The Politics of Dependence on International Trade: Public Attitudes, Policy Preferences, and US Responses to Supply Chain Vulnerability

by

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to H. D.—you'd likely have earned a Ph.D. before me, but I know that you'd still be proud (and that I'd have had someone to fix everything in LaTeX).

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the impact of the United States' dependence on foreign-made goods, examining how concerns over this reliance shape public opinion and policy outcomes. As recent global events and public discourse highlight the national security risks of international supply chains, this research explores the conditions under which these vulnerabilities alter public support for trade, influence policy preferences, and translate into legislative action. Using a mixed methods approach that combines quantitative experimental survey research with qualitative case study analysis, this three-article dissertation provides an examination of a critical issue at the intersection of international security and domestic politics.

The first paper uses two survey experiments to demonstrate that while framing trade in terms of national security vulnerabilities erodes general support, this effect is significantly mitigated when the potential economic costs of reshoring production are made apparent, demonstrating the tension between national security policy and pocketbook effects. The second study builds on this by investigating public preferences for specific policy responses to trade dependence. Experimental findings show a clear public preference for policies that recede from trade, particularly for critical goods such as telecommunications and military equipment. This preference is most pronounced among Republican respondents. However, the source of the dependence—whether an ally or an adversary—had no significant impact on the public's policy choice, an unexpected finding. The final paper attempts to bridge the gap between public sentiment and policy reality. Through a qualitative analysis focusing on three goods of concern—semiconductors, oil, and pharmaceuticals—this research finds that enacted policy responses, unlike public opinion, are intensely shaped by both the strategic nature of the product and the geopolitical status of its source country. A strong correlation emerges between the strategic importance of a good and whether it is sourced from an adversary and the salience and intensity of the corresponding US policy intervention.

Taken together, this dissertation uncovers a unique dynamic between public anxieties and policymaker decisionmaking. While voters are primarily concerned with the type of good in question and the potential costs of protectionism, policymakers seem to respond with greater urgency when dependence involves both a strategic product and an adversarial nation. This research contributes to our understanding of the political economy of trade by linking experi-

mental findings on public opinion with real-world policy outcomes, offering a detailed analysis of how anxieties over trade dependence are reshaping the foundations of US trade policy, as well as domestic industrial policy.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The flow of goods across borders has long been a foundational tenet of US economic policy since 1945—indeed, one could argue it is a cornerstone of the liberal international order in general. The US has championed this economic integration by espousing the benefits of comparative advantage, and each country began to specialize in certain areas and import many of their products from abroad. As time went on, this deep integration and drive for efficiency has resulted in a vast, fragmented supply chain for many products that we need for our every day lives—without the average consumer perhaps even realizing it. However, recent events have dramatically recast this supply chain as a strategic vulnerability rather than an operational efficiency or economic miracle. First, the COVID-19 pandemic showed what could happen when supply chains shut down, whether that was a result of shipping issues, plant closures, or a lack of supply. Tensions with China intensified and the average American started hearing about potential national security concerns with their goods. More recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine showed the potential power that countries may have to weaponize supply chains during a conflict. There is no doubt that this is a concern of both policymakers and consumers.

My dissertation seeks to investigate the political consequences of this new reality. I explore a fundamental tension that has recently burst into political discourse: how does the US grapple with the national security consequences of reliance on foreign-made goods while maintaining free and open trade, both for the export of its own products and for the economic benefits of imports? From this question comes several others. Under what conditions does this issue alter public support for international trade? How do Americans' anxieties about dependence shape their preferences for specific, often costly, policy interventions? And ultimately, how do these public sentiments translate—or fail to do so—into concrete policy change? These three questions will allow me to examine this issue from three connected but distinct angles: public attitudes, policy preferences, and policymaking outcomes.

I employ a mixed methods approach in this dissertation to bridge the gap between public opinion and actual policy. In my first two papers, I developed original survey experiments

conducted on relatively large samples of the American public. I used techniques in both experiments that allowed for manipulation of framing of the issues, to causally identify how framing the threat changes concerns about the issue and how different goods and countries change the preference for policy responses. In my third paper, I complement the quantitative analysis by undertaking a qualitative analysis of the actual policy environment. I provide a case study overview of three goods—semiconductors, oil, and pharmaceuticals—and examine how the differences in these policies are driven by the strategic importance of the good (i.e. its importance to military and economic power) and whether the US is reliant on an ally or an adversary for imports of the good.

I argue that when international trade is framed not in terms of economic gains (or losses) or as rivalry between different nationalities or ethnic groups, but instead as a source of potential threat to national security, public support for the current global economic order becomes even more fragile than it already is. However, I also expect that this effect will be moderated by concerns about costs and price increases—there is not an unlimited amount of money that voters will spend on fixing this issue. I also attempt to move beyond the usual pro- versus anti-trade dichotomy to provide a more nuanced understanding of the specific policy solutions Americans desire to solve the issue. I use a framework that describes "recessive" (onshoring, tariffs) policy responses and "expansionary" (diversifying trade partners, signing cooperative treaties) policy responses. Under this framework, one could reasonably still be concerned with the issue, yet desire a pro-trade solution to the issue. I argue that preferences for policy responses will depend on whether or not a good is strategic and whether or not the US is dependent on an adversarial country for that good.

The results provide unique insights into this issue, sometimes because they are what I hypothesized and sometimes because they were not. In the first experiment, in which I asked respondents about their concern about the issue and desire to change it, respondents who received a stronger experimental framing showed a stronger desire to decrease trade. However, this was a fickle response, as respondents did not maintain their desire to reshore production when confronted with the issue of costs increasing. This demonstrates a tension that must be reckoned with in any policy change. For the second experiment, in which I examined policy response preferences, respondents clearly preferred recessive responses, particularly subsidies to reshore production. This was much stronger when the good was a strategic good (in this case, telecommunications and military equipment). Republican respondents showed a significantly stronger preference for recessive responses. The source country had a negligible effect, a somewhat surprising outcome. Education, in both experiments, confusingly showed the opposite effect of what decades of political science research demonstrates—these respondents increased their hostility towards trade when they were shown these risks.

In the examination of policy responses, I found that policy outcomes do indeed seem shaped by the geopolitical status of the source country, unlike what I found for the public, and I found as well that strategic importance of the good matters. Semiconductors, for which we have a heavy reliance on an adversarial country (China) and are a highly strategic good, are a top priority when it comes to policy responses to dependence on imports. Oil, which is strategic, but which the US has in abundance, has fewer policy responses, especially today as dependence actually decreases as time goes on. And medicines and medical supplies, which are not strategic but are somewhat dependent, do not have many targeted policy responses at all.

While a great deal of literature has explored the determinants of individual trade preferences, my dissertation contributes a new angle to our field in a few distinct ways. First, while prior work has focused on determinants like interstate conflict and power dynamics (Nguyen, Sattler and Schweinberger, 2024; Chen, 2021; Morrow, Siverson and Tabares, 1998), I attempt to test in this work how framing trade as a national security vulnerability affects public opinion. In addition, in both experiments, I use specific frames to isolate trade sentiment, rather than in any case simply asking respondents whether they agree with trade or how they would like trade policy to change, which I believe more accurately elicits preferences. I also specifically force respondents in both experiments to consider costs. And finally, I examine in what I believe is a novel way the policy responses to dependence on trade and the determinants of the differences in those responses.

These findings show that there is a clear and troubling issue in US trade policy, and, since the US is largely a keeper of it, the global economic order itself. Public support for trade seems quite volatile in the current political era, and the risks from national security pose a great risk to public support. On the other hand, voters do not seem interested in taking on additional costs related to reduction of imports. This will be a challenging issue for policymakers to confront—as I begin to explore in this paper as well—and they must act carefully but purposefully to keep the global economy running.

CHAPTER 2

Dependence on Foreign-Made Goods and Attitudes Towards International Trade

This paper investigates whether concerns about US reliance on foreign-made goods affect individuals' attitudes toward international trade. Given that recent events and public discourse have highlighted the risks of this dependence, the study explores whether exposure to these risks alters opinions on trade's value and increases desire for reshoring production. The results of two survey experiments, which presented respondents with frames explaining the potential threats of trade reliance or a control statement, show that both treatment frames negatively impact general support for trade. However, this effect largely vanishes when potential costs of reshoring are mentioned. The study also examines how these framing effects vary across political and educational spectrums, as well as whether the health condition of a respondent is a factor in attitudes over trade in medical products, contributing to a deeper understanding of the different dimensions of public sentiment about the national security implications of trade. Ultimately, this research concludes that vulnerability to import supply disruptions threatens public support for the international economic order.

2.1 Chapter introduction

The US economy depends on global supply chains that work well and supply goods consistently. The US obtains many very important goods, such as rare earth elements, health care supplies, and technology from overseas. Analysts, policymakers, and national security officials see this as a potential threat, as there may be issues with importing the goods needed should there be a disruption to the supply chain. For example, Ellen Lord, a Pentagon official managing weapons purchasing, stated that the United States should step in using the Defense Production Act to offer support to businesses unable to make a reasonable profit by producing critical materials domestically (Stewart and Stone, 2018). Recent events have highlighted to the public that imports cannot be taken for granted.

Thus, in this paper, I seek to explore whether Americans are concerned with US dependence on foreign-made goods and whether these concerns shape their support for free trade. I expect that exposure to US dependence on foreign-made goods will decrease support for free trade in general. However, reliance on foreign-made goods will concern some individuals more than others. Specifically, I argue that Republican respondents will respond more strongly to exposure to dependence on foreign-made goods, due to their stronger beliefs about the importance of national security and the potential impact of reliance on adversarial nations, and highly educated respondents will respond less negatively to this exposure, as a result of both the long-standing findings that highly educated individuals support free trade in general (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Mansfield, Mutz and Brackbill, 2019; Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017) and due to the fact that the US may have a comparative advantage in the jobs they are most likely to have (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). I also include what I believe is a novel variable—whether the respondent has a serious health condition. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of the healthcare and pharmaceutical supply chain. I expect that respondents with a serious health condition will have a stronger reaction to exposure to dependence on foreign-made goods, because these individuals may recognize the potentially disproportionate individual effect that supply chain disruptions could have.

I present findings from two survey experiments in which I am to measure how public support for trade, and concern about US reliance on trade, are influenced by both the framing of the issue and the characteristics of the respondents. One treatment in each study provides respondents with a general, and relatively less threatening, statement about the issue of American dependence on foreign-made imports. A second treatment in each study provides a much more specific and threatening statement highlighting the threats of dependence, including dependence on China. In Study 1, the statements contrasted a statement explaining US trade dependence (without making any mention of any threat) with a statement explaining the threat from US trade dependence. In Study 2, the statements contrasted threats from nonspecific foreign countries with a threat explicitly from China. A control group in each study read a statement unrelated to trade policy. Afterward, all participants were asked about their concern with trade dependence and their overall views on trade. I also collected data on respondent partisanship, education, and health status to analyze their influence on these attitudes.

I find that respondents decrease their support for trade in general when presented with any of the treatment frames, whether they explained only dependence on trade or gave more detail about a threat from dependence on trade, though the effect depends on the question asked. In particular, the question that notes the potential cost to reshoring production makes the effect disappear. These results are mostly as expected. Partisanship did not interact with the treatments in general, and education interacted with the treatments in the opposite direction

as expected (decreased support for trade, rather than increased it), both surprising findings.

There is a robust literature on trade preferences, which examines many aspects of what affects support for trade, such as gender (Mansfield, Mutz and Silver, 2015), industry of employment (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2012), education (Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006), preexisting prejudices and out-group anxiety (Sabet, 2013; Mutz, 2018; Mansfield and Mutz, 2009), and many more (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mansfield and Mutz, 2013; Mansfield, Mutz and Brackbill, 2019). In addition, there is some research on public understanding of the effects of trade on national security (Scheve and Slaughter, 2004; Acemoglu and Yared, 2010), and a growing body of work about US public opinion on trade and China (Kleinberg and Fordham, 2013; Bulman, 2022, 2025). I contribute to this long-running research program by investigating how vulnerability to import supply shocks might impact trade attitudes.

There is existing work in this area of US-China trade and security, but I seek to expand it. Existing research on public opinion in this area assesses the impact of interstate comity and conflict in development of trade preferences (Carnegie and Gaikwad, 2022), determinants of preferences for a trade agreement (DiGiuseppe and Kleinberg, 2019), declining versus rising power dynamics (Nguyen, Sattler and Schweinberger, 2024), and the effects of Chinese domestic policies (Zeng and Li, 2019). There are cross-national studies on the topic as well (Spilker, Bernauer and Umaña, 2016; Nguyen, Sattler and Schweinberger, 2024). However, I take a step further by explicitly outlining the potential threats from dependence on trade. In addition, I assess differences in overall preferences for trade, not the choice between two policies, by showing respondents only one frame, which I believe is a more natural way for respondents to receive this information and thus provides results that more closely represent real-world preferences. Finally, I explicitly force respondents to think about the tradeoff between domestic production and savings from imports and make a selection on that question alone. This is in addition to the novel question about health status.

This research offers critical insights into the future of American trade policy and the stability of the global economic order. First, the findings suggest a volatile future for US trade policy; while framing trade as a national security threat effectively erodes general support for it, this opposition evaporates when the potential for higher consumer costs is introduced. This creates a challenging environment for policymakers, suggesting that, while anti-trade rhetoric may be politically popular, policies that impose direct financial burdens on voters through reshoring will face significant public resistance. Second, this fragility of public support, particularly when threats are linked to specific adversaries such as China, signals a potential fracturing of the global trade order. If American public opinion turns decisively against economic integration, it could accelerate a shift away from a unified global system toward one characterized by strategic

competition and regional trading blocs, undermining international institutions that rely on broad support. Finally, the erosion of trust in trade relationships could spill over, complicating international cooperation in other critical areas. If the dependence on other countries for vital goods is perceived as a critical vulnerability, it may foster a public desire for greater self-sufficiency that hampers collaborative efforts on global challenges such as climate change, future pandemics, and security alliances. This is a critical shift that policymakers must urgently address.

