsh, 2022). Active vetoing of EU sanctions, as well as lack of Orban's condemnation of Russian aggression were not shared by other Visegrad partners.

In the past years, many scholars started talking about Visegrad Group's diversification and potential dissolution de facto, and even more so after the war in Ukraine. At the same time, as members of the EU all Visegrad countries managed to maintain a common position towards the EU sanctions and Ukraine's future assessment to the EU, as claims Kucharczyk (2015).

4.5. Conclusions

Cooperation between Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic has been a widely discussed phenomenon (Cabada et al,2018; Pakulski et al., 2016, Hunya et al, 2011). Since the Visegrad Group came into existence in 1991, it has been a distinguishable player on the international scene. After the success of the original aim of the Visegrad Group, accession to the EU, their cooperation certainly did not diminish, but only grew. As many studies show, the

Visegrad Four exhibit similar voting patterns, as well as demonstrate multiple cases of joint lobbying effort in the EU bodies (Onderco, 2014).

As it was observed in this chapter, their ideological orientation has grown closer within the past years. All four countries, but most prominently Hungary and Poland, were exhibiting right-wing and illiberal tendencies. After the migrant crisis in 2015 and subsequent EU Commission's decision to allocate quotas, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Czechia came together, and opposed accommodating refugees, accompanying by a strong nationalist rhetoric in all states (Nagy 2016). Yet since then, the overall tendency of the region towards the far right has only grown, making them ideologically closer in the last years.

The Visegrad Group did not always demonstrate unanimity in their interests, there are grounds to believe that their cooperation is stronger when ideology of their governments coincides. Sharing common membership in the international organizations also bonds them by different treaties and directly facilitates the cooperation, while their geographical proximity is another important factor for bilateral trade. Those factors make the cooperation within the V4 is predictable, but the extent of it – is not. Visegrad states allow us to measure whether cooperation between individual pairs of states increases as their governments move closer to each other on the ideological scale.

5.Analytical Framework

5.1. Methodology

5.1.1. Variables operationalization

Ideological proximity is a focal concept of this work, and the best way to measure the distance between ideological orientations of the states would be the outcome of the legislative elections. Majority of the citizens realize their ideological preferences though voting for a party with a particular ideological orientation. In its turn, the party forms the government by appointing its members for ministerial positions. Therefore, the outcome of the elections allows to analyze the deeper picture of the ideological composition of the different brunches and extrapolate it on the state ideological orientation overall. Commonly used to analyze the ideological positions of the elected parties, Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) was used for the purpose of this research (Rovny et al. 2022; Bakker et al. 2014; Nanou et al. 2017).

Independent variables

For more than twenty years, CHES has observed the ideological orientation of national parties on the variety of topics (Bakker et al. 2020, 15). Thus, the best fit for this research are variables of overall left-right orientation, economic right-left, and Gal-Tan divide.

General Left-Right, operationalized as "lrgen" variable, reflects the overall ideological stance of the party on the scale, where 0 - is Extreme Left, 5 - Center, and 10 - Extreme Right.

Economic Left-Right variable measures position of the party in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues, such as privatization, taxes, regulation, government spending, and the welfare state. It is operationalized using 10-points "lrecon" variable where 0 stands for Extreme Left, 5 – Center, and 10 – Extreme Right.

GALTAN accommodates the progressive vs. conservative ideological standing of the party "in terms of their views on social and cultural values". It has been a recently established

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as a common variable to measure ideological voting (Ortiz et al. 2021), Euroscepticism (Hajo et al. 2009), or Illiberalism in Central Europe (Havlík, 2019). GAL abbreviation stands for: Green/Alternative/Libertarian, and TAN - Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist. GAL implies favoring libertarian values, personal freedoms, such as "abortion rights, divorce, and same-sex marriage". Whereas TAN parties favor tradition, stability, and order, believing that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues. In the dataset "Gal-Tan" is operationalized on the following scale: with 0 - Libertarian/Postmaterialist, 5 – center, 10 - Traditional/Authoritarian.

To compute the ideological orientation of the government for each year, this research follows Patrick A. Mello's (2012) calculation of the weighted score of executives' partisan position on a left-right scale¹. For multi-party governments Patrick Mellow based a weighted score on the assumption that the partners in the coalition will affiliate the seats in the cabinet according to the relative share of seats gained in the elections. Thus, for the left-right scale formula is calculated as:

 $E_{LR} = [(EP_{LRa} * Seats_a) + ... (EPL_{Rn} * Seats_n)] / / Government Seats$

In the CHES dataset used for this research the seats gained by each party were already measured as a share of seats. Hence, instead of dividing by the overall number of government seats, the equation was divided by 100.

Government ideology = $[(EP_{LR/EconLR/GalTan} * EP_{seat share}) + \dots (LR/EconLR/GalTan} * EP_{seat share})] / 100$

Calculation includes only those parties which were represented in the government. It is also based on the assumption that party which forms the government retains the same ideological orientation until the next elections. Thus, years when elections did not take place, automatically gained the same score as they did in the preceding elections.

¹ I am grateful to Michal Onderco for his invaluable advice on measuring the ideology of governments and for referring me to Patrick Mello's work.

After receiving an ideological score for each country and year, the ideological proximity between the dyads of countries was computed by dividing the ideology score within pairs of countries for each year.

Dependent variables

Bilateral trade is the independent variable in this research. Trade dataset is derived from the United Nations Commodity Trade Information Database (Comtrade) statistical data. UN Comrade provides a detailed statistics in goods and services and has been a widely used source to conduct trade analysis.

The variables which were used in this research are exports in terms of value (US dollars), imports in terms of value (US dollars), as well as Export share and Import share. The last two categories refer to the share of export/imports which can be obtained by adding up all export/imports as reported by other country.

Bilateral trade is coded in such categories as "Reporter" country which reports trade to the UN, and "Partner" country which commodity was imported or exported. Despite an assumption that reported exports from country *a* would coincide with reported imports of country *b*, in most of the cases data might vary. As the dataset codebook explains: countries tend to report import more accurately, as imports do not usually generate tariff revenues, while exports do not; same goods might be recorded in different categories by the exporting and importing countries. Yet, it does not appear to be an obstacle in the given research, as the minor variation would not impact the overall tendency.