2.2 Theory

2.2.1 Reliance on foreign-made goods

Many actors in the United States depend on goods or services manufactured abroad. Trade and specialization mean that some nations do not produce key items that they need for survival, proper functioning of the economy, or public health and national security. This includes actors of all different kinds—individual consumers, firms, and the state itself. Normally, this does not pose much of a problem. After all, foreign firms are selling items to the United States in order to accomplish their business goals (usually turning a profit), so they have an incentive to keep the supply chain running and supply enough product to meet demand. In fact, scholars have argued that these supply chains serve to reinforce protection of property rights and fair treatment (Johns and Wellhausen, 2016). But in some cases, the supply chain can be interrupted. We see essentially three types of interruptions in the supply chain that could expose the danger of reliance on foreign goods: positive demand shocks, negative supply shocks, and international conflicts.

With positive demand shocks, there is a sudden surge in demand for a certain good. States will tend to hoard that good by limiting exports or re-exports. Governments may seize supplies and end competitive market transactions in order to ensure supply is available for their domestic markets. States act similarly when there is a negative supply shock. In either case, the available supply is mismatched to the existing demand, and states' first priority is to ensure that domestic supply is as uninterrupted as possible.

The recent COVID-19 crisis made these hypothetical problems real. An example of a positive demand shock is India's export ban on hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial drug that some saw as a potential treatment for the COVID-19 virus. India preferred to keep supplies of the drug within its borders in case it proved to be a useful treatment. This made it impossible for other countries to obtain the drug; the United States was only able to obtain some of the drug after heavy pressure from President Donald Trump (Biswas, 2020). "Vaccine nationalism" played

a large role in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, as well, with producer countries reserving supply for domestic use (Zhou, 2022). The crisis also exposed fault lines in the supply chain where we could see negative supply shocks: factories producing necessary ingredients could close because of the pandemic, stopping production, and shrinking supply. It may be unclear that this problem exists until it is too late. A senior FDA director indicated that it is difficult to assess the ability of the US manufacturing base to respond to a supply shock-triggered crisis because it may be unknown what portion of the active pharmaceutical ingredients we use come from each country (Woodcock, 2019). Furthermore, the United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer stated that the overdependence on medical supplies created a strategic vulnerability (Schlesinger, 2020).

A different and more sinister danger to the supply chain is international conflict. During wars, economic warfare, and other international crises, states can deny other states certain exports to punish or defeat them (Clayton et al., 2025; Chen, 2021). In this case, the state has no motive other than to inflict pain on its opponent. An exporting nation can weaponize trade by curtailing goods that are vital to a consumer state's success in a conflict (Morrow, Siverson and Tabares, 1998). This creates a critical vulnerability for the importing nation and provides a major strategic advantage to the supplier. Furthermore, regional conflicts can also trigger secondary disruptions to global value chains, as seen with the Russia-Ukraine conflict, while separate events like the supply chain breakdowns in China have also highlighted this fragility (Solingen, 2025).

Although all of the aforementioned mechanisms involve government intervention to limit or block exports, this can also be market-driven. For example, a surge in demand for a good that drives up the price could effectively shut out developing country markets from being able to obtain the good, since they have been priced out by relatively wealthier, developed nations.

But how exactly is a country put in danger through their reliance on goods when it comes to a crisis? For one, consumers may depend on a certain good, like foreign-made staple foods or housing materials, and a supply chain shock could make life generally more difficult— the fruits and vegetables consumers expect to see at the supermarket may not be there, or light bulbs may become unacceptably expensive. Particular firms that are important to the economy could be vulnerable to these disruptions, and have well-documented efforts of opposing efforts to economically disrupt their supply chains if they have a high degree of foreign production or sourcing (Lee and Osgood, 2021; Osgood, 2018). Or, more broadly, the economy as a whole may rely on a certain foreign good, like foreign oil or electricity. In certain situations, the supply chain threat to the good in question could be directly connected to the crisis at hand. A country could depend on military equipment that could be withheld when it is needed most. Or, as recently seen, the materials needed for public health, such as key drugs and equipment,

could be unavailable during a health crisis.

All of the negative effects described above are the result of reliance on goods made abroad. These external forces can be natural and entirely out of our control, like a hurricane destroying a key factory or a poor crop year in a country producing most of the world's supply of a given food (Frankel, 2012), or they can be a result of government action or business transactions, such as export restrictions or new labor laws. If goods were made at home instead, the nation would be less vulnerable to these negative effects, whether created by the state or created by the market.

One reaction to a strong reliance on foreign producers would be to strongly support bringing production back home. In turn, this might lead to negative attitudes towards the policies that lead to the loss or non-creation of these industries in the first place—trade liberalization, permitting offshoring, lack of strategic development, neoliberalism, and free-market capitalism. In particular, citizens may identify trade and globalization as factors that lead to these threats, and exhibit significant backlash (Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein and Rudra, 2024).

Thus, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 1**: People who are informed about their country's dependence on foreign trade and vulnerability to supply disruptions will express more hostile attitudes toward international trade.

On the other hand, it is possible that attitudes might go in a different direction. A strong reliance on foreign-made goods might induce citizens to have more strongly pro-trade attitudes since apparently they are benefiting from trade under normal circumstances. It might only be during crises that citizens realize the dangers of reliance on foreign-made goods—it requires a combination of reliance and a crisis that makes them oppose trade.

As a final point, the effects of overreliance (whether in crisis or not) could be to force Americans to strongly support more trade, international economic institutions, and global integration in general. In terms of trade, they might say that the US should try to rely on a more diverse set of countries, so that the country is less vulnerable in crises. Regarding international institutions, they might say that US diplomats should try to rebuild economic order so that trade is freer and less strategic. Perhaps the best medicine, some Americans may argue, is not to pull back on trade but to forge partnerships with countries that have similar conditions that give the current primary source country of a good comparative advantage in that industry. This could come from intentional government action, such as tax breaks or preferential purchases, or it could come from destroying any unfair advantage, potentially through the prosecution of antitrust cases, the elimination of tax breaks, and just general combating "crony capitalism".

Large firms have done this to an extent, shifting their oil imports away from countries that are considered adversaries to the United States (Mityakov, Tang and Tsui, 2013).

In summary, we know that dependence on other countries for the products we need could pose problems if we cannot obtain those products. This dependence is a particular problem when another country could specifically target us by withholding that good, but is an issue even if the threat is entirely outside anyone's control, like weather, or simply collateral damage from a supply shock, like we saw during the pandemic. National security officials have likely seen this as a problem for some time, but Americans probably have not paid it any attention—until public opinion on doing business with China turned and the COVID-19 crisis happened. Now, these issues are at the forefront of the public's mind, and they potentially see these threats as grave enough of a threat to dampen their opinion of foreign trade in general. However, it may shift opinion in favor of international institutions or strengthen trade links with more countries. Overall, we know very little about this subject, in large part because of its low prominence prior to recent events.

2.2.2 Framing import dependence: why be concerned?

If an individual's level of concern about the issue of reliance on foreign goods impacts their trade attitudes, then what changes an individual's level of concern? In other words, voters might view the threat of import dependence in a number of different ways (or as arising from different sources)—perhaps it is about nationalism (or xenophobia). Or, it could be about threats to the US economy. There may even be personal factors that contribute to these attitudes, such as health conditions, that may make someone more vulnerable to supply chain issues. These differing views of what exactly the threat of import dependence exactly *is* may then impact how the threat of import dependence shapes general trade preferences.

Americans with nationalist views want to avoid reliance on other countries simply because they believe in self-sufficiency. This alone is enough to evoke the threat for nationalist individuals (O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2001; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005). It is a very general type of threat and could have a number of underlying factors. There could be a xenophobic attitude that contributes to a nationalist view, in which individuals may be wary of people from other countries in general, and relying on people from other countries to make goods would be abhorrent to this group (Collingwood, Reny and Valenzuela, 2017). Status anxiety could also contribute. Put simply, status anxiety reflects displeasure with changing social dynamics. Individuals with status anxiety feel threatened by others getting ahead and their high socioeconomic status becoming less of an advantage (Mutz, 2018; Mansfield and Mutz, 2009, 2013). Reliance on others would double down on this changing social order. National pride is an aspect of every

country and the United States is no different. Individuals with these sentiments would oppose being dependent on other countries because they would rather products be American-made, and would like to be independent and not reliant on others. They may be particularly worried about this dependence permeating into other non-trade areas—scholars have found that this is a real possibility (Armstrong, 1981).

An economic threat could be another contributing factor to changes in individuals' level of concern about the issue. This frame evokes the idea that our reliance on other countries poses a threat to the long-term economic health of our country. This could be in a number of ways—one obvious one is that jobs will permanently flow out, both leaving workers in affected industries without jobs for which they are trained, and potentially reducing the available jobs permanently. We know that voters are particularly sensitive to job losses from trade specifically (Margalit, 2011). Distributional consequences are a major concern as well, and this has been examined in the literature both through import sensitivity of Congressional districts on roll call voting (Kleinberg and Fordham, 2013) and through "anti-corporate" attitudes reducing levels of support when primary winners are large corporations (Menon and Osgood, 2024).

An unusual but recently salient way to frame the issue would be by examining the public health implications of reliance on trade, given the COVID-19 pandemic that is still well within our collective memory. What if our security could be threatened by our reliance on medications, medical supplies, personal protective equipment, or anything else necessary for public health measures, either during a pandemic or just in general? If we do not make these products here, then we are relying on other countries providing these products in sufficient quantities at prices we can afford. This could become an issue for multiple reasons. An example could be simple supply chain shocks. An earthquake or tsunami in areas with a lot of factories could reduce supply for quite some time and if there are only a few suppliers of a product and no real substitutes, we could experience significant difficulty[1]. A more sinister issue that could come up is the deliberate withholding of medical supplies, either because another country is putting their own interests first or just as retaliation. This may be seen as tantamount to an act of war, of course, but it could be on the table.

Finally, one could be concerned with the more traditional implications for national security of reliance on trade. Although all of these issues are matters of national security, since our ability to keep markets running effectively is a matter of national security, we could think of more direct ways to examine security. Military equipment is a specific industry that could be highly susceptible to the sudden unwillingness of other nations to sell equipment (Moran, 1990). Perhaps one country wants to engage in conflict, but the country that usually supplies

[1]We saw this quite recently—automakers actually needed to *stop the lines of production* because they didn't have microchips, in large part due to a fire in a key factory (Jie, 2021).

military equipment disagrees with this action and cuts off the supply. Telecommunications equipment could pose another obvious threat related to communication not being possible at all or communications being compromised. The WTO recognizes these concerns, in particular, as legitimate and allows nations to respond appropriately (Peng, 2015).

2.2.3 Differential impacts of issue framing: partisanship, education, and health status

We know that different types of voters have differing opinions on trade. Two characteristics emphasized in the literature are party identification and education. Partisanship seems to go beyond simply a way to sort into different political preferences—it seems to be a social identity in itself (Huddy and Bankert, 2017) and has significantly politicized globalization in recent years (Walter, 2021). I examine here two important aspects of partisanship that lead me to hypothesize that Republicans will have a stronger hostile attitude shift than Democrats when exposed to threats from US reliance on trade.

Republicans should ideologically believe in freer trade due to the idea that it is a reduction of government intervention in the market, represents lower taxes (tariffs), and allows consumers to buy what they want and for companies to sell things for the price they want. In contrast, Democrats believe in more government intervention in the market, which can sometimes include tariffs or other barriers to free trade. Democrats have historically represented more anti-trade constituencies like unions and progressives—they have demonstrably taken steps to appease these constituencies in trade negotiations and policymaking (Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold and Zorn, 1997) and more regulation and intervention in markets is tolerated. The comparison here shows that it is likely that Republicans are going to give free trade the benefit of the doubt.

In addition, national security threats seem to be more important to Republicans, particularly when it comes to threats to national security arising from overseas actors. We can see some evidence of this from the fact that Americans generally favor Republicans when it comes to who can best handle national security threats (Norman, 2016). Therefore, reliance on other countries for products we need is unlikely to resonate well with Republicans, and Democrats may feel less strongly about this being an issue. This could mean that, on balance, Republicans will respond more strongly to both frames, since a threat to security underlies each of the different frames that I am using.

Based on this, I hypothesize the following.

> **Hypothesis 2**: Republicans who are informed about their country's dependence on foreign trade will exhibit a stronger shift toward a hostile attitude than Democrats.

Next, we examine education. Researchers consistently find that education increases support for trade (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Mansfield, Mutz and Brackbill, 2019; Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017). This bias will work similarly to the Republican bias—free trade will receive the benefit of the doubt in college-educated individuals. Although there is little empirical research directly assessing the relationship between higher education and nationalism, it is plausible to infer that the observed liberal orientation among college-educated individuals extends to a cosmopolitan worldview. Furthermore, considerations of self-interest may contribute to this phenomenon. A significant proportion of occupations in which the United States has a comparative advantage are located within the service sector, encompass white-collar roles, or involve high-skilled manufacturing. Individuals with higher educational qualifications may therefore be more inclined to endorse free trade, as their employment prospects are less likely to be adversely affected by international competition and may even benefit from it. Scheve and Slaughter2001 lend credence to this interpretation, demonstrating that an individual's factor endowments (i.e., skill level) are a more significant determinant of support for trade barriers than their industry of employment. This aligns with the theoretical expectation that individuals who control abundant factors of production or work in competitive industries would favor free trade (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001, 280-84), a type of "pocketbook" voting, which Gomez and Wilson 2001 argue is only available for sophisticated voters—the kinds of voters who know enough about how the economy works to figure out the implications of policy choices. Mendelberg, McCabe, and Thal 2017 find that education has an effect on economic views overall—college educated individuals, through socialization, have more conservative economic views (Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017, 615-21). This may result in support for free trade through the lens of a preference for less regulation. In addition, as a result of their cosmopolitan bias, these highly educated individuals are also likely to be more receptive to international cooperation as a mechanism for mitigating dependence and addressing supply chain challenges. Consequently, alerting them of threats associated with import dependence is likely to lead them to perceive that the problem is more urgent and needs to be resolved with international cooperation.

Therefore, in line with the vast majority of the findings of the trade literature with respect to education, and my theory of the interaction of this support with the treatments, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 3**: Highly educated individuals who are informed about their country's dependence on foreign trade will exhibit a weaker shift toward a hostile attitude than less educated individuals.

Some individuals are more susceptible to interruptions in trade than others—particularly

for some goods. Medical supplies are one of these goods that I have identified as part of this category. This is quite different from party identification or educational status because it is something intrinsic to the individual and there is a direct material loss, rather than an ideological loss. This is akin to the pocketbook voter model, as mentioned before. The clearest example is probably an individual with a chronic disease who responds only to one drug on the market with one supplier. This individual is seriously threatened by an interruption in the supply chain for that drug. Their life is potentially in danger. Although individuals are unlikely to know many of the details of their medication or medical supply, such as where it comes from, whether there are viable alternatives, etc., the thought of it being a possibility is probably enough. The dependence threat frame of this experiment exposes these individuals to this possibility.

Thus, based on my theory of exposure to this previously unknown threat that activates concern about a threat coming from dependence, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 4**: Individuals with a health condition who are informed about their country's dependence on foreign trade will exhibit a stronger shift toward a hostile attitude than individuals without a health condition.

2.3 Research design

In order to answer these questions, I conduct two survey experiments. Survey experiments have been used widely in the study of trade preferences (Margalit, 2012; Naoi and Kume, 2011; Ardanaz, Murillo and Pinto, 2013; Naoi and Kume, 2015) and immigration (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). I describe the two experiments separately.

2.3.1 Study 1: Trade dependence vs dependence threat

2.3.1.1 Overview

My first study presented to an approximately equal number of respondents either one of two treatment conditions or an unrelated control statement. One treatment statement mentioned our dependence on trade generally but not specifically explaining the threat (which I call the "trade dependence" treatment, a "weaker" statement), and the other treatment statement added a paragraph further explaining the threat that this dependence could pose (which I call the "dependence threat" treatment, a "stronger" statement). These statements are detailed below. I refer to this as study 1 in this paper.

I recruited survey respondents through Cint Theorem (previously known during this data collection as Lucid Theorem) and obtained 678 responses.

2.3.1.2 Treatments

I detail here the specific wording of the statements (both the two treatments and the control statement).

In the "dependence threat" treatment, I frame the issue with a general threat, stating that dependence could "threaten Americans' livelihoods or contribute to a national crisis". The other treatment, which I call the "trade dependence" treatment, does not mention an explicit threat—it only mentions that our reliance has increased. The control statement is not related to trade—it is about Congressional term limits.

The "trade dependence" threat treatment is as follows:

> International trade has grown over the past few decades. Many American-made products are exported and sold in foreign countries while foreign-made products are also imported and sold in the United States. Because of this increasing international trade, the US has become more reliant on foreign-made products that aren't produced in the US.

The "dependence threat" treatment keeps the above text, and adds the following:

> For example, we must import some medicines, medical equipment, and computer equipment. In the event of a supply shortage or diplomatic dispute, the US's trade partners might be unwilling to ship those products to the US, which might threaten Americans' health, livelihoods, or self-sufficiency.

My control statement gives a brief overview of the debate on Congressional term limits, an issue completely unrelated to trade.

> Right now, members of the United States Congress can be re-elected as many times as they want. Members of the House of Representatives serve a two year term, and members of the Senate serve a six year term. Some say that members of Congress should have a limit on how many terms they can serve in the Senate or the House. These people think that term limits would cut down on corruption and make our elected representatives more likely to know what it feels like to be a regular citizen. But other people say this is a bad idea. They believe that long serving members of Congress bring knowledge to lawmaking, and that this makes them less likely to just listen to what lobbyists say instead of making their own decisions based on what the people want.

2.3.1.3 Dependent variables

My overall outcome is trade attitudes, which I have measured in the form of three questions, the answers to which will act as my dependent variables. The first is a question about the respondent's views on trade generally: *In your opinion, how good or bad is international trade for the US, or do you think it doesn't make a difference either way*? The respondent then chooses on a Likert scale, from "extremely bad" to "extremely good". The purpose of this question is to assess whether the respondents' overall views of trade differed across the different treatment and control groups.

To assess respondents' concern about the issue mentioned, I ask if the US should increase or reduce trade. This is so I can see whether respondents specifically believe that trading less is the solution. I ask the question as follows: *Should the US rely more or less on products made in foreign countries, or are you not sure? And how strongly do you feel that way?* Respondents select one of three options: more, less, or not sure.

Finally, to assess whether or not respondents believe things should change to respond to the issue of import dependence (and if so, in which direction), I ask for their view on a relative scale. Respondents are presented with the following question:

> Some people think the US should make more products at home, even if those products end up costing more. Others think we should allow companies to manufacture in other countries because it will reduce the prices of those products. How about you? On a scale of 1 through 7, where 1 is make more products here even if they cost more, and 7 is make products in other countries to keep prices low, which would you choose?

This acts both as a temperature check on how strongly the respondent feels about their position and as a way for the respondent to weigh the tradeoffs. Although it is not always (or even usually) the case that there is a perfect 1:1 trade-off between affordability and domestic production, this still offers a useful view on whether respondents are willing to pay for products to be made here.

2.3.1.4 Moderators

Cint Theorem automatically includes some basic information about the respondent, and I use the political party identification and level of education responses provided.

The wording of these questions is almost identical to that which is used in the American National Election Studies 2020 Exploratory Testing Survey[2]. In particular, the party identifi-

[2]https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-exploratory-testing-survey/

cation battery of questions is well written and sidesteps the issue of asking individuals if they *are a member* of a specific party, which may confuse some individuals. It also determines the intensity of preference for a party, as well as determining the direction of those individuals who initially state that they do not have a party preference.

The question about education is a standard scale, from less than high school diploma up to a doctoral degree. I define "highly educated" for the purposes of my study as having obtained a bachelor's degree, and use that in my education analyses.

An additional question I ask in the descriptive information section is a question about the individual's vulnerability as it relates to their health.

> Do you have a serious medical condition that requires treatment with medication? (Examples: cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS) (yes, no, not sure)

I believe that this question will adequately address what I am trying to assess: whether an individual would be seriously negatively affected by supply shocks in medical supplies. Asking a general question about the respondent's health is too broad, potentially including individuals with conditions not managed with medications, or managed in a manner that would not render one susceptible to supply shocks.

2.3.2 Study 2: China threat vs foreign threat

2.3.2.1 Overview

For the second study, I used the same design and general principles, keeping a "stronger" and "weaker" statement, but adjusted the focus of each statement, as well as the topic of the control. I recruited survey respondents through Cint Theorem (previously known during this data collection as Lucid Theorem) and Prolific, two online survey response tools, and obtained 2,520 responses.

2.3.2.2 Treatments

In this study, the "stronger" statement explains the threat that may be posed to our national interests by our dependence on imports from China (the "China threat" treatment), while the "weaker" statement explains the same, but simply references non-specific "foreign countries" (the "foreign threat" treatment). In the "China threat" treatment, the issue is framed as coming from China, stating that we rely on China for two critical categories of goods, medicines and communication equipment, and explaining how that could be a threat to us. The other treatment, which I call the "Foreign threat" treatment, has the same content, but it does not

indicate a specific country that it comes from—it only mentions that the US relies on "some foreign countries". The control statement is not related to politics at all—it is about adult reading habits.

The treatment statement stating that the threat comes from China is as follows:

> International trade has grown over the past few decades and the US has become more reliant on foreign-made products that aren't produced in the US. The US relies heavily on China for some medicines. For example, as much as 90% of our antibiotics come from China. In case of a supply shortage or diplomatic dispute, China might be unwilling to ship those medicines to the US. This might threaten Americans' health. The US also relies on China for communications equipment. The US government sees this as a security threat and has provided funding for removal of some Chinese-made equipment from critical infrastructure like 5G mobile internet. National security experts believe that China could use this equipment to spy on us.

The treatment statement stating that the threat comes from some foreign countries is exactly the same, except that instead of "China", it states "foreign countries" or "some foreign countries", depending on the sentence context.

My control statement gives a brief overview of adult reading habits, a relatively uncontroversial topic unrelated to politics.

> Adult reading habits have been evolving significantly in recent years due to a variety of factors. With the advent of digital technology, more adults are turning to e-books and audiobooks for their reading needs, valuing the convenience and accessibility these formats offer. Social media and online platforms have also changed the way people discover and discuss books, with influencers and online communities often shaping reading trends. There's also growing interest in diverse and inclusive narratives, reflecting broader societal shifts towards more varied and representative storytelling. Finally, while traditional print reading still holds strong appeal, there is a noticeable inclination towards multi-tasking and consuming shorter forms of written content, such as articles and social media posts, in our fast-paced, digitally-driven lives.

2.3.2.3 Dependent variables

Much of the design is the same in study 2. My overall outcome remains trade attitudes, which I have continue to measure in the form of three questions, the answers to which will act as my

dependent variables. The questions are substantially similar between the two studies; minor wording and choice modifications were made for the second stage. I detail the adjustments made in this section; for a full discussion of the questions, see the dependent variables section of study 1.

For the question about the respondent's views on trade generally, I remove the last portion, underlined here, from the question: *In your opinion, how good or bad is international trade for the US, or do you think it doesn't make a difference either way?* The respondent chooses on the same Likert scale, from "extremely bad" to "extremely good".

For their concern about the issue mentioned, I still ask whether the US should increase or reduce trade, so that I can see whether it is that respondents believe specifically that trading less is the solution, but I ask the question in a different way in study 2. I ask the question as follows: *Do you think the US should aim to increase or reduce its reliance on foreign countries as sources of goods and services?* The respondent then chooses on a Likert scale, from "reduce a lot" to "increase a lot".

I ask for the respondents' agreement as to whether things should change to account for these issues using the same question in both studies, asking respondents to select their view on a scale of 1 through 7, where 1 is make more products here even if they cost more, and 7 is make products in other countries to keep prices low.

2.3.2.4 Moderators

Cint Theorem automatically includes some basic information about the respondent, and I use the political party identification and level of education responses provided, as I did in study 1. Prolific automatically includes some basic information as well, but it is not worded the same way, so I ask the questions myself using the same questions and response options as Cint Theorem uses, so that I have the same information for all respondents.

I include the same question about the individual's vulnerability as it relates to their health.

> "Do you have a serious medical condition that requires treatment with medication? (Examples: cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS)" (yes, no, not sure)

2.3.3 Plan of analysis

To test my hypotheses, I employ Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models with OLS standard errors to analyze the effects of the treatment conditions on three primary outcome measures assessing trade attitudes. I both want to test the overall treatment effect of each

statement (relative to control), to see if hypothesis 1 is supported, and the effect within subgroups, to see if hypotheses 2-4 are supported. These analyses examine each of the following three outcome variables:

1. **General trade view**: The respondent's overall assessment of whether international trade is good or bad for the US (coded numerically from Likert scales).

2. **Preference for increasing or decreasing trade**: Whether the respondent believes the US should rely more or less on foreign-made products (transformed into a numeric variable for OLS: binary in Study 1, Likert scale in Study 2).

3. **Domestic production tradeoff**: The respondent's position on making products domestically even if costly versus importing to keep prices low (coded numerically 1-7).

My analysis proceeds in two stages corresponding to the hypotheses:

- **Main effect (Hypothesis 1)**: To test Hypothesis 1, which posits an overall effect of the dependence frames on trade attitudes, I analyze the complete sample for each study. Specifically, for each of the three outcome variables, I regress the outcome on two dummy variables representing the two treatment conditions ("trade dependence" and "dependence threat" frames in Study 1; and "China threat" and "foreign threat" frames in Study 2). The control group serves as the omitted reference category in these models. This allows for estimating the average treatment effect of each frame relative to the control group across all respondents.

- **Subgroups (Hypotheses 2-4)**: To test H2-H4, which predict differential treatment effects based on partisanship (H2), education (H3), and health status (H4), I examine how the treatment effects vary across these specific subgroups. Following the approach detailed in the results section, I perform the OLS regressions specified above separately within each relevant sample subset (e.g., running the model using only Republican respondents, then separately using only Democrat respondents; similarly for education and health status groups). This method estimates the treatment effects within particular groups of interest. I then examine interaction terms between the treatment dummies and moderator variables to test whether there is a difference in actual response to treatment frames between the groups.

2.4 Results

I report selections from these results in the tables herein. I will report the results of the two studies separately and in order, in a similar structure.

2.4.1 Study 1: Trade dependence vs. dependence threat

2.4.1.1 Overall effect

In Table 1, I report the results of my analysis of only the main effects—that is, the effect of the treatments, relative to control, on all respondents. According to hypothesis 1, I expected to find a decrease in support for trade when respondents were shown the dependence threat frame.

Table 2.1: Overall effect only—no interactions (Study 1)

	Is trade good or bad?	Should we rely more or less on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
General dependence frame	-0.476** (0.153)	-0.074 ^ (0.042)	0.002 (0.151)
Dependence threat frame	-0.442** (0.159)	-0.017 (0.044)	-0.194 (0.158)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 678.

Hypothesis 1 is partially supported. It correctly predicts the outcome of the analysis only with respect for general support for trade (whether trade is good or bad), and not on reliance on more or less trade or whether products should be made domestically or imported. This result is found for both treatment frames, not just for the treatment frame explaining the threat. The treatment effects on the "is trade good or bad" question are both significant at traditional levels of statistical significance.

Beyond statistical significance, the effect size is substantively meaningful. Respondents who are shown a treatment frame respond with almost a half level, out of seven, lower on the scale of whether trade is good or bad. Looking at the effect size in a standardized way, I see that the effect size is moderate, a little over a quarter of a standard deviation.

Perhaps more importantly, this demonstrates the direction of preferences, showing that Americans will prefer to withdraw from international trade—and not increasing it or expanding the number of trade partners, as I alternatively theorized —when it comes to reacting to dependence on international trade.