Another independent variable is voting proximity between the dyads of countries. **Voting proximity** is measured with United Nations General Assembly Voting Data (Voeten, 2009; Bailey et al. 2017). This is a dataset of roll-call votes in the UN General Assembly 1946-2021 (sessions 1-76). UNGA voting dataset has been a commonly used to measure states' preferences in the foreign policy and voting similarity between pairs of states by providing an ideal point distance between them.

UNGA voting dataset transforms ideal points into dyadic measures by taking an absolute distance between the ideal points of dyads of states and multiplying them by 1 to get the same sign. These estimates are based on the dynamic ordinal special model which identifies changes in voting similarity due to changes in agenda, as opposed to assuming that all changes in voting reflect change in preferences.

UNGA voting dataset transforms ideal points into dyadic measures by taking an absolute distance between the ideal points of dyads of states, and multiplying them by 1 to get the same sign.

Control variables

Governance quality has been proven to be a major factor influencing cooperation. In the model this research has established, governance system is measured through five governance indicators, developed by the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project (Kaufmann et al. 2011).

Indicators are based on 31 different data sources, collected through surveys in more than 200 countries in the period of 1996 – 2021 years. They reflect perceptions of a great number of enterprises, non-governmental organizations, citizens and experts worldwide, and capture six dimensions of governance, five of which are included in the given research:

Voice and Accountability - perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government.

Government Effectiveness - 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.

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Rule of Law - perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society.

Cultural proximity has often been viewed as a factor significantly influencing cooperation between the states. Cultural similarities are directly correlated with trust, and therefore reflect on the international trade flows and investments (Zingales, 2009).

ESS/EVS-based Cultural Distance Indices, used in the given research, provides an insightful variable of dyadic cultural difference. The indicators of cultural dimensions used for this dataset were comprised by applying confirmatory factor analysis on the indicators from European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Values Study (EVS) (Kaasa et al. 2014).

Cultural dimensions are based on original Hofstede's model, which emphasized four main cultural cleavages: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity (Hofstede, 1984). Kaas et al. (2016) define cultural distance as the "degree to which shared cultural norms and/or values in one country are different from those in another country", based on the individualistic perception of differences between the two countries.

Ethnic linkages which countries share might also be a decisive factor in their decision to increase cooperation. For instance, Rauch and Trinidade (2002, 1107) find that the percentage of ethnic population helps predict levels of trade in the country. For this reason, when analysing impact of culture of trade, scholars also report to ethnic differences between countries "to capture deeper cultural roots" (Rauch et al., 2002). Data on population by national and/or ethnic group for pairs of countries was extracted from Demographic Statistics Database at United Nations Statistics Division.

5.1.2. Model specification

As theoretical framework states, the main hypothesis of this work is that ideological proximity directly influences cooperation, hence correlates with trade and voting within pairs

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of countries. The empirical analysis uses a random effects panel data set, which is comprised of a cross section of twelve pairs of countries, so that each of four countries forms a unique pair with three other countries; for a period of 2002 - 2018 year. The time selection was largely dependent on the availability of data for all the variables.

Model comprises of random effects regression models, where one dependent variable is voting proximity, and four dependent variables represent trade: 1) export, 2) export share, 3) import 4) import share. Import and Export variables were transformed into linear relationship by taking the natural logarithm of those variables. As ideology was measured through three variables, they all were fitted as separate regressions.

Our equations are as follows:

- Import = Ideological proximity (left vs. right/economic left vs. right/ gal-tan) + Voice Accountability Proximity + Government Effectiveness + Rule of Law Proximity + Ethnic Proximity + Cultural Distance
- Export = Ideological proximity (left vs. right/economic left vs. right/ gal-tan) + Voice Accountability Proximity + Government Effectiveness + Rule of Law Proximity + Ethnic Proximity + Cultural Distance
- Import share = Ideological proximity (left vs. right/economic left vs. right/ galtan) + Voice Accountability Proximity + Government Effectiveness + Rule of Law Proximity + Ethnic Proximity + Cultural Distance
- Export share = Ideological proximity (left vs. right/economic left vs. right/ galtan) + Voice Accountability Proximity + Government Effectiveness + Rule of Law Proximity + Ethnic Proximity + Cultural Distance
- Voting proximity = Ideological proximity (left vs. right/economic left vs. right/ gal-tan) + Voice Accountability Proximity + Government Effectiveness + Rule of Law Proximity + Ethnic Proximity + Cultural Distance

The use of random effects model (REM) was determined by the character of the data used in analysis. Hausman test statistics for random vs. fixed effects model did not demonstrate significance at 5% level, which suggests that random effects model is preferred.

Yet, the random-effects model for this model was used by multiple reasons. As specified above, ideological variables which are based on the election's data, which remains unchanged in - between the elections, thus ideological difference between pairs of countries can be constant for some years (Williams, 2015). Cultural distance and ethnicity for dyads of states are time constant variables. According to Clark et al. if the time variation is not big, or subjects do not change across time at all, a fixed effects model would not be well suited (Clark & Linzer, 2015). Whilst, the time-invariant variable would create perfect multicollinearity if opting for the fixed-effects model.

Additionally, since volume of trade between dyads of countries in this study represents only a part of the world's trade, random effects model is also more appropriate for this dataset (Frees, 2004).

5.2. Regressions results

The empirical tests demonstrate the effect of three independent ideological variables on trade flows. The negative coefficient associated with ideology supports the hypothesis that with higher ideological distance between governments, trade decreases. While positive coefficient for ideology-related variables goes against the hypothesis by supporting claim that the higher is the ideological distance, the bigger are the trade flows.

For voting distance, on the other hand, positive coefficient confirms the argument that the higher is the ideological distance between the governments, the higher is the vote distance between them.

Table 1 contains the results of our first specification, confirming our first hypothesis that high levels of ideological distance between dyads of states negatively impact trade, while ideological proximity increases it. In the first specification, Export, Import, Export share and Import share are each separately regressed on the GAL-TAN distance of governments for the Visegrad states coded as pairs. Model also included several variables, which proved to be efficient control variables for the dependent variable.

	Dependent variable:			
	Export)	Import)	Export_share	Import_share
galtan)	-0.016	-0.023**	-1.416***	-1.172***
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.434)	(0.305)
Ethnicity)	0.103***	0.071***	4.530***	3.396**
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.965)	(1.698)
Voice_Account)	-0.034***	-0.027**	-0.187	0.582*
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.496)	(0.352)
Gov_Effect)	-0.004	0.010	-0.403	-0.237
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.470)	(0.331)
Rule_Law)	0.004	-0.007	0.297	-0.233
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.459)	(0.324)
Cultur_Dist)	-0.209***	-0.118 [*]	-6.231**	-5.060
	(0.066)	(0.065)	(2.604)	(4.552)
Constant	14.159***	14.320***	20.228**	24.227
	(0.303)	(0.286)	(9.681)	(16.797)
Observations	204	204	204	204
R ²	0.163	0.097	0.164	0.113
Adjusted R ²	0.137	0.069	0.139	0.086
F Statistic	38.338***	21.090***	38.696***	25.127***
Note:				*p**p***p<0.01

Table 1. GAL-TAN and control variables regression results

The results indicate that relationship between Export or Import and ideology are elastic. Regressions, where Export and Import were dependent variables were log-transformed, as were all the independent variables. Hence, with one percent increase in ideological distance, export decreases for 0,016%, and import for 0.023%.

For export and import as share the coefficients indicate that with one percent increase in ideological distance, export share decreases for 0.014 units, while import share decreases for 0.011 units. Export share and import share as dependent variables were not log-transformed, while all the independent variables were.

For the given research question, the R-Squared can be considered high enough, as it explains some variation of a dependent variable by the independent ones. As discussed earlier, trade flows are dependent on many factors, primarily the market fluctuations, exchange rate and global economic situation. Yet, clearly, our model explains on average 10% of the changes in export, import, export share and import share.

F Statistic is also significant for all variables associated with trade. P-value of the galtan variable also confirms that the coefficients are statistically significant for all dependent variables associated with trade. Coefficients related to ethnicity are also significant for all trade variables. They demonstrate that for one percent increase in Ethnicity, Export share increases for 0.04 units, and Import share increases for 0.03 units. Coefficients for Import and Export as a total value demonstrates a very similar tendency – Export increases for 0.10%, and import for 0.07%.

Voice accountability, Government Effectiveness and Cultural Distance, along with our hypotheses, demonstrate a negative correlation with trade. One percent of Cultural Distance increase –decreases Import and Export for 0.21% and 0.11%, and Export share - for 0.06 units.

Multicollinearity test also demonstrates that other variables are not highly correlated with each other.

	Voice_Accour	nt Rule_Law	Gov_Effect	Cultur_Dist	Ethnicity	galtan
Voice_Account	1	0.040	0.255	0.515	0.092	-0.096
Rule_Law	0.040	1	0.254	0.032	0.025	0.059
Gov_Effect	0.255	0.254	1	-0.063	-0.133	0.082
Cultur_Dist	0.515	0.032	-0.063	1	0.214	0.131
Ethnicity	0.092	0.025	-0.133	0.214	1	0.067
galtan	-0.096	0.059	0.082	0.131	0.067	1

Table	2.	Multicol	llinearity	,

Additional tests to control for the effect of multicollinearity on trade variables were conducted. When running a separate test with one independent variable, we observe that the R-Squared has decreased, yet the effect of distance on the GAL-TAN remained significant.

Table 3.	GAL-TAN	regression	independent	effects
<i>I ubic J</i> .	On In In	regression	inacpenaeni	cjjecis

	Dependent variable:				
	Export)	Import)	Export_share	e Import_share	
galtan)	-0.014	-0.020**	-1.428***	-1.241***	
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.394)	(0.291)	
Constant	15.292***	15.096***	66.078***	57.601***	
	(0.192)	(0.170)	(4.262)	(4.346)	
Observations	204	204	204	204	
R ²	0.012	0.023	0.061	0.082	
Adjusted R ²	0.007	0.018	0.056	0.078	
F Statistic	2.353	4.754**	13.124***	18.159***	
Note:				[*] p ^{**} p ^{***} p<0.01	

For one percent increase in ideological distance, Export would decrease for 0.014%, Import for 0.020%. Export share will decrease for 0.014 units, and Export share – for 0.012 units.

Table 4. General Left-Right

	Dependent variable:			
	Export)	Import)	Export_share	Import_share
Irgen)	-0.005	0.002	0.879**	0.695**
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.419)	(0.303)
Ethnicity)	0.104***	0.071***	4.477***	3.339*
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(1.145)	(1.842)
Voice_Account)	-0.035***	-0.027**	-0.044	0.637*
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.510)	(0.370)
Gov_Effect)	-0.007	0.007	-0.383	-0.260
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.485)	(0.350)
Rule_Law)	0.003	-0.011	-0.043	-0.457
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.467)	(0.337)
Cultur_Dist)	-0.212***	-0.121*	-6.407**	-5.161
	(0.065)	(0.066)	(3.079)	(4.936)
Constant	14.144***	14.315***	21.343*	25.146
	(0.281)	(0.274)	(11.383)	(18.193)
Observations	204	204	204	204
R ²	0.161	0.078	0.110	0.072
Adjusted R ²	0.135	0.050	0.083	0.044
F Statistic	37.813***	16.677**	24.383***	15.284**

The next specification tests the impact of general left-right ideological distance between dyads, coded as variable "lrgen". While Cultural Distance and Ethnicity remain to be significant predictor of all variables associated with trade, the overall left-right positioning does not have an observable effect on import, export, import share or export share.

Even though "lrgen" coefficients for export share and import share are significant and positive, the percentage change of 0.0008 and 0.006 is too low for any comprehensive conclusions. Import and Export coefficients are disregarded due to lack of statistical significance. Since all four variables demonstrate contradicting evidence, along with extremely

low coefficients, hypothesis that ideological proximity on the right-left scale increases trade cannot be supported.