2.4.1.2 Moderators

In Tables 2.2-2.4, I report the results of my subgroup analyses. I performed these by subsetting the data and running a linear regression, identical to the one I used to obtain the numbers in table 2.1, but with only the subgroup of interest included. I then interacted the moderator dummy variable of interest (labeled in the tables) with the full sample to test whether there is a difference in response to treatment frames between the groups.

In Table 2.2, I first analyzed only the Republican respondents. I also analyzed only the Democrats for comparison. In hypothesis 2, I hypothesized that Republican respondents will respond with stronger opposition to trade with either treatment frame—"general dependence" or "dependence threat".

Table 2.2: Republican vs Democrat (Study 1)

Republican respondents	Is trade good or bad?	Should we rely more or less on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
General dependence frame	-0.459 (0.346)	0.234 (0.327)	-0.007 (0.055)
Dependence threat frame	-0.417 (0.347)	0.073 (0.328)	0.086 (0.056)
Difference in treatment effect between Republicans and Non-Republicans			
General dependence frame	0.031 (0.084)	0.096 (0.096)	0.314 (0.361)
Dependence threat frame	0.026 (0.069)	0.136 (0.097)	0.336 (0.367)
Democrat respondents			
General dependence frame	-0.545* (0.257)	-0.004 (0.088)	-0.172 (0.269)
Dependence threat frame	-0.493 (0.257)	-0.009 (0.088)	-0.198 (0.269)
Difference in treatment effect between Democrats and Non-Democrats			
General dependence frame	-0.149 (0.321)	0.098 (0.088)	-0.287 (0.321)
Dependence threat frame	-0.069 (0.327)	0.021 (0.091)	0.000 (0.327)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 678.

Hypothesis 2 is not supported across any of the outcomes between the different treatments versus the control, either in Republicans or Democrats, and either within the subgroups or when interacted to test difference in response. This could simply be the fact that trade preferences are not nearly aligning with partisan preferences during the present era. It is also quite possible that this is a bipartisan issue; indeed, some legislation that has come out of Congress has bipartisan support, and opposition to China does not tend to have a partisan leaning. In addition, opposition to some efforts, such as the ban on TikTok, can be bipartisan as well. This would also explain the lack of bipartisan difference.

In Table 2.3, I first analyzed only highly educated respondents. I also analyzed only the non-highly educated respondents for comparison. In hypothesis 3, I hypothesized that highly educated respondents will respond less negatively to either treatment frame—"general dependence" or "dependence threat".

Hypothesis 3 is not supported. The highly educated respondents decrease their support for trade when shown the general dependence treatment, relative to control. Interestingly, the result for the dependence threat treatment is not significant. The effect size is very large—at -0.811, it is nearing enough to push the respondent one full step down on the Likert scale as to

Table 2.3: Highly educated vs non-highly educated (Study 1)

Highly educated respondents	Is trade good or bad?	Should we rely more or less on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
General dependence frame	-0.811*** (0.230)	-0.180 (0.235)	-0.084 (0.063)
Dependence threat frame	-0.468* (0.233)	-0.289 (0.238)	-0.013 (0.065)
Non-highly educated respondents			
General dependence frame	-0.241 (0.201)	-0.069 (0.055)	0.135 (0.198)
Dependence threat frame	-0.549* (0.215)	-0.028 (0.059)	-0.148 (0.212)
Difference in treatment effect between highly educated and non-highly educated			
General dependence frame	-0.570 ^ (0.306)	-0.015 (0.084)	-0.315 (0.306)
Dependence threat frame	0.081 (0.317)	0.015 (0.088)	-0.141 (0.318)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 678.

whether trade is good or bad. In standardized terms, this is around half a standard deviation. Like the results for the main effects, the significant results are limited to the question of whether trade is good or bad. None of the other questions shows results of statistical significance, and the difference in effect between the highly educated and non-highly educated respondents is not statistically significant.

A potential theory that would explain this finding is that educated individuals are better able to understand the threat from dependence on trade, that is, the general theory that educated individuals support trade more does not hold when you show them the threats from it. One possible explanation for the lack of effect for the dependence frame is a statistical anomaly or insufficient power.

In Table 2.4, I first analyzed only the respondents who reported having a health condition. I also analyzed only the respondents who reported that they did not have a health condition for comparison. In Hypothesis 4, I hypothesized that respondents with a health condition will respond with stronger opposition to either treatment frame—"General dependence" or "Dependence threat".

Hypothesis 4 is not supported. In respondents with a health condition, the statistical significance of the overall effect that seen in Table 2.1 disappears. The effect size (regardless of statistical significance) is also cut in half for the dependence threat frame. However, in respondents without a health condition, a highly significant negative response is present to both frames for the "good or bad" question, with larger effect sizes than we see for the whole group. Substantively they are significant, as they are around a third of a standard deviation, and translate into about half a level on the Likert scale. This is an interesting finding. However, there is not a statistically significant difference in treatment effect between respondents with

Table 2.4: Health status (Study 1)

With health condition	Is trade good or bad?	Should we rely more or less on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
General dependence frame	-0.406 (0.262)	-0.049 (0.275)	-0.030 (0.071)
Dependence threat frame	-0.201 (0.275)	0.079 (0.287)	0.009 (0.075)
No health condition			
General dependence frame	-0.536** (0.196)	-0.096 (0.053)	0.012 (0.190)
Dependence threat frame	-0.551** (0.201)	-0.029 (0.055)	-0.309 (0.195)
Difference in treatment effect between respondents with and without a health condition			
General dependence frame	0.129 (0.326)	0.066 (0.087)	-0.061 (0.325)
Dependence threat frame	0.349 (0.340)	0.039 (0.091)	0.388 (0.338)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 678.

and without a health condition.

A possible interpretation of this result is both a theoretical and a statistical matter. Theoretically, there may be an uncertainty as to how to respond to this potential threat among individuals who are highly susceptible to its effects, which results in a large variance in answers. Statistically, there is probably just low power, as there are only 240 respondents with a health condition in this study, and they should be relatively evenly divided between the three statements, leaving only 80 respondents in each arm.

2.4.2 Study 2: China threat vs Foreign threat

To recap, in study 2, I present to an equal number of respondents either one of two treatments or a control statement. The treatment statements are exactly the same, explaining that the US relies on foreign-made products and that it could become a security threat, except that one of the treatments mentions China as the specific country on which the US relies, and the other treatment simply states "foreign countries".

2.4.2.1 Overall effect

In Table 2.5, I report the results of my analysis of only the main effects—that is, the effect of the treatments, relative to control, on all respondents. According to hypothesis 1, I expected to find a decrease in trade support when the respondents were shown the China threat frame.

Hypothesis 1 is largely supported, with an important caveat. Overall support for trade (whether trade is good or bad) and whether we should increase or reduce reliance on trade both fall, as expected. However, respondents are not more likely to select that they would like

Table 2.5: Main effect only —no interactions (Study 2)

	Is trade good or bad?	Should we increase or reduce reliance on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
Threat from China frame	-0.409*** (0.075)	-0.405*** (0.076)	-0.180* (0.072)
Foreign threat frame	-0.325*** (0.075)	-0.245** (0.076)	-0.054 (0.072)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 2,520.

to make more products here even if they cost more. Beyond statistical significance, the effect size is substantively meaningful, and the effect size for the China frame is noticeably larger. Respondents who are shown the China frame respond with almost a half level, out of seven, lower on the scale of whether trade is good or bad or whether we should increase or reduce trade with other countries. For the foreign threat frame, the effect is about a third of a level and about a quarter of a level, respectively, for the two questions. In standardized terms, we see a moderate but significant effect. These are around a quarter of a standard deviation.

This supports my theory, but also demonstrates that "pocketbook voting" is as present as ever—a quite strong effect quickly disappears when respondents are asked whether they'd like to make more products here even if they cost more. (Notably, to preview the rest of this results section, no subgroups analyzed, other than the highly educated respondent subgroup, wanted to make products here even if they cost more, either.)

2.4.2.2 Moderators

In Tables 2.6-2.8, I report the results of my analyses of the subgroups. I performed these by subsetting the data and running a linear regression, identical to the one I used to obtain the numbers in Table 5, but with only the subgroup of interest included. I then interacted the moderator dummy variable of interest (labeled in the tables) with the full sample to test whether there is a difference in response to treatment frames between the groups.

In Table 2.6, I first analyzed only the Republican respondents. I also analyzed only the Democrats for comparison. In hypothesis 2, I hypothesized that Republican respondents will respond with stronger opposition to trade with either treatment frame—"China threat" or "Foreign threat".

Hypothesis 2 is not supported. Republican respondents responded only to the China threat frame at a statistically significant level for the good/bad question and the increase/reduce question, and not the foreign threat frame, while the Democrats responded to both for the good/bad and increase/reduce questions. Like in the overall analysis, no group responded to either frame for the question mentioning cost. The effect sizes were about on par with

Table 2.6: Republican vs Democrat (Study 2)

Republican respondents	Is trade good or bad?	Should we increase or reduce reliance on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
Threat from China frame	-0.449** (0.137)	-0.394** (0.141)	-0.174 (0.129)
Foreign threat frame	-0.286* (0.134)	-0.296* (0.139)	0.113 (0.127)
Difference in treatment effect between Republicans and Non-Republicans			
Threat from China frame	-0.049 (0.159)	0.026 (0.161)	0.020 (0.152)
Foreign threat frame	0.051 (0.157)	-0.082 (0.159)	0.237 (0.151)
Democrat respondents			
Threat from China frame	-0.429*** (0.104)	-0.421*** (0.105)	-0.120 (0.104)
Foreign threat frame	-0.352*** (0.105)	-0.290** (0.106)	-0.067 (0.104)
Difference in treatment effect between Democrats and Non-Democrats			
Threat from China frame	-0.019 (0.148)	-0.011 (0.149)	0.126 (0.142)
Foreign threat frame	-0.058 (0.148)	-0.089 (0.149)	-0.034 (0.142)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 2,520.

the overall effect, around a quarter of a standard deviation in standardized terms or a little over a third of a level on the 7 point Likert scale in substantive terms. The exception is the Democrat outcome on the increase/reduce question—the effect size is very small in this case (the Republican effect is not statistically significant).

However, no interaction was present, showing no true difference between the two. Like in study 1, I suspect this is simply a result of rapidly shifting preferences of political leaders and the effect this has on the preferences of those leaders' co-partisans. Preferences are still shifting in the current political moment and may not be as neat as I thought they would be, particularly for Republicans. Alternatively (or in addition), also like in study 1, this could be a bipartisan issue with little cross-party variance. Perhaps it is the case that both Republicans and Democrats are concerned, and though we see differing policy proposals due to other political considerations, the level of concern is the same.

In Table 2.7, I first analyzed only the highly educated respondents. I also analyzed only the non-highly educated respondents for comparison. In hypothesis 3, I hypothesized that highly educated respondents will respond less negatively to either treatment frame—"China threat" or "Foreign threat".

Hypothesis 3 is not supported. In fact, the exact opposite findings are present. Highly educated respondents decrease their support for trade when shown either treatment, relative to control, and, interestingly, they are the only subgroup that indicates a desire to make products here even if they cost more—although only for the China frame, and at about half the effect

Table 2.7: Highly educated vs non-highly educated (Study 2)

Highly educated respondents	Is trade good or bad?	Should we increase or reduce reliance on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
Threat from China frame	-0.551*** (0.092)	-0.530*** (0.094)	-0.280** (0.091)
Foreign threat frame	-0.505*** (0.093)	-0.348*** (0.094)	-0.177 ^ (0.091)
Non-highly educated respondents			
Threat from China frame	-0.189 (0.126)	-0.205 (0.127)	-0.023 (0.119)
Foreign threat frame	-0.041 (0.124)	-0.086 (0.125)	0.138 (0.117)
Difference in treatment effect between highly educated and non-highly educated			
Threat from China frame	-0.362* (0.153)	-0.324* (0.156)	-0.256 ^ (0.149)
Foreign threat frame	-0.464** (0.152)	-0.262 ^ (0.0)	-0.314* (0.148)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^ p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 2,520.

size as the other two questions. The effect sizes for the good/bad and increase/reduce question are quite a bit larger than the main effects only results or any other subgroup's results—more than half a level on the 7 point Likert scale, substantively, or around a third of a standard deviation in standardized terms. These large differences contributed to one of the only statistically significant differences in treatment effects between subgroups in this study, demonstrating that there is likely a strong effect of education on how a person responds to a threat.

It may be that highly educated individuals, though long found to have a strong preference for trade relative to the overall population, are more susceptible to arguments about trade being a threat to national security, as they are better able to understand the potential implications. Therefore, they have these stronger reactions. As for being the only group that responds to the question about making products here even if they cost more versus importing more products to save money, a straightforward explanation is that educated respondents likely have higher income on average and would be better able to financially weather a storm coming from this additional cost.

In Table 2.8, I first analyzed only the respondents who reported having a health condition. I also analyzed only the respondents who reported that they did not have a health condition for comparison. In hypothesis 4, I hypothesized that respondents with a health condition will respond with stronger opposition to trade with either treatment frame—"China threat" or "Foreign threat".

Again, hypothesis 4 is not supported. Respondents with a health condition respond at a statistically significant level only for the China threat frame and only for the good/bad and increase/reduce question. These effect sizes are almost twice the statistically significant effect sizes of the respondents without a health condition. However, there is no response to the China threat frame on any question, while there was a response in people without a health condition

Table 2.8: Health status (Study 2)

With health condition	Is trade good or bad?	Should we increase or reduce reliance on trade?	Should we make products here or import more?
Threat from China frame	-0.534** (0.172)	-0.597*** (0.165)	-0.183 (0.168)
Foreign threat frame	-0.221 (0.175)	-0.323 ^ (0.168)	-0.083 (0.171)
No health condition			
Threat from China frame	-0.362*** (0.084)	-0.350*** (0.087)	-0.190* (0.081)
Foreign threat frame	-0.359*** (0.083)	-0.235** (0.086)	-0.064 (0.080)
Difference in treatment effect between respondents with and without a health condition			
Threat from China frame	-0.171 (0.182)	-0.247 (0.185)	0.006 (0.176)
Foreign threat frame	0.139 (0.185)	-0.088 (0.187)	-0.019 (0.178)

Notes: Average treatment effects shown; standard errors in parentheses. ^ p<0.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01. Sample size: 2,520.

to the foreign threat frame.