	Dependent variable:			
	Export)	Import)	Export_share	Import_share
lrecon)	0.012	0.013	0.564	0.643
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.554)	(0.398)
Ethnicity)	0.104***	0.073***	4.667***	3.515*
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(1.121)	(1.801)
Voice_Account)	-0.036***	-0.028**	-0.051	0.626*
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.502)	(0.363)
Gov_Effect)	-0.004	0.009	-0.510	-0.311
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.478)	(0.344)
Rule_Law)	0.002	-0.012	-0.022	-0.467
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.461)	(0.332)
Cultur_Dist)	-0.209***	-0.119*	-6.484**	-5.193
	(0.064)	(0.065)	(3.015)	(4.826)
Constant	14.147***	14.302***	19.177*	23.294
	(0.292)	(0.283)	(11.167)	(17.800)
Observations	204	204	204	204
R ²	0.166	0.083	0.101	0.059
Adjusted R ²	0.141	0.055	0.073	0.030
F Statistic	39.318***	17.836***	22.068***	12.344*
Note:				*p**p***p<0.01

Table 5. Economic Left-Right

The third specification that tests ideological distance on the economic left vs. right scale also did not prove to be a predictor of trade. Even though coefficients are positive, the statistical significance level does not confirm the hypothesis that ideological proximity in the economic domain would impact the trade. Controls, such as Ethnicity, Voice Accountability and Cultural Distance, as in the previous specifications, are statistically significant and support the argument. Hypothesis of ideological impact on vote distance was not confirmed by the statistical evidence. Statistical significance was not achieved at the 95% level for variables, associated with trade.

Table 6. Vote distance

	Dependent variable:			
	Vote_Distan)			
galtan)	0.021			
	(0.068)			
lgen)		-0.047		
		(0.062)		
lrecon)			-0.150*	
			(0.088)	
Ethnicity)	0.094**	0.101**	0.080*	
	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.047)	
Voice_Account)	-0.097	-0.090	-0.045	
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.071)	
Gov_Effect)	0.127*	0.122 [*]	0.110	
	(0.073)	(0.074)	(0.074)	
Rule_Law)	-0.015	-0.013	0.015	
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.072)	
Cultur_Dist)	0.308**	0.298**	0.252*	
	(0.129)	(0.130)	(0.132)	
Constant	-3.767***	-3.858***	-3.586***	
	(0.475)	(0.492)	(0.483)	
Observations	204	204	204	
R ²	0.072	0.074	0.078	
Adjusted R ²	0.044	0.046	0.050	
F Statistic	15.237**	15.726**	16.651**	
Note:		*p**p	***p<0.01	

The empirical tests confirm that ideology measured on a GAL-TAN scale is statistically significant and being negatively correlated with all trade variables, while coefficients sign is not consistent for overall left-right and economic left right – negatively correlated. For the

voting proximity, on the other hand, none of the ideological variables demonstrated a statistically significant correlation.

Statistically significant relation between the governmental ideology on the GAL-TAN scale and trade is a phenomenon which requires further consideration. Positioning of the party on the GAL-TAN often differs from the general right left position, and it appears particularly salient for the Visegrad states. In order to explore the role of GAL-TAN further, this research turns to the years, when there was a particular ideological closeness between pairs of selected states.

The mean ideological GAL-TAN difference between the dyads of states accounts to 1.07 points, with minimum ideological distance point of 0.01, and maximum distance - 3.22.





Some dyads were ideologically closer to each other than others. In particular, the pair which stands out with regards to their ideological closeness is Slovakia and Czechia, with a mean distance of 0,87 points. When analyzing the share of Import and Export, those two

countries also show an unprecedentedly high trade share between each other, as well (Figure 14; Figure 15). Other pairs shared, on average, 1 point distance, such as Poland and Slovakia, Poland and Czechia, Poland and Hungary. While the biggest mean distance on the GAL-TAN was 1,3 – shared by Slovakia and Hungary, Czechia and Hungary.

For the case study this research chose to focus on the import and export shares between the pairs of states, as opposed to import and export as total numbers. While trade in total numbers is ultimately more influenced by a variety of factors, trade as a share reflects more upon choice of each specific partner. Export and import between states in total numbers would grow across years exponentially, while the share of partners could stay the same across the sample.

Additionally, after analyzing graphs of import share and export share, we found that import share patterns generally repeat export share patterns. Hence, to avoid data noise, the case study focuses only on import share variable.

Even though, regressions found almost identic correlation between GAL-TAN ideology distance and import and export, we believe that import share is also more indicative for the case study. Countries as self-interested players would have more incentive to export goods and services regardless of ideology, while at the same time governments would have more possibility to prioritize, follow preferences, or generally maneuvers, when it comes to import.

In order to confirm the results gained through regression analysis and explore the GAL-TAN ideological composition in Hungary, Poland, Czechia and Slovakia, this work also engages with comparative case study analysis.

6.Qualitative case study

In the beginning of 2000s, Visegrad states were ideologically rather close to each other. Czech Republic and Hungary were at their lowest ideological distance point from 2002 to 2005 (0.69). Similarly, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic were ideologically closest in the period from 2002 until 2005 (0.8).

In 2002 in Slovakia ANO, KDH, SMK and SDKU formed the government. ANO, at that time is defined as a liberal party, KDH which was conservative party, SMK, a party of the Hungarian community defined as regionalist, and SDKU a Christian democratic party.

SDKU and SMK together got 26% of votes and received 3,5 and 5,2 points on the GAL-TAN scale; ANO with 8% of the votes received 3,5 points on the GAL-TAN. This composition of the government shows overall center-left orientation of the government on the GAL-TAN due to the comparatively biggest seat share of SDKU and SML.

At the same time in Czechia, only two parties formed the government CSSD which is a socialist party and KDU-CSL which is Christian-Democratic. CSSD, however, received significantly higher vote of 30,2%, while KDU-CSL has gotten 10,3%.

On the GAL-TAN scale, their points also differ - CSSD received 4,7 which puts it very close to center. KDU-CSL got 7,5 on the GAL-TAN, aligning closer with traditional and authoritarian orientation, but with three times less votes. In total, it resulted that both Czech Republic and Slovakia found themselves very close to the center on the GAL-TAN scale, and ideologically close to each other.

After 2002, both countries shared center-liberal orientation, with Slovakia leaning towards left. Throughout all years, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic are the closest ideological partners among all the dyads, so their distance does not reach overall extremes. Yet,

the elections of 2006 have increased the difference to its maximum point distance of 1.7 in the GAL-TAN.

In Slovakia, following 2006 elections SDKU-DS and SMER received a majority of votes - 18,4% and 29,1%, respectively. Compared to previous elections, SKDU moved up from left-center to the liberal center on the GAL-TAN scale (4,5 points). SMER which participated in the government formation for the first time, with its position on the GAL-TAN was also ranked moderate, reaching 4,4.

In the previous elections, the only ideologically right party to participate in the government was KDH. While in 2006 two more parties which were leaning towards traditional-authoritarian orientation were also included in the government. LS-HZDS, SMK both received more than 6 points on the GAL-TAN, while KDH – 8,7. Slovak Republic. As results indicate, Slovakia moved closer to center right, compared to 2002 elections.

At the same time, in Czechia Conservative ODS got 35% of the votes during 2006 elections, and as a result it participated in the government, as opposed to 2002 elections. On the GAL-TAN scale, ODS stood on center-left with 3,7 points. Similar to previous elections, CSSD received 32% of the votes, with its ideological score of 4,8. Christian Democratic KDU-CSL, on the other hand, got fewer votes than before (7,2%), bringing the overall GAL-TAN orientation closer to center-left, as compared to center libertarian scored in the previous elections.

While Slovakia did not drastically change its overall GAL-TAN position in 2006, it certainly moved closer to center right, while Czech government ideology moved in the opposite direction. Their ideological distance, however, is much smaller than the one between other dyads, therefore relatively slight changes in distance might have lesser impact on trade.

Figure 2. GAL-TAN distance: Czechia and Slovakia



Figure 3. Import share: Czechia and Slovakia



As we observe, both Slovakian and Czech import share was growing and reached its highest point around 2007 but started to decrease drastically since (Figure 3). This tendency

goes along with their GAL-TAN distance patterns, whereas trade predictably took more time to adjust, following 2006 elections.

Ideological polarization following 2006 was associated not only with Slovakia and Czechia, but almost all the dyads. Even though Poland was not particularly close ideologically to its partners until 2006, it also moved even further ideologically apart from Visegrad partners since.

Slovakia and Hungary reached their highest distance of 3.2 points in the years of 2006-2009. Whereas with return of Fidesz in 2010, GAL-TAN distance of Slovakia and Hungary has again decreased. As Tab. 4 demonstrates, their high ideological distance post 2006 was not particularly reflected on the Import share, but ideological proximity following 2010 is observable. In 2010, import share for both Hungary and Slovakia starts to grow drastically, following their low ideological distance.

Figure 4. GAL-TAN distance: Hungary and Slovakia





Figure 5. Import share: Hungary and Slovakia

While this research already established that governmental ideological orientation in Slovakia post 2006 as center-right, in Hungary elections of 2006 brought a center-left government. Socialist MSzP and Conservative SzDSz received around 50% and scored 4 and 2,1 on the GAL-TAN scale.

As it can be concluded, left government in Hungary was relatively distant from centerright Slovakia, while it was not particularly far from Czechia on the GAL-TAN. The tendency of growing Import share for Czechia and Hungary is indeed present, following 2006, until the observable decrease in 2010.



Figure 6. GAL-TAN distance: Hungary and Czechia

Figure 7. Import share: Czechia and Hungary



Left leaning Hungary also reached its maximum distance with Poland in 2005 and 2006 (2.7 and 2.4 points), until elections were held in Poland in 2007. In Poland elections of 2005, brought Agrarian S, Radical Right PiS and Confessional LPR to the government. On the GAL-

TAN scale, S and PiS received 7,7 and 9,6 points, while LPR has scored 10 out of 10. In total, Polish government found themselves ideologically on the right, traditional and authoritarian end of the GAL-TAN scale. Import share did not reflect a drastic distance between Hungary and Poland in 2005 and 2006. While there is pattern of continuous Import share growth, the closer those countries move to each other ideologically, as could be observed on the figure 8.





Figure 9. Import share: Poland and Hungary



In 2005, Poland reached its maximum distance also with Czech Republic (2.0) with its center-left government. Import share of Poland and Czechia was low in 2005 but started to grow since. At the same time, the correlation between ideological difference and import share is not as pronounced as for other pairs.

Figure 10.GAL-TAN distance: Poland and Czechia



Figure 11.Import share: Poland and Czechia



With Slovakia, leaning towards center right after 2006, right wing Poland has grown its import share in the following years. Figure 12 shows that through the years GAL-TAN distance between states decreases, while their import share grows.

Figure 12.GAL-TAN distance: Poland and Slovakia



Figure 13. Import share: Poland and Slovakia



Another pattern which stands out in the data is the pattern of ideological rapprochement of the Visegrad states following 2016, with Poland and Hungary, Hungary and Slovakia, Slovakia and Poland reaching their lowest GAL-TAN distance points. To confirm those results, this research further explores the elections in V4 after 2016, and their ideological landscape.

In Poland last elections were held in 2015 with radical right PiS (9,1 on the GAL-TAN) forming the government with 37% of the votes. In Hungary the GAL-TAN tendency started already before, when in 2014 Fidesz received 39,5% of the votes. Defined as conservative at that time, they received 8,6 points on the GAL-TAN scale, bringing the 2014 government to a traditional-authoritarian end. After 2018 elections Fidesz (already defined as radical right) scored even higher on the GAL-TAN (9,2), while acquiring 49,2% of the votes.

As a result, Hungary and Poland, with the traditional-authoritarian orientation of their governments achieved their lowest point distance during 2015 - 2017, as fixed in the study. Their impact share also reflects the steady growth, particularly after 2010 when Fidesz came back to power.

Slovakia demonstrated similar tendency after 2016 elections, where Socialist SMER – SD got 28,2% of the votes, radical right SNS got 8%, and Conservative MH got 6,5%. On the GAL-TAN scale SMER – SD and SNS who together got the biggest GAL-TAN score - 7,8 and SNS 8,9 points. Following government composition anchored after 2016 elections, Slovakia achieved its lowest ever point distance with Poland in 2016-2018, and Hungary in 2016-2017.

Czechia was not particularly close to other Visegrad states and did not demonstrate lowest distance points with either of them, it also did not reach its maximum points distance either. The last elections in Czechia fixed in our sample were held in 2017. Only two parties formed the government – a Socialist CSSD with 7% of the votes and ANO2011 which wasn't affiliated to any family with 29,6 %. On the GAL-TAN scale, however, both parties had a very similar score 4,9 and 5,7 points respectively, making the country very close to the center. After looking at each case specifically, the ideological reproachment of 2016-2018 was an observable pattern. Furthermore, when combining all pairs on the same graph, the tendency of increased trade following 2016 indeed stands out.