The effect sizes are around the same as the main effect sizes, except for quite large effect sizes on the respondents with health conditions on the China threat frames, which are over half a level on a 7-point Likert scale and around a third of a standard deviation.

This is an interesting and slightly puzzling finding. This could again be an artifact of the relatively small size of this group (528 respondents out of 2,520, split into one of three frames). However, I suspect that it is more related to a "China effect", where respondents actually respond not to a fear of trade dependence, but rather a fear of or simply a strong dislike for China. This appears in most of the results, but the difference here shows up quite strikingly.

However, none of the interaction terms are significant, making the differences in effects hard to draw conclusions from.

2.5 Discussion

2.5.1 Findings

In general, I found support for Hypothesis 1, but little or no consistent support for Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4. In general, respondents decrease their support for trade when faced with a threat. In the second study, respondents also note that they want to reduce reliance on trade. However, my subgroup predictions are generally incorrect; in some cases, I find the opposite. However, my most interesting finding is that I find no support anywhere for making more products here when I present respondents with the fact that it will cost more. Here I explain why I think I got these results.

2.5.1.1 Frame effects

When asking if trade is good or bad overall, both treatments in both studies lower support for trade at a statistically significant level—not entirely consistent with my hypothesis, but not contradictory either. I expected that only the stronger frames would lower support for trade, but this is a logically consistent outcome. In the first study, even though a respondent might not be explicitly told about the threat, they can infer it based only on hearing about dependence; in the second study, the respondent is likely worried about the dependence mentioned regardless of the country. Put another way, it is the *dependency* that is worrying, and the respondent can connect the dots as to what that means practically.

However, in most cases, the China frame had a much larger effect size; in many cases almost twice as large. This shows that different framings of the issue can indeed change how people feel about the matter, even if the change is relatively subtle (the only thing that was changed was the mention of a country). This difference also shows up through significant effect sizes across the board in the second study. Although the second study retains the stronger/weaker frame setup, both frames are stronger relative to control. I believe that this is part of the explanation for the stronger results in the second study.

2.5.1.2 Pocketbook voting

A key finding here —one of the most critical findings of this study —is the fact that there was no significant effect across any subgroup, other than highly educated respondents seeing the China frame, on the question of whether we should make more products here even if they cost more vs. making more products abroad to keep costs low. When clearly confronted with the costs of reshoring production to the United States, the effect of import dependence on opposition to trade diminishes. This may reflect concerns about price inflation during the study period, but could also reflect a more general wariness of addressing trade dependence through recessive policies if they cannot be implemented in a way that is low cost.

2.5.1.3 Subgroups

There was almost no support for any of my subgroup hypotheses (Republicans, highly educated individuals, or individuals with a medical condition).

The effect sizes are roughly the same between both parties for both studies; not statistically significant for study 1 and statistically significant in study 2 only for the China frame for the Republicans (as opposed to both for the Democrats). I do not have a theoretical explanation for this; the likely cause is a misjudging of party line views. We are indeed in a rapidly changing political environment with the advent of the second term of President Trump, and at the time

of the writing of this paper, trade policy is still changing by the day, so it is not unreasonable to think that party line trade views simply don't hold like they did before. In a highly polarized trade policy environment, partisans likely take cues from their respective leaders, so if those leaders' preferences are quickly changing, so are the partisans'.

For highly educated respondents, a surprising finding in the opposite direction appeared—highly educated respondents have a stronger response to the frames than other respondents. A reasonable theoretical path exists. Especially since the effect sizes are much larger, I believe it is possible that highly educated respondents simply are "connecting the dots" more effectively than the average respondent but going in the same direction. Rather than having different considerations (cosmopolitanism, comparative advantage) than the average voter like I anticipated when I made my hypothesis, it would seem they have the same considerations as everyone else, or at least these considerations outweigh those that are limited to highly educated voters. I am particularly convinced of this explanation when I consider the tradeoff analysis "make products here that cost more or import more products" question—this is the only subgroup where this has a significant (negative) result when they see the China frame.

2.5.2 Future directions

An interesting next direction of this study is to determine what policies voters desire in response to this. Immigration is a potential solution, but this tends to be unpopular. Peters 2015 notes in her study that trade and immigration are substitutes but that increases in technology exacerbate the problem. A study that examines whether the US is likely to use, or is already using, non-tariff barriers and other non-tariff trade restrictions to obfuscate its trade policy would also be useful, though admittedly it is difficult to untangle genuine concerns versus veiled protectionism. See Kono 2006.

2.6 Impact

2.6.1 Contributions to the field

Many opportunities remain in the political science literature to examine how the American public feels about the implications for national security of a high volume of trade. This is perhaps understandable; it has not until recently been most salient topic in American minds and is more technical than the average individual wants to get. But the relatively recent public health crisis and the ensuing exposure to cracks in the supply chain provides the opportunity

to explore these thoughts while they are fresh in everyone's mind after being hit with news articles after news articles about the impact of the crisis.

It is clear that this is an important topic, as there is a great deal of literature on the national security implications of trade themselves, public opinion notwithstanding (Tanaka, Tago and Gleditsch, 2017; Fordham and Kleinberg, 2011; Roberts, Choer Moraes and Ferguson, 2019; Peng, 2015). Therefore, this type of survey has the potential to add a new angle to the otherwise quite robust body of literature on American trade preferences by integrating this literature with the trade preference literature.

There is no shortage of literature on the determinants of trade preferences, with scholars seeking to answer questions about whether gender, education, jobs, and more affect support for trade, employing many different methods. This adds a new angle—the health status of an individual—to this body of work. Second, the research challenges and complicates established models of how education and partisanship moderate trade attitudes. A consistent finding in the literature is that higher education correlates with stronger support for free trade. My findings reveal this support to be conditional. Highly educated respondents reacted more negatively to the dependence threat frames, not less. This suggests that while educated individuals may generally favor trade, they are also more attuned to and persuaded by elite discourse surrounding its national security risks, causing a sharper reversal in their attitudes. This adds a critical new dimension to foundational work, for example, Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006. Finally, the strong dichotomy between response in a "vacuum", when the financial cost was not mentioned, and response when respondents had to consider cost, is a novel contribution. It demonstrates empirically that while voters may be swayed by security arguments in principle, their support for costly policy changes may be quite fragile—itself not difficult to believe, but potentially hard to reconcile with US policy from the past decade.

In addition, these results could add to the literature on the effects of threats on public opinion. Although there is much work, some of which is cited in this paper, on status threats (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009; Mutz, 2018; Blum and Parker, 2019), there is some, but not as much work on threats such as national security (Scheve and Slaughter, 2004; Acemoglu and Yared, 2010), particularly the economic impact of national security. There is also a growing body of work about US public opinion on trade and China (Kleinberg and Fordham, 2013; Bulman, 2022, 2025). All of this work informs the direction of this research as I harmonize these aspects of political economy to develop a theory of how the rapid turn against global trade potentially has roots in public opinion, and that the outlook for international order as we know it may be quickly darkening.

2.6.2 Broader impact

Perhaps the larger impact of this paper is outside of the field. Our policymakers must be informed of the thoughts of Americans about these issues. Those in government certainly are already having these conversations, with President Trump at the helm in an unprecedented non-consecutive second term and with a mandate to make even broader changes to American foreign policy than he had before—and with bipartisan support on some issues, particularly when it comes to China (Borg, 2024b). The findings of this research carry significant implications for the future of American trade policy, the design of international economic agreements, and the durability of the global trade order itself.

First, the future of US trade policy appears volatile and susceptible to political framing. This study demonstrates that highlighting the national security risks of import dependence is a powerful tool for eroding public support for international trade. However, this newfound opposition is shallow; it largely disappears when voters are forced to consider the direct "pocketbook" consequences of reshoring, such as higher consumer prices. This suggests that while nationalist and protectionist rhetoric may be politically potent, policymakers will face significant public resistance to implementing policies that fully reverse globalization at the cost of the average citizen. The likely result is a conflicted trade policy, characterized by performatively tough actions, like targeted tariffs, rather than a full-scale, costly overhaul of global supply chains.

Second, these results offer a potential roadmap for how trade policy could be redesigned to rebuild public support. Given that public opposition is triggered by fears of dependence and vulnerability, particularly in critical sectors like medicine and technology, a more popular trade strategy would directly address these anxieties. Instead of pursuing broad protectionism, which the public is unwilling to pay for, a more sustainable approach might involve targeted industrial policies to reshore production of only the most critical goods. Furthermore, since reliance on a single adversary like China elicits a strongly negative reaction, the public may be more supportive of trade agreements that intentionally diversify supply chains among a wider array of allied or neutral countries, thereby mitigating the risk of disruption without sacrificing the benefits of trade entirely.

Finally, this study sounds a warning for the future of the global trade order, especially in the midst of degrading geopolitical relationships. The research confirms that vulnerability to supply disruptions directly threatens public support for the international economic system. As security competition with nations such as China intensifies, the American public becomes more hostile to the economic interdependence that underpins the current global order. If the dependence on other nations is increasingly framed as a critical national security threat, it may become politically untenable for the United States to champion the open, integrated global

economy it has led for decades. This could accelerate the fragmentation of the world into competing economic blocs, fundamentally altering the nature of global cooperation and undermining the institutions that have governed international trade since World War II.

The policy of whether we should take steps to mitigate the potential risks, perhaps at the expense of the national pocketbooks, is one best left to the politicians rather than the academics. However, there are legitimate issues to be examined, and a public opinion-informed approach is at least a good place to start.

CHAPTER 3

Preferences for Policy Responses to Dependence on International Trade

This study investigates public preferences for policy responses to the US dependence on international trade, particularly for critical goods. Using a survey experiment, I explore the influence of the country of dependence and the good of concern on the choice of policy response to dependence on trade. I present respondents with multiple choices for policy responses, some of which would result in receding from trade and some of which would result in expanding trade. The results show a clear preference for recessive policies, particularly when the good of concern is telecommunications and military equipment, and among Republican respondents. However, the country of dependence, whether friendly or adversarial, had no significant impact. Furthermore, contrary to expectations, highly educated respondents seemed less inclined to select expansionary policies. These findings underscore the important yet nuanced role of product type and political affiliation in shaping public trade policy preferences while both challenging assumptions about the influence of education and giving pause to the idea that the rise of China is contributing to most anxieties. The study contributes to a growing body of work that seeks to understand the complexities of voter behavior with respect to global trade dependencies.

3.1 Chapter introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic cast a harsh spotlight on the vulnerabilities inherent in global supply chains, transforming the issue of US dependence on foreign-made goods from a niche policy debate into a salient public concern. As empty shelves and shortages of critical products became a national experience, Americans were confronted with the tangible risks of economic interdependence. This study investigates the political consequences of this heightened awareness, seeking to understand what drives public preferences for how the United States should respond to these threats. Specifically, what factors determine whether Americans favor policies

that recede from global integration in favor of self-reliance or policies that expand international cooperation to mitigate shared risks?

In this paper, I argue that public preferences over policy responses to trade dependency are shaped by a contextual cost-benefit analysis. I theorize that citizens weigh the perceived security benefits of national self-sufficiency against the economic costs of protectionism. Policy options can be broadly categorized along a spectrum from "recessive" to "expansionary". Recessive policies, such as onshoring production through subsidies or imposing import controls, prioritize national autonomy at the potential expense of higher consumer and taxpayer costs. In contrast, expansionary policies, such as diversifying trade partners or signing cooperative treaties, aim to manage risk while preserving the economic efficiencies of global trade.

The public's weighting of these costs and benefits is not static but rather conditioned by two critical framing elements: the good of dependency and the country of dependence. When a product is perceived as vital to national security, such as military or telecommunications equipment, the security benefits of self-reliance are expected to outweigh economic cost considerations, leading to stronger support for recessive policies. Likewise, when the country of dependence is a geopolitical adversary, the perceived threat is magnified, which should similarly push public opinion toward recessive, self-help strategies over cooperative, expansionary ones that require trust in international partners.

To test these hypotheses, this study employs a survey experiment conducted on a large, diverse sample of 3,109 US residents via the Prolific platform. The experiment utilizes a simplified conjoint design in which respondents were presented with a vignette describing US dependence on either "medicines and medical supplies" or "telecommunications and military equipment" from either a strategic ally (Canada) or a strategic rival (China). After exposure to one of the four treatment conditions, respondents were asked to select their most preferred policy solution from a randomized list of five distinct options, capturing a range of recessive, expansionary, and neutral (laissez-faire) approaches. This design allows for the clean identification of how the specific good and country of dependence influence policy preferences, while also enabling an analysis of how these effects are moderated by individual-level characteristics like political partisanship and education.

The results reveal a clear baseline preference for recessive policies, with a plurality of Americans favoring government subsidies to reshore production. This preference for inward-looking solutions becomes significantly stronger when the good in question is telecommunications and military equipment, confirming the hypothesis that the perceived criticality of the product is a powerful driver of opinion. Contrary to my expectations, however, the country of dependence had very little effect on policy choices. The findings also highlight stark partisan divides, with Republicans being substantially more likely to favor recessive options, an effect that is magni-

fied when the goods are security-related. Finally, and contrary to much of the existing literature, higher levels of education were associated with less support for expansionary policies, not more, though the effect is small.