Figure 14. Import share within the dyads



Figure 15. Export share within the dyads





Import and export shares grow throughout the analyzed period for most of the pairs, reaching their maximum points close to 2018. While, as reflected on the table, it is not the case for all pairs. Dyad of Slovakia and Czechia does not seem to reflect any ideological fluctuations, as those states are already ideologically the closest dyad across the sample. They also share the highest import and export share overall. Poland and Hungary are the most distinct pair to analyse– they were the most ideologically distant in the beginning of the analyzed period, and the closest towards the end. Import share does indicate a growing pattern, the less ideologically far they become, while export share reflects it even more. The similar pattern of negative correlation is also very pronounced on the graphs for Poland and Slovakia, Hungary and Slovakia, Czechia and Poland.





Figure 17. Import within the dyads



Even though Import and Export as total amounts demonstrate even more distinct growth closer to 2018, the total trade variables are less significant compared to the trade share within countries. The growth of export and import as totals are primarily affiliated to the economic growth of those countries, and to a much lesser extent – the choice of partners.

7. Discussion

The empirical part of this work has explored the impact of ideological proximity defined through three separate variables on bilateral trade and voting alliance. The results of the loglinear regressions did not demonstrate significant correlation between trade and vote alliance for Visegrad states. Those findings also correspond to Michal Onderco's findings that domestic political arrangements have a very limited importance for the geopolitical preferences of the V4 which is expressed as voting in this work (Onderco, 2014). As he demonstrated, the voting alliance between the Visegrad states is already high, and their behavior on the international arena also changes simultaneously, regardless of the composition of the domestic governments.

The results of the regressions also did not prove a significant correlation between trade and ideological positioning on the left vs. right or economic left vs. right scale. The ideological proximity on the GAL-TAN scale, however, demonstrated an observable impact on bilateral trade for Visegrad countries.

The GAL-TAN measurement of the ideology has become a significant measure in the recent scholarly works and is particularly relevant for the Visegrad states. In his work on democracy in Hungary and Poland Fecnic (2015) argues that major parties in those countries share a common feature of little difference along economic left-right cleavage, while extremely different positions on the GAL-TAN dimension.

SMER-SD, for example, is defined as a Socialist party, and in terms of its overall ideological stance, or its stance regarding economic issues – it largely leans towards left. While on the GAL-TAN scale it starts from moderate center-left position in 2002, and almost reaches traditional authoritarian ends with 7,8 points out of 10. This reasoning makes a GAL-TAN scale a particularly salient to measure the ideological composition in the V4 and explains a significant correlation of this variable with trade.

The impact of ideological closeness measured via GAL-TAN ideology shows a 0,016% and 0.023% decrease for export and import as totals for one percent increase in ideological distance. This pattern is also present when measuring import and export as share per partner, with 0.014 and 0.011 units decrease for one percent increase in ideological distance.

Those findings were additionally tested in a case study, which explored ideological composition of governments in four Visegrad states using GAL-TAN ideology measurement scale. A comparative ideological analysis for each country also considered the GAL-TAN point distance between states, as highlighted by our data. For those countries which had a high point distance, case study confirmed that their governments were composed by parties on the opposite side of the GAL-TAN scale.

The case study particularly focused on trade as a share, as it is more representative of the relations between states than trade flows in total numbers. Additionally, both import and export are growing across the years in the sample, while import and export share per partner do not follow the pattern of exponential growth.

The comparative analysis highlighted that import as share is influenced by ideological variable, as state's decision to import from another country is often more preference-based than export. Analysis particularly highlighted the two periods in their relations – high ideological distance in 2006 and following years, and gradual rapprochement after 2016. The case study confirms that patterns of trade flows within V4 do go along with the ideological proximity of their governments. While bilateral trade demonstrates a tendency to grow throughout the years, the findings also show that ideological proximity on the GAL-TAN scale is correlated with import share.

For instance, Slovakia and Czechia were close on the GAL-TAN scale following elections of 2003, and until 2006 when their governments shifted more towards center right and center-left, respectively. This tendency was also reflected on their import share, which

decreased after 2006 elections in both countries. Slovakian trading relations also decreased with Hungary which took a left position on the GAL-TAN with MSzP and SzDSz in its government. After return of Fidesz to power, and drastic turn to right on the GAL-TAN ideological scale, Hungarian trading relations increased with Poland and Czechia.

The study indicated the gradual ideological realignment within the V4 following 2016. With dominating PiS in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary and SMER-SD in Slovakia, those three countries found themselves very close to the right on the GAL-TAN scale. The tendency of increasing export and import, both as totals and share also goes along with those findings.

Overall, the case study confirmed the correlation that was demonstrated by log-linear regressions and analyzed in-depth the ideological tendencies that impacted this cooperation. While steadily growing trade majorly is highly correlated with variety of factors, which are included in our regressions, this work showed a significant impact of ideology on export and import.

The case study also gave a perspective on the increase of right-wing tendencies in the Visegrad space and its impact on economic cooperation. An observable increase in trade between Visegrad states as most of their governments lean towards right on the GAL-TAN scale, demonstrates that cooperation within ideologically similar governments exceeds the joint discursive effort.

8. Limitations

Theoretical framework and methodology used in this work proved to be appropriate measure to research ideological proximity. However, some limitations could be highlighted.

There are different approaches to define cooperation that are focal concepts of this work. While cooperation is defined as bilateral trade and voting alliance in this study, representing the geopolitical and economic aspects of the state, there might also be a different way to measure cooperation.

Additionally, this work opted for measuring ideological proximity through the ideological composition of the governments, calculated with Patrick Mello's formula that weights each party towards the number of seats they gained in a respective year (Mello, 2012). While this approach proposes a valid measure for ideological proximity and hence is appropriate for this study, it is not an exhaustive measure to capture ideology. Additionally, this work does not account for ideological variation of the same government in-between elections, as it is based only on the electoral data.

The multiplicity of ideologies that also possess distinctive features cannot be accounted in this work. Furthermore, theoretical premise of this work claims that democracies cooperate with each other more, and our research findings expand on this by adding that democracies what share comparable systems and ideological proximity of their governments will be more cooperative. Furthermore, this work is focused on democratic countries which exhibit a similar institutional and historical path, and hence allow us to compare their parties.

Hence, applying the same findings to non-democratic systems could also go against the theoretical premise and are a limitation of this work.

9. Conclusions

This work aimed to provide evidence that domestic ideologies have a significant effect on cooperation between states. While previous scholarly research has established that democracies tend to collaborate more with states that share a similar political system, this work has made a contribution by asserting that states with similar ideologies perceive each other's systems as even more comparable. In addition to economic and geopolitical preferences that are fundamental for cooperation, ideological proximity further strengthens the perception of similarity between their respective political systems, leading to increased cooperation.

The case study of the V4 is particularly well-suited in understanding the impact of ideological proximity on cooperation. The V4 countries have followed similar historical and institutional paths, resulting in their political systems sharing many similarities that ensure their cooperative behavior (Törő et al. 2012; Kucharczyk et al. 2015; Kalhousová and Rubínová, 2020) However, their cooperation becomes drastically more evident when their ideologies align, particularly it reached its peak during the migrant crisis of 2014. Our empirical analysis confirms that ideological proximity is indeed an important factor for the V4 group. Findings of this work reveal a correlation between ideological proximity and bilateral trade. However, the relationship between ideology and voting alignment, although theoretically valid, did not generate sufficient statistical evidence, possibly due to their already high level of voting alliance.

Many scholars have emphasized that V4 cooperation is only present when their interests coincide (Dangerfield, 2018; Neuman 2017). The differing attitudes of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic towards Russia and Ukraine, which became more apparent after the war, prompted discussions about the potential end of the Visegrad Group. However, this work establishes that despite occasional differences in political rhetoric, a steady rapprochement of cooperation can be observed as their ideologies become closer.

The relevance of this work is particularly pronounced today given the rise of the radical right in the region. Chiru and Wunsh point to the "more gradual and partial development towards greater collaboration" (2023, 78) between radical right parties, and findings of this work corroborate this statement. At the same time, many scholars have also underscored how right-wing parties often failed to unite and cooperate in a more profound way (Startin, 2010; De Lange, 2012). Due to their institutional differences, but also their nationalist rhetoric, right wing parties undermine any potential for international cooperation, such as create coalitions in the international bodies (such as the European Parliament).

This research contributes to the literature by exploring other ways of cooperation between right-wing governments such as bilateral trade and voting alignment. Additionally, by mitigating the institutional differences that prevent international cooperation, this research suggests looking at groups of similar states (such as the V4) instead of the right-wing parties globally. Ultimately, this research constitutes a valuable contribution to the academic understanding of the factors driving cooperation. Applying these results to a broader group of states in future research could shed light on the relevance of ideology for cooperation among countries with diverse systems that are not necessarily expected to engage in intensive cooperation.

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11. Appendices

country	electionyear	score
Pol	2001	0,76
Pol	2002	0,76
Pol	2003	0,76
Pol	2004	0,76
Pol	2005	4,26
Pol	2006	4,26
Pol	2007	2,69
Pol	2008	2,69
Pol	2009	2,69
Pol	2010	2,69
Pol	2011	2,38
Pol	2012	2,38
Pol	2013	2,38
Pol	2014	2,38
Pol	2015	1,11
Pol	2016	1,11
Pol	2017	1,11
Pol	2018	1,11
Pol	2019	3,99
Cz	2002	2,19
Cz	2003	2,19
Cz	2004	2,19
Cz	2005	2,19
Cz	2006	3,41
Cz	2007	3,41
Cz	2008	3,41
Cz	2009	3,41
Cz	2010	2,68
Cz	2011	2,68
Cz	2012	2,68
Cz	2013	2,26
Cz	2014	2,26
Cz	2015	2,26
Cz	2016	2,26
Cz	2017	2,06
Cz	2018	2,06
Cz	2019	2.06

Appendix 1. Gal-Tan ideological score of the government

Hun	2002	1,50
Hun	2003	1,50
Hun	2004	1,50
Hun	2005	1,50
Hun	2006	1,87
Hun	2007	1,87
Hun	2008	1,87
Hun	2009	1,87
Hun	2010	3,89
Hun	2011	3,89
Hun	2012	3,89
Hun	2013	3,89
Hun	2014	3,41
Hun	2015	3,41
Hun	2016	3,41
Hun	2017	3,41
Hun	2018	4,53
Hun	2019	4,53
Slo	2002	2,05
Slo	2003	2,05
Slo	2004	2,05
Slo	2005	2,05
Slo	2006	5,09
Slo	2007	5,09
Slo	2008	5,09
Slo	2009	5,09
Slo	2010	2,12
Slo	2011	2,12
Slo	2012	3,08
Slo	2013	3,08
Slo	2014	3,08
Slo	2015	3,08
Slo	2016	3,31
Slo	2017	3,31
Slo	2018	3,31
Slo	2019	3,31

country	year	galtan
hungary_czechia	2002	0,69
hungary_czechia	2003	0,69
hungary_czechia	2004	0,69
hungary_czechia	2005	0,69
hungary_czechia	2006	1,54
hungary_czechia	2007	1,54
hungary_czechia	2008	1,54
hungary_czechia	2009	1,54
hungary_czechia	2010	1,21
hungary_czechia	2011	1,21
hungary_czechia	2012	1,21
hungary_czechia	2013	1,63
hungary_czechia	2014	1,15
hungary_czechia	2015	1,15
hungary_czechia	2016	1,15
hungary_czechia	2017	1,36
hungary_czechia	2018	2,48
hungary_czechia	2019	2,48
hungary_poland	2002	0,75
hungary_poland	2003	0,75
hungary_poland	2004	0,75
hungary_poland	2005	2,76
hungary_poland	2006	2,39
hungary_poland	2007	0,82
hungary_poland	2008	0,82
hungary_poland	2009	0,82
hungary_poland	2010	1,20
hungary_poland	2011	1,51
hungary_poland	2012	1,51
hungary_poland	2013	1,51
hungary_poland	2014	1,03
hungary_poland	2015	0,01
hungary_poland	2016	0,01
hungary_poland	2017	0,01
hungary_poland	2018	1,11
hungary_poland	2019	0,55
hungary_slovakia	2002	0,55
hungary_slovakia	2003	0,55
hungary_slovakia	2004	0,55