This paper contributes to the literature on trade policy preferences by moving beyond the traditional pro vs anti trade dichotomy to provide a more nuanced understanding of public attitudes toward specific policy instruments in an era of geopolitical competition. By demonstrating that the type of product can be a more powerful driver of public opinion than the specific country of origin, this research challenges the prevailing narrative that American anxieties about trade are solely a reaction to the rise of China. Furthermore, the counterintuitive finding on education suggests that traditional models of trade preference formation may need to be revised in a new global context where the risks of interdependence are highly salient across the educational spectrum (and as political preferences shift and polarize). For policymakers, these findings indicate that public support for costly industrial policies is not uniform but is instead highly contingent on the perceived link between a given industry and national security.

3.2 Theory and hypotheses

3.2.1 Import dependence and public concern

The United States imports and exports many goods and services, contributing to economic activity and growth both within and outside its borders. Americans have consistently supported free trade in general for around the last ten years (Gallup Inc, 2021). The stability and openness of international trade are critical to US economic growth, financial market performance, and employment. Economic research consistently demonstrates a strong positive relationship between trade openness and economic growth (Samuelson, 1962; Grandmont and McFadden, 1972; Bhagwati, 2002). This is because trade allows for greater specialization, efficiency, and innovation as domestic firms compete in a global marketplace and gain access to a wider variety of inputs at lower costs. However, participation comes at a cost—shifting production of certain goods away from the US results in dependence on other countries for those goods, as domestic resources are repurposed to produce other goods and services both for domestic production and export.

This reliance poses concerns among policymakers, analysts, and politicians (G7 Leaders, 2023). Although economic reliance is certainly a concern, a more worrying issue is reliance on other countries for the production of goods deemed critical, goods that would cause grave effects on the country as a whole if the US stopped being able to import. The Pentagon believes

that businesses unable to make a profit producing critical materials domestically should be supported by the government through the Defense Production Act (Siripurapu, 2021)—which the Trump Administration began (though it is now controversial, as the Biden administration used it to support clean energy manufacturing, which congressional Republicans feel is an overreach) (Picon, 2024). The former US Trade Representative, Robert Lighthizer, noted that the overdependence on imports of medical supplies poses a strategic vulnerability for the United States (Lawder and Shalal, 2020). Demonstrating that this is also a bipartisan issue, Kamala Harris vowed to "bring back critical supply chains so the future is made in America" on her 2020 campaign trail (Savage, 2020).

One might wonder why public opinion even matters on the issue of dependence on foreign-made goods. This issue of dependence on foreign made goods has been a bit of a niche issue in the past. Policymakers, especially within the national security community, have had their eyes on it for longer than the public; there is some content from Congressional hearings such as discussions with the FDA about pharmaceutical ingredients (Woodcock, 2019). But it is a new topic even for them, and scholars have demonstrated that the massive supply chains that we have constructed can make finding vulnerabilities more difficult than it may initially seem (Baldwin, Freeman and Theodorakopoulos, 2023). Firms have also considered it, sometimes shifting imports away from countries that are considered adversaries to the United States (Mityakov, Tang and Tsui, 2013). But for the most part, it was not something one would see regularly discussed in mass media.

Then the pandemic happened. This was a catalyst for public and policymakers' concern about dependence on trade because there was a clear demonstration of the potential consequences of this dependence. For policymakers, concerns regarding US dependence on foreign-made goods stem from a confluence of vulnerabilities that threaten national security, economic stability, and public health. Although it may seem that way at first, based on very recent elections and rhetoric, this is not simply a reflection of protectionist sentiment but a calculated response to the tangible risks revealed by recent global events (Aggarwal and Reddie, 2020). The main driver of this concern is the risk to national security. The US defense industry base, for example, is dependent on foreign suppliers for critical components, including microelectronics and specialized materials. A dependency on components sourced from potential adversaries, most notably China, creates a profound strategic vulnerability. This situation gives the source country potential leverage, allowing it to threaten or enact an embargo on critical goods to achieve geopolitical objectives (Farrell and Newman, 2019).

For the public, the concerns about international trade dependence are likely different. Many Americans' concerns are rooted in tangible, kitchen-table issues that directly affect households and communities, translating abstract geopolitical risks into immediate personal and economic

anxieties. While policymakers may focus on strategic vulnerabilities, the public's apprehension is often driven by the perceived impact of globalization on domestic job security, product availability and safety, and a broader sense of national economic identity. The specific concerns and how they manifest electorally and behaviorally are not necessarily uniform across different groups (Mutz and Lee, 2020; Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein and Rudra, 2024) but the broader idea of concern does resonate across diverse segments of the population who feel the consequences of a globalized economy in different ways.

Public concern is now sharply focused on what happens when a critical chokepoint in the international supply chain breaks down. A defining example was the port congestion crisis in 2021-2022. News cycles were dominated by images of dozens of container ships idling for weeks off the California coast, unable to unload goods from Asia (Berger, 2021). For the public, this was not an abstract problem; it translated directly into tangible "kitchen-table" anxieties: empty shelves where household goods should be, month-long delays for furniture and appliances, and fears that toys and electronics would not arrive in time for the holidays. This crisis made the abstract concept of a supply chain visible and personal, demonstrating how a single bottleneck, thousands of miles from most consumers, could disrupt everyday life across the entire country. But this is just one part of the problem—the part that arises from an unforeseen difficulty (in this case, many things could be blamed for this crisis, but ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst). However, the same pandemic showed some purposeful actions by world actors, such as the hoarding of pharmaceuticals that might help recovery from COVID-19 (Biswas, 2020) and personal protective equipment (Bown, 2022) by India and China, respectively. Regardless of the reasons, it is something that is on the public's mind now—especially since there has not seemed to be any recovery from supply chain issues, even if the specific goods of concern may change from time to time.

These issues did not begin or end with the pandemic, however. Trade wars and applications of tariffs occurred during the first years of the Trump administration and so preceded the pandemic. Therefore, the catalyst for those—broader economic rivalry with China—is decades old. Throughout the 2010s, the narrative surrounding China shifted from that of a benign economic partner to a strategic rival.

In today's highly charged partisan environment, any issue of widespread public concern represents a potential political vulnerability for officials. The dynamic is straightforward: public anxiety creates political opportunity for opponents and risk for incumbents. For instance, the supply chain crisis quickly evolved from a technical problem into a narrative of governmental incompetence, with critics targeting the Secretary of Transportation for a perceived lack of urgency (even criticizing him for taking parental leave and not solving the supply chain crisis (Duncan, Alfaro and Scott, 2021)). As administrative challenges are inevitably framed for po-

litical gain, they become critical test cases for public opinion. Analyzing public sentiment in these moments clarifies how, and how effectively, the public holds its leaders accountable for performance on what may have started as non-partisan issues.

The public may also care about supply chain dependence since these solutions will affect voters. It will directly affect Americans' pocketbooks whether the US chooses not to buy telecommunications equipment from China and instead uses only more expensive equipment from friendlier countries here in the United States. It will make a difference if the US decides only to make a certain critical good—for example, an antibiotic drug—here in the United States. It will affect jobs, it will affect the availability of goods, and it will affect prices of goods. Knowing what the public is thinking about this might give us an insight as to how palatable these potentially uncomfortable changes are going to be for the voters.

However, the problem with this issue is that changes in import policy cannot be used as a blunt instrument. There is a big difference—even to the voter who doesn't care at all about trade policy—between making the parts needed to fight wars domestically instead of importing them from China and ceasing imports of rice from Japan. If presented with these options, as policymakers are, I strongly believe that voters will take them into account. In any case, there is a steady march towards a new order in globalization, and this has been the case even before the COVID-19 pandemic. We can no longer be sure that the US (or any other country) will continue to believe in the institutions created in the post-Cold War period (Roberts, Choer Moraes and Ferguson, 2019; Walter, 2021; Hopewell, 2021).

Thus, we are left wondering: what approaches does the public prefer to address import dependence? And what determines their preferences for such approaches? I explore these questions in this paper.

3.2.2 Varieties of policy responses to import dependence

The substance of the plan—specifically, what the plan actually proposes to do with trade—is one of the most important variables in this study. It is important to know what Americans want policymakers to do about trade dependence.

I divide solutions into two categories: **recessive** policies and **expansionary** policies. The recessive policies are going to mean that the country inflects. Americans perceive this dependence as a vulnerability and believe the US should pursue self-reliance. Consequently, they expect policymakers to guarantee that foreign actors cannot compromise the nation's capacity to meet its citizens' needs. These policies could look like import restrictions, subsidies for domestic industry, tax incentives, export controls, or tariffs. Benefits of these are that they directly address the problem with (usually) narrow policies designed to adjust the market to

make it more favorable for US conditions. These policies can also foster domestic innovation. However, they are costly. Putting restrictions on items that are currently imported by definition means giving up the economic benefit of comparative advantage. Either consumers will pay at the cash register, or taxpayers will pay through their taxes.

With expansionary policies, the problem is solved by trading more. The same problem exists here, but instead the solution to the problem is to reduce the "bottleneck points", so to speak. The US protects its interests by widening the supply chain and cooperating with others who are probably having the same problem and trying to come up with the way that everyone can keep themselves secure. Potential options for expansionary plans include increasing trade to diversify trading partners and signing treaties with allies to govern the allocation of goods in a shortage. There are lots of benefits to this approach—an increase in international cooperation generally (Oneal and Russett, 1999; Oneal and Russet, 1997; Huang and Li, 2024), adding sources for products, potentially increasing competition and bringing prices down, and creating new markets for domestic products. However, there is a risk of further fragmentation of global production, which has its own costs and could inadvertently create a new bottleneck. It is also not a rapid process—these business and diplomatic relationships take years to develop.

There is also a third option: do nothing and let the free market handle the problem. This is closest to what a libertarian might pick, or an individual who believes in the lowest possible amount of state intervention in trade. Notably, this is much closer to an expansionary policy than a recessive policy because the market in normal times is going to import those supplies, and it is going to import them from the places where they are most affordable, and this could naturally result in dependence on certain areas. One may say that this is the whole reason why the problem exists. Nonetheless, this is more of a neutral option.

3.2.3 The country of dependence

I believe this the country on which the US depends for a good is an important dimension of the policy proposals because of how it can affect the level of concern about the dependence, and therefore the likelihood of a voter choosing a recessive or expansionary policy response. In other words, in the case of a shortage, voters' thoughts about whether the US is friendly with the nation or not may affect how they want policymakers to respond.

The selection of a policy response to US supply chain vulnerabilities does not have to be a blunt, monolithic instrument; rather, trade policy can (and very often is) developed to target specific foreign nations upon which the US is dependent to accomplish different goals. The geopolitical relationship, economic structure, and perceived reliability of the source country fundamentally alter the calculus of costs and benefits for each policy option. Public and political

support for a given strategy will therefore likely differ depending on whether the dependency lies with a strategic competitor, a stable ally, or a neutral ally.

Take, for example, the option of signing a treaty. This requires a commitment from the nations signing the treaty, since no other enforcement mechanism exists. Will these nations uphold their commitments? It is easier to see a friendly nation agreeing to do what they said they would do in a time of crisis, even if it might not be the optimal choice for their own citizens. A nation with which the US has a lukewarm or poor relationship is unlikely to consider collective needs over its own in a time of crisis. Instead, in cases where the threat comes from an adversarial country, Americans may just want to take the threat out of their hands entirely and focus on self-help.

Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 1**: Respondents will be more likely to choose an expansionary policy response option when presented with a friendly country of dependence.

Conversely, I also hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 2**: Respondents will be more likely to choose a recessive policy response option when presented with an adversarial country of dependence.

3.2.4 The nature of the good of concern

Another important part of this analysis is whether the good on which one's country is dependent is strategic or not is an important factor for voters. This is a real consideration in policy just like the country of concern—policy can be targeted at specific goods, specific countries, or both. The perceived importance of a product to national well-being fundamentally alters the public's cost-benefit analysis, leading to divergent policy preferences for goods related to national defense versus those destined for household consumption or other less critical purposes. For goods directly tied to national security and defense, such as advanced semiconductors for weapons systems and critical components for intelligence hardware, the public is likely to feel that cost becomes a secondary concern to the importance of supply chain security. The more costly policy options, such as government subsidies and import bans, are likely to be acceptable. In many cases, the government may already have control over production.

In addition, the nature of the good could also limit the possible policy responses that policymakers see as realistic. Trading with more countries or signing treaties does not fundamentally change the dependence on imports; it only mitigates the potential for shortage. This largely

addresses the concern with medicines and medical supplies, but does not address all of the potential problems with relying on imports of telecommunications and military equipment. Only domestic production will eliminate this potential vulnerability.

On the other hand, non-essential goods such as apparel, furniture, toys, and standard electronics would not be things voters would want to target with costly interventions. For these items, the status quo is likely acceptable to voters, especially if they have not personally experienced any difficulties in obtaining their desired goods in the recent past. If they have, it may make sense to increase sources for the product, as this consumer psychology of a wider range of choices solving the issue may bleed over into how voters think about obtaining their everyday items.

Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 3**: Respondents will be more likely to choose an expansionary policy response option when presented with non-strategically important goods than when presented with strategically important goods.

Conversely, I also hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 4**: Respondents will be more likely to choose a recessive policy response option when presented with strategically important goods than when presented with non-strategically important goods.

3.2.5 Differential impacts of issue framing: partisanship and education

Quite a lot of research shows that traits are correlated with differing views on trade, such as gender (Mansfield, Mutz and Silver, 2015), industry of employment (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2012), education (Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006), preexisting prejudices and out-group anxiety (Sabet, 2013; Mutz, 2018; Mansfield and Mutz, 2009), and many more (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mansfield and Mutz, 2013; Mansfield, Mutz and Brackbill, 2019). In this article, I examine the differing impacts of issue framing on respondents of different political parties and education levels.

Partisanship has long been seen as an imperfect predictor of trade attitudes (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987; Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990); however, it is still an important aspect of study of trade preferences, especially as trade becomes an increasingly salient issue. Republicans—those on the economic right—should ideologically believe in freer trade in theory due to the idea that it is a reduction of government intervention in the market, represents lower taxes (tariffs) and allows consumers to buy what they want and for companies to sell things for the price they want (Kaltenthaler, Gelleny and Ceccoli, 2004). This would slightly complicate the

matter. However, as of late, the Republican party has not seemed concerned with these issues with respect to trade. It is unclear whether this is an appeal to the median voter or a true shift in party priorities. There is also evidence that Republicans are more individualistic, as shown by partisan grouping into geographic areas (Brown and Enos, 2021) and cultural values and experience preferences (Buechner et al., 2022; Margalit, 2012).

In contrast, Democrats may see international trade as a tool for building alliances and fostering mutual security. Although they acknowledge the risks of supply chain vulnerabilities, Democrats tend to favor a multilateral approach, working through international institutions and bilateral agreements to mitigate these issues rather than retreating from global trade altogether. They argue that cooperation and interdependence with other nations create a web of mutual interests that make conflict less likely, and therefore can help secure critical goods without severing the economic and diplomatic ties that trade relationships provide (Barbieri, 1996). For Democrats, the goal is not to isolate the United States, but to reform trade policies so that security and economic benefits are balanced without sacrificing the advantages (particularly the economic ones) of global integration.

Due to the difference in party views on trade and the fact that Republicans tend to have a particular concern for national security—research shows that a significant number of Americans trust them more to handle national security issues (Norman, 2016)—I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 5a**: Republican respondents will be more likely to choose a recessive policy response option than Democrats.
>
> **Hypothesis 5b**: The positive effect of trade with an adversary (or of a strategic good) on support for recessive options will be stronger among Republicans than Democrats.

Next, we turn to education. Quite a lot of research consistently finds that education causes an increase in support for trade (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Mansfield, Mutz and Brackbill, 2019; Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017). I see this as a baseline—free trade will receive the "benefit of the doubt". There are many reasons to believe that this baseline will hold here. Comparative advantage is one—more educated people often control abundant factors of production or work in competitive industries in the US and benefit from trade, and have shown the sophistication needed to successfully "vote with their wallets" (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Gomez and Wilson, 2001; Kaltenthaler, Gelleny and Ceccoli, 2004). Highly educated individuals also demonstrate a markedly more cosmopolitan outlook on global affairs. Seeing themselves more as citizens of the world after socialization into such views through education, highly educated individuals may be more likely to support global integration and international

cooperation in general (Inglehart and Rabier, 1978). As a result of these factors, they are more likely to support policies aimed at modernizing and safeguarding global supply chains through partnerships and oversight, as well as simply reducing the reliance on one single failure point. They see vulnerability as something that can be managed with advanced planning, cooperation between allied nations, and a strong institutional framework, rather than by disengaging from global markets.

In contrast, non-highly educated individuals may be more inclined to perceive global trade in more immediate, tangible terms. In other words, for these individuals, reliance on foreign producers for critical goods often translates into real-world concerns such as job losses, factory closures, and economic instability within local communities (even if it does not directly affect them (Gomez and Wilson, 2001, 910-11)). They may be more prone to supporting policies that promise a swift and concrete reclaim of domestic production, even if that comes at the cost of reduced integration with broader global networks. This group tends to favor solutions that directly address what they experience as the day-to-day impacts of globalization, such as cuts in manufacturing jobs or sudden price hikes when supply chains fall apart. Distributional consequences of trade are important as well—the benefit that international trade provides to large, multinational corporations is often seen as *prima facie* negative (Menon and Osgood, 2024; Bhagwati, 2002).

Based on these differences, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 6a**: Highly educated respondents will be less likely to choose a recessive policy response option than less-educated respondents.
>
> **Hypothesis 6b**: The positive effect of trade with an adversary (or of a strategic good) on support for recessive options will be weaker among highly-educated respondents than less-educated respondents.

3.3 Research design

In order to answer these questions, I conducted a survey experiment to explore these preferences in multiple dimensions of policy proposals, so that I can answer the question of what factors affect the support of a policy response to dependence on foreign-made goods. I modeled this experiment on the basic principles of a conjoint experiment (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014), albeit with a simplified design. Other scholars have conducted successful survey experiments in which they attempt to influence respondents with a stimulus such as a list of attributes (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010), visual stimuli (Naoi and Kume, 2011), or political advertisements (Brader, 2005).

I recruited survey respondents through Prolific, an online survey marketplace, and obtained 3,109 responses. I limited respondents to those who reside in the United States, and all respondents were over 18 years old per the platform's rules. Respondents were prevented from responding to other surveys that I have posted on the platform, and were only allowed to take the survey if they were considered a high quality respondent. I selected a payment amount according to the platform's recommended guidelines for the duration of the survey. The platform has representation from all age, sex, and political party groups in the US. The platform is a non-probability sample, as not all US residents have an equal chance of being included. However, research shows that this is becoming an increasing concern with traditional random digit dialing probability sampling techniques as well (Tourangeau, Plewes and National Research Council (U.S.), 2013), and in any case, studies show that point estimates are the primary concern with usage of non-probability sampling, while relations between variables, such as what I seek to do here, are more robust towards faster and more convenient sampling techniques without as much issue with potential error (Pasek, 2016).

3.3.1 Variables of interest

3.3.1.1 Dependent variable

My overall outcome is choice of preferred policy response. I measure this by presenting the respondent with five choices in random order that policymakers are supposedly considering, and ask them to select the one they most prefer policymakers to use to address the problem.

I provide different levels of these recessive and expansionary options in this experiment. One of the options I present is to recede from global trade by providing government funding to make products here. In this option, I note that this will potentially mean that the products will be more expensive. This is important to mention. Of course, everyone would support making more goods at home to address a supply chain problem if it costs the same, but voters may or may not know that this is not an economic reality (Rho and Tomz, 2017). Including it here in the frame is a way to ensure that voters have a full understanding of the potential consequences.

An even more hard-line recessive approach is to stop trading with a certain country. This would be potentially more relevant for something like telecommunications equipment. If voters decide that it is too much of a risk to buy from a country because it is critical that there is domestic control of all parts of the supply chain for that product, this option could become very important. I am not sure whether voters will have the necessary, specialized knowledge or nuance to understand this, but it is worth discussion and investigation.

I also include two expansionary options. One proposes addressing potential weaknesses in

the supply chain by expanding it. Instead of having a potential for a bottleneck in which one country shuts down most of the supply chain, the US would be able to shift to importing goods from another country. Voters may want to take advantage of this option because it clearly addresses any issue that comes from importing goods from one country. It is very easy for voters to understand.

Another option is to sign a treaty to address the allocation of goods. This option would create an infrastructure to specifically provide a set amount of an in-demand good, negotiated in advance of a crisis, so that no one is left with nothing in the event of a crisis. This could be an attractive option because it has a great "fairness" angle. Everyone has their "fair share" of goods, and everyone involved agreed to either provide the goods or take only what they negotiated.

Finally, I provide an option to do nothing—the neutral option. The exact wording of the options are as follows:

- Provide tax breaks and government subsidies to encourage companies to make these products in the United States, even if they are more expensive
- Place new limits on importing these products, so people must buy American-made products even if they are more expensive
- Trade with more countries than we do now, so that if one country stops selling us these products, we can get them from another country
- Work with like-minded countries to sign a treaty agreeing how to manage the supply of these products if there is a shortage
- Do nothing and let free markets determine who gets these products in the event of a supply shortage

The respondents are shown these potential options in a random order in the survey.

3.3.1.2 Explanatory variables: the statements

The explanatory variables in this experiment are the individual attributes of the problem that I present to the respondent. These consist of the country mentioned as the one we depend on and the good that we import.

I presented an approximately equal number of respondents with one of four experimental statements. These experimental statements briefly explained that international trade has expanded recently and that the US has become more dependent on imports. They note that some

policymakers believe that we need to reduce our dependence on some given good and that we are heavily dependent on imports of that given good from some given country. The statements were varied in only two ways—between the product mentioned and the country mentioned. The good mentioned was either "medicines and (other) medical supplies" or "telecommunications and military equipment", and the country mentioned was either China or Canada.

The specific wording of the statements is as follows:

> International trade has expanded in recent decades, with many American products exported abroad and foreign products imported into the United States. As a result, the US has become more dependent on foreign-made goods. Some policymakers believe that the US needs to reduce its dependence on foreign-made [medicines and other medical supplies/telecommunications and military equipment]. For example, the US is heavily dependent on [medicines and medical supplies/telecommunications and military equipment] that [is/are] manufactured in [Canada/China].

I selected these countries because they represent two sides of US international relations. The United States has generally had very positive relations with Canada. The favorability of these countries is very high and US diplomats value the relationship the US has with these countries. However, the US relationship with China is highly adversarial. Polls show an extremely dim view among Americans of China—it is either the number one or number two "enemy" (competing with Russia), depending on who you ask and how you ask. (Gallup Inc, 2024). I also chose these countries because they both represent important trading partners of the United States. They are among the top five suppliers of foreign goods to the US (U.S. Trade Representative, 2022), placing them firmly on the list of important partners.

I did not choose Russia, even though it would be the most obvious to one of the two "extremes" of international relations, because it does not fit the criteria of being an important trade partner. The US has, up until recently, imported oil from Russia, but this stopped once the invasion of Ukraine began due to the sanctions put in place, and Russia does not supply much else to the US. The country now imports only a few billion dollars worth of goods (US Census Bureau, 2024). In any case, China is a more important trade partner and the relationship is just as adversarial.

I selected these goods as they are both critical, so I do not anticipate that respondents will have a lack of concern entirely with either of them. However, they are critical for different reasons. Medicines and medical supplies are critical for health, while military equipment is important to US national security, and telecommunications equipment is important to both the economy and to a certain extent also national security. I believe that while voters will be

concerned with both of these goods, they will have a far higher level of concern about military and telecommunications equipment. Voters consider, when selecting their preferred policy proposal, the threat from dependence on trade. A shortage of *either* of these goods, if the US was unable to obtain them, would be detrimental to the position of the US. However, there are additional considerations beyond just shortages with military and telecommunications equipment that policymakers have and that I believe voters also understand to some extent. The reliance on other countries for this equipment—especially a country with which the US has an adversarial relationship—could open up an opportunity for sabotage or spying.

Through this experiment, I can easily examine both the overall effect of an attribute (across all remaining attributes) and the conditional effect of an attribute based on the value at which another attribute is held. In other words, in the example above, I can examine both the overall effect of being Republican on whether one is likely to select the plan, as well as the effect that telecommunications equipment *specifically from China* has.

3.3.1.3 Moderators

I collected the political party identification and level of education of each respondent.

I used a similar scale to that used in the American National Election Studies 2020 Exploratory Testing Survey[1]. This question allows for the determination of the intensity of preference for a party, as well as the determination of the direction of those individuals who would posit that they do not have a party preference. For the purposes of my study, I define a partisan (either Democrat or Republican) as someone who has any preference in one direction. For example, an individual who selects that they are independent but on the follow-up question states that they consider themselves closer to the Republican party would be coded as Republican for the analysis below.

For the level of education of each respondent, I use a standard scale of high school or less to doctoral degree. I define "highly educated" for the purposes of my study as having obtained a bachelor's degree and use that in my education analyses.

3.4 Plan of analysis

To test my hypotheses, I will use standard unpaired two-sample *t*-tests. As my hypotheses all address whether the respondent chose a recessive or expansionary option, I constructed dummy variables for both whether the respondent chose an expansionary option or not and whether the respondent chose a recessive option or not (notably, a single dummy variable

[1] https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-exploratory-testing-survey/

will not work, as the respondent could have instead chosen the "do nothing" option), as well as dummy variables for whether the respondent was shown a statement with military and telecommunications equipment or not and whether the respondent was shown a statement with China or not.

3.5 Results

I report here the results of my study, including tests of my hypotheses.

3.5.1 Overall distribution of preferred policy responses

I first present an overview of the selections made by respondents in both a treemap form and in a table. A slight majority of respondents selected a recessive option, and very few respondents selected the option to do nothing.

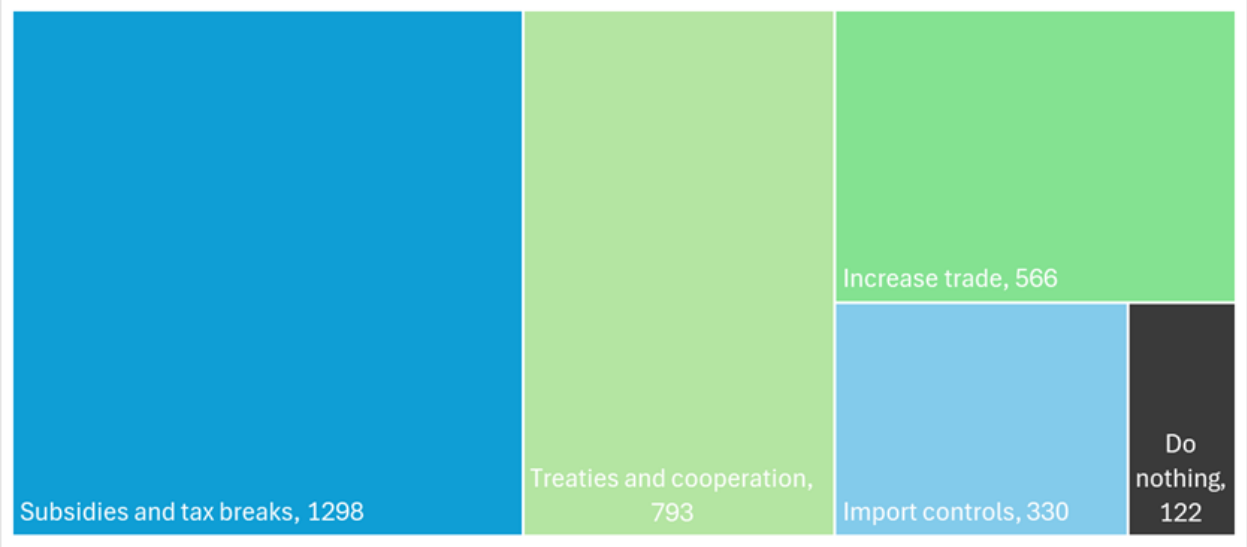

Figure 3.1: Treemap of respondent selections

3.5.2 Main treatment effects

I next report the results of my hypothesis testing. In each of the following tables (Tables 3.2-3.5), I report the difference in means between the two values of the variable of interest. In Table 3.2, I report the results of my analysis of only the main effects—that is, the marginal effect of the treatments on all respondents—as it relates to the country of dependence.