Appendix 2. Gal-Tan ideological difference in pairs

hungary_slovakia	2005	0,55
hungary_slovakia	2006	3,22
hungary_slovakia	2007	3,22
hungary_slovakia	2008	3,22
hungary_slovakia	2009	3,22
hungary_slovakia	2010	1,77
hungary_slovakia	2011	1,77
hungary_slovakia	2012	0,81
hungary_slovakia	2013	0,81
hungary_slovakia	2014	0,34
hungary_slovakia	2015	0,34
hungary_slovakia	2016	0,10
hungary_slovakia	2017	0,10
hungary_slovakia	2018	1,22
hungary_slovakia	2019	1,22
czechia_hungary	2002	0,69
czechia_hungary	2003	0,69
czechia_hungary	2004	0,69
czechia_hungary	2005	0,69
czechia_hungary	2006	1,54
czechia_hungary	2007	1,54
czechia_hungary	2008	1,54
czechia_hungary	2009	1,54
czechia_hungary	2010	1,21
czechia_hungary	2011	1,21
czechia_hungary	2012	1,21
czechia_hungary	2013	1,63
czechia_hungary	2014	1,15
czechia_hungary	2015	1,15
czechia_hungary	2016	1,15
czechia_hungary	2017	1,36
czechia_hungary	2018	2,48
czechia_hungary	2019	2,48
czechia_slovakia	2002	0,14
czechia_slovakia	2003	0,14
czechia_slovakia	2004	0,14
czechia_slovakia	2005	0,14
czechia_slovakia	2006	1,68
czechia_slovakia	2007	1,68
czechia_slovakia	2008	1,68
czechia_slovakia	2009	1,68
czechia_slovakia	2010	0,56

czechia_slovakia	2011	0,56
czechia_slovakia	2012	0,40
czechia_slovakia	2013	0,82
czechia_slovakia	2014	0,82
czechia_slovakia	2015	0,82
czechia_slovakia	2016	1,05
czechia_slovakia	2017	1,26
czechia_slovakia	2018	1,26
czechia_slovakia	2019	1,26
czechia_poland	2002	1,44
czechia_poland	2003	1,44
czechia_poland	2004	1,44
czechia_poland	2005	2,07
czechia_poland	2006	0,85
czechia_poland	2007	0,73
czechia_poland	2008	0,73
czechia_poland	2009	0,73
czechia_poland	2010	0,01
czechia_poland	2011	0,30
czechia_poland	2012	0,30
czechia_poland	2013	0,12
czechia_poland	2014	0,12
czechia_poland	2015	1,17
czechia_poland	2016	1,17
czechia_poland	2017	1,37
czechia_poland	2018	1,37
czechia_poland	2019	1,93
slovakia_czechia	2002	0,14
slovakia_czechia	2003	0,14
slovakia_czechia	2004	0,14
slovakia_czechia	2005	0,14
slovakia_czechia	2006	1,68
slovakia_czechia	2007	1,68
slovakia_czechia	2008	1,68
slovakia_czechia	2009	1,68
slovakia_czechia	2010	0,56
slovakia_czechia	2011	0,56
slovakia_czechia	2012	0,40
slovakia_czechia	2013	0,82
slovakia_czechia	2014	0,82
slovakia_czechia	2015	0,82
slovakia_czechia	2016	1,05

slovakia_czechia	2017	1,26
slovakia_czechia	2018	1,26
slovakia_czechia	2019	1,26
slovakia_hungary	2002	0,55
slovakia_hungary	2003	0,55
slovakia_hungary	2004	0,55
slovakia_hungary	2005	0,55
slovakia_hungary	2006	3,22
slovakia_hungary	2007	3,22
slovakia_hungary	2008	3,22
slovakia_hungary	2009	3,22
slovakia_hungary	2010	1,77
slovakia_hungary	2011	1,77
slovakia_hungary	2012	0,81
slovakia_hungary	2013	0,81
slovakia_hungary	2014	0,34
slovakia_hungary	2015	0,34
slovakia_hungary	2016	0,10
slovakia_hungary	2017	0,10
slovakia_hungary	2018	1,22
slovakia_hungary	2019	1,22
slovakia_poland	2002	1,30
slovakia_poland	2003	1,30
slovakia_poland	2004	1,30
slovakia_poland	2005	2,21
slovakia_poland	2006	0,83
slovakia_poland	2007	2,41
slovakia_poland	2008	2,41
slovakia_poland	2009	2,41
slovakia_poland	2010	0,57
slovakia_poland	2011	0,27
slovakia_poland	2012	0,69
slovakia_poland	2013	0,69
slovakia_poland	2014	0,69
slovakia_poland	2015	0,35
slovakia_poland	2016	0,12
slovakia_poland	2017	0,12
slovakia_poland	2018	0,12
slovakia_poland	2019	0,67
poland_czechia	2002	1,44
poland_czechia	2003	1,44
poland_czechia	2004	1,44

poland_czechia	2005	2,07
poland_czechia	2006	0,85
poland_czechia	2007	0,73
poland_czechia	2008	0,73
poland_czechia	2009	0,73
poland_czechia	2010	0,01
poland_czechia	2011	0,30
poland_czechia	2012	0,30
poland_czechia	2013	0,12
poland_czechia	2014	0,12
poland_czechia	2015	1,17
poland_czechia	2016	1,17
poland_czechia	2017	1,37
poland_czechia	2018	1,37
poland_czechia	2019	1,93
poland_hungary	2002	0,75
poland_hungary	2003	0,75
poland_hungary	2004	0,75
poland_hungary	2005	2,76
poland_hungary	2006	2,39
poland_hungary	2007	0,82
poland_hungary	2008	0,82
poland_hungary	2009	0,82
poland_hungary	2010	1,20
poland_hungary	2011	1,51
poland_hungary	2012	1,51
poland_hungary	2013	1,51
poland_hungary	2014	1,03
poland_hungary	2015	0,01
poland_hungary	2016	0,01
poland_hungary	2017	0,01
poland_hungary	2018	1,11
poland_hungary	2019	0,55
poland_slovakia	2002	1,30
poland_slovakia	2003	1,30
poland_slovakia	2004	1,30
poland_slovakia	2005	2,21
poland_slovakia	2006	0,83
poland_slovakia	2007	2,41
poland_slovakia	2008	2,41
poland_slovakia	2009	2,41
poland_slovakia	2010	0,57

poland_slovakia	2011	0,27
poland_slovakia	2012	0,69
poland_slovakia	2013	0,69
poland_slovakia	2014	0,69
poland_slovakia	2015	0,35
poland_slovakia	2016	0,12
poland_slovakia	2017	0,12
poland_slovakia	2018	0,12
poland_slovakia	2019	0,67