Policy	Number	Percent of total
Do nothing	**122**	**3.9%**
Total recessive	**1628**	**52.4%**
Subsidies and tax breaks	1298	41.7%
Import controls	330	10.6%
Total expansionary	**1359**	**43.7%**
Increase trade	566	18.2%
Treaties and cooperation	793	25.5%

Table 3.1: Overview of respondent selections

According to hypothesis 1, I expected respondents to be more likely to choose an expansionary policy response option when presented with a friendly country of dependence. In contrast, according to hypothesis 2, I expected the respondents to be more likely to choose a recessive policy response option when presented with an adversarial country of dependence.

Table 3.2: Effect of country of dependence

	Recessive	**Expansionary**
	Outcome: Proportion selecting one of the two options for the respective column	
China relative to Canada	0.021	−0.012
	(0.018)	(0.018)
95% CI	[−.01, .06]	[−.05, .02]

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported at traditional levels of statistical significance. However, the proposed treatment effect resulting from changing the country of dependence in either direction—in other words, seeing that the US depends on China for either good—did show up as expected, and respondents selected a recessive response option more often, though again, not quite at traditional levels of statistical significance. The converse, seeing that the US depends on Canada for either good, held in the same way (present but not statistically significant).

I next test hypotheses 3 and 4. According to hypothesis 3, I expected respondents to be more likely to choose an expansionary policy response option when presented with medicines and medical equipment as the good of concern. In contrast, according to hypothesis 4, I expected the respondents to be more likely to choose a recessive policy response option when presented with telecommunications and military equipment as the good of concern. In table 3.3, I report the results of this hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported. At a 0.05 significance level, a higher proportion of respondents chose a recessive policy proposal (approximately four percentage points more) when presented with a treatment with military and telecommunications equipment as the good

Table 3.3: Effect of type of good

	Recessive	**Expansionary**
	Outcome: Proportion selecting one of the two options for the respective column	
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.038*	−0.039*
	(0.018)	(0.018)
95% CI	[.002, .073]	[−.074, −.004]

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

of concern. The effect size is not large, about .06 of a standard deviation, but this is still a substantively meaningful effect given that the experiment is a relatively large sample size (n=3109, and as this is the main effect, this is only divided in half). The inverse was also true.

3.5.3 Effects of partisanship

I next examine my hypotheses about how partisanship will affect the choice of policy response option. In Table 3.4, I report the results of my analysis of the marginal treatment effects on Republicans. According to hypothesis 5a, I expected Republican respondents to be more likely to choose a recessive policy response option.

Table 3.4: Effect of partisanship of respondent

	Recessive	**Expansionary**
	Outcome: Proportion selecting one of the two options for the respective column	
Republicans relative to Democrats	0.239**	−0.234**
	(0.020)	(0.021)
95% CI	[.20, .28]	[−.27, −.19]

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Hypothesis 5a is supported. Republican respondents are more likely than Democrats to select a recessive policy option. This result is significant at a 0.05 significance level. The effect is quite strong as well, with an effect size of over a quarter of a standard deviation. This shows that party is a strong predictor of desired choice of policy response in general. Next, we test the experimental effect itself. According to Hypothesis 5b, the positive effect of trade with an adversary or of a strategic good on support for recessive options will be stronger with Republicans than Democrats. We will therefore expect that when given experimental statements that mention China or military and telecommunications equipment, Republicans will shift further to recessive policy responses than Democrats. I report the results of this testing in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Differences in responses to frames across partisans

	Recessive	**Expansionary**
	Outcome: Proportion selecting one of the two options for the respective column	
Republicans		
China relative to Canada	−0.027	−0.034
	(0.027)	(0.026)
95% CI	[−.07, .03]	[−.09, .02]
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.057*	−0.052*
	(0.026)	(0.027)
95% CI	[.01, .11]	[−.103, −.001]
Democrats		
China relative to Canada	0.058*	−0.039
	(0.028)	(0.029)
95% CI	[.002, .114]	[−.01, .10]
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.020	−0.024
	(0.028)	(0.029)
95% CI	[−.08, .04]	[−.08, .03]
Effect size differences (R−not R)		
China relative to Canada	0.183**	−0.172**
	(0.025)	(0.025)
95% CI	[.13, .24]	[−.22, −.12]
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.245**	−0.226**
	(0.024)	(0.025)
95% CI	[.20, .29]	[−.27, −.18]

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01. R=Republican.

Hypothesis 5b is supported as well. At a significance level of 0.05, Republican respondents demonstrate a stronger shift towards a recessive policy response option when presented with telecommunications and military equipment as the good of concern or with China as the country of concern. Even though exposure to the frames does not always change the proportions selecting a recessive response within partisans at a statistically significant level, the differences between the groups are statistically significant both for country and for product of concern. The effect size is relatively large both substantively and statistically. The difference is around a quarter of a standard deviation for all effect size differences.

3.5.4 Effects of education

Finally, I examine my hypotheses about different levels of education. According to hypothesis 6a, educated respondents will, in general, be less likely to choose a recessive policy response option, compared to non-highly educated respondents. I report the results of my hypothesis testing for hypothesis 6a in table 3.6.

Hypothesis 6a was not supported; in fact, the opposite was found. At a 0.05 significance level, highly educated respondents were actually more likely to choose the recessive policy options. The effect size, however, is not very large, at less than a tenth of a standard deviation.

Table 3.6: Effect of education of respondent

	Recessive	**Expansionary**
	Outcome: Proportion selecting one of the two options for the respective column	
Highly educated relative to non-highly educated	0.053^{**}	-0.040^{*}
	(0.016)	(0.016)
95% CI	[.02, .08]	[−.071, −.010]

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

This shows that education may actually result in a desire to recede from trade. To further examine this result, we turn to hypothesis 6b, which states that the positive effect of trade with an adversary or of a strategic good on support for recessive options will be weaker among highly educated respondents than non highly educated respondents—in other words, highly educated respondents will have a weaker shift (or no shift/shift towards expansionary options) than non highly educated respondents towards the recessive options when shown an experimental statement that mentions China or telecommunications or military equipment. I report the results of this hypothesis testing in table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Differences in responses to frames across levels of education

	Recessive	**Expansionary**
	Outcome: Proportion selecting one of the two options for the respective column	
Highly educated		
China relative to Canada	0.001	0.012
	(0.021)	(0.021)
95% CI	[−.04, .04]	[−.03, .05]
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.040	−0.037
	(0.021)	(0.020)
95% CI	[−.0005, .08]	[−.08, .003]
Non highly educated		
China relative to Canada	0.077^{*}	-0.080^{*}
	(0.036)	(0.036)
95% CI	[.01, .15]	[−.15, −.01]
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.032	−0.043
	(0.036)	(0.036)
95% CI	[−.04, .10]	[−.11, .03]
Effect size differences (HE−non HE)		
China relative to Canada	0.033	−0.007
	(0.029)	(0.029)
95% CI	[−.02, .09]	[−.06, −.05]
Military/telecom equip. relative to medical supplies	0.075^{**}	−0.503
	(0.029)	(0.029)
95% CI	[.02, .13]	[−.11, −.01]

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01. HE=Highly educated

Hypothesis 6b was also not supported. There was no effect, one way or the other, for country

of concern, and for good of concern (military and telecommunications equipment relative to medical supplies), the effect was again in the opposite direction, at a statistically significant level. Like the result for Hypothesis 6a, this result is not a strong effect, at less than a tenth of a standard deviation. Overall, education does not appear to be a strong predictor.

3.6 Discussion

3.6.1 Findings

There are mixed results with respect to my hypotheses. Respondents clearly prefer recessive policies in general. This is evidenced by both hypothesis 1 and by examining the effects within each table. This is not surprising, as much of the evidence in the literature shows that there is a significant degree of backlash against globalization, especially when faced with foreign investment (Canes-Wrone, Mattioli and Meunier, 2020; Chilton, Milner and Tingley, 2020), and that international institutions do not help to mitigate the issue (and may actually be one of the things that voters lash out against) (Walter, 2021; Mansfield, Milner and Rudra, 2021).

3.6.1.1 Frame effects

I found it interesting that there was no marginal treatment effect for the China frame in either direction. I hypothesized this because I have observed such a large effect of China in previous research. Instead, in this experiment, most of the effect came from the difference in good. Why?

The best explanation I have is the timing of this study. I collected this data after President Trump's recent trade disputes with Canada. I, of course, could not expect this when designing the experiment, as Canada has been one of our closest allies, and I did not anticipate that Canada-US relations would be tense at any point in the near future. This may have made it difficult for respondents to differentiate any negative feelings about the Canadian response to US actions from prolonged negative feelings about China—especially if they are Republicans, as they are likely inclined to support President Trump and, therefore, take particular issue with Canada.

3.6.1.2 Subgroups

For Republicans, I found what I hypothesized. However, it is still quite remarkable to see the differences in the effect sizes. I expect that this was partially due to the timing of this survey—it

was taken on the eve of much of the recent large shifts in trade policy and implementation of new tariffs, and therefore was a highly salient issue for the political battle lines to be drawn.

For highly educated respondents, I perplexingly found the opposite of my hypothesis. However, I believe I can partially explain the discrepancy by theorizing that highly educated respondents have the same concerns as non-highly educated voters, and just experience them to a higher degree—perhaps because they can understand what is happening more easily. This explanation makes logical sense and fits the results more easily than the idea of having different considerations (cosmopolitanism, comparative advantage) than the average voter, like I anticipated when I made my hypothesis. In addition, the effect size is not large, so it is difficult to say whether this is a significant finding at all.

3.7 Impact

3.7.1 Contributions to the field

Political scientists should be concerned about the views of the American public on the implications for national security of dependence on trade trade because these perceptions can shape policy decisions and electoral outcomes in potentially profound ways. When a large segment of the public believes that growing trade leaves the country vulnerable—whether it is through dependence on foreign goods, compromised economic sovereignty, or something else—this can generate political pressure for protectionist measures or the reassessment of key alliances. As policymakers feel compelled to respond to voters' concerns, they may enact tariffs, withdraw from trade agreements, or direct government resources toward reshoring key industries through the enactment of things such as tax incentives and subsidies. These moves, in turn, can reshape economic ties at home and abroad and shift the strategic status quo that has long defined international relations for the United States.

Attitudes about the security implications of trade can also affect broader public confidence in political leaders. If citizens believe that foreign competitors are using trade relationships to undermine US national security, they may lose faith in the value of established economic partnerships and the institutions that regulate them. This erosion of support can weaken traditional alliances and can bolster political movements that advocate insulating the US from global economic forces. It is not difficult to see evidence of this, based on the most recent few national elections.

There has been some previous work that has examined the implications for national security of dependence on trade (Tanaka, Tago and Gleditsch, 2017; Fordham and Kleinberg, 2011; Roberts, Choer Moraes and Ferguson, 2019), and there is some newer work as well (Bulman,

2025; Nguyen, Sattler and Schweinberger, 2024; Carnegie and Gaikwad, 2022). These new developments are likely a result of scholars realizing that this issue is ripe for discussion in the political arena after the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing geopolitical conflict between major trading partners. However, I wish to connect this work with public opinion surveys, to integrate national security and trade literature with public opinion literature. It adds to the public opinion literature too, as I explore the effects that educational status and political party identification have on responses to the issue. Education is widely studied in the literature (Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal, 2017; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006) and party ID is an ongoing debate in trade preferences.

3.7.2 Broader impact

There is an even greater impact outside the field. Politicians and policymakers have a direct stake in how the American public perceives the national security implications of high-volume trade because these perceptions can quickly translate into policy mandates and electoral repercussions. This is a unique approach given the implications. Politicians who fail to address or acknowledge these concerns risk losing voter confidence and consequently their jobs. Thus, staying attuned to public sentiment can help elected officials craft policies that not only secure economic benefits but also reassure the public that national security and strategic autonomy remain protected.

These are not new issues for those in government, and there is renewed interest in coming up with fresh approaches, with President Trump decidedly into his unprecedented nonconsecutive second term, deciding how to use his mandate with bipartisan support on some issues, particularly when it comes to China (Borg, 2024b), while still meeting the needs of the American people and preventing his Republican colleagues from getting voted out of office.

However, there is a lack of direction on these issues. We find ourselves in changing times. Vice President JD Vance identifies as part of the "postliberal" right (Zorzi, 2024), and it is obvious that this comes with a seismic shift in what the Republican party believes (Borg, 2024a). The outcome seen in the difference in response between the Republicans and Democrats was striking. This is an important early indicator of where this shift might be headed. If, as seen in previous studies, parties are equally concerned about the issue, perhaps the debate will be more focused on how to respond to the problem, where there is a clear variance. This is important information to have, as it would allow politicians to focus their efforts on mobilizing the electorate on the issues where their party varies.

Beyond the headlines of today, the fact is that this is not a made-up issue. There is a real risk to national security from globalization if policy makers do not proceed with caution (Far-

rell and Newman, 2023). Acemoglu and Yared 2010 explore how military spending impacts trade and how these changes may reflect public opinion. More broadly, interest groups could take advantage of this information to mobilize voters for or against free trade (Naoi and Urata, 2013). For example, if domestic semiconductor manufacturers desire further investment from the US government to shore up domestic production in the form of subsidies and tax breaks, they could use the type of information gained from these types of surveys to convince policymakers that this is what the voters want, or they could mobilize existing preferences to get voters to lobby politicians themselves.

Finally, it is also important to note that there is not a lack of appetite for expansionary solutions. This article focuses much on recessive solutions, and it is clear that a slight majority of the responses preferred were recessive response options. However, over 40% of respondents desired an expansionary response, with a good mix between treaties and cooperation and increasing trade. Policymakers should not take these options off the table. It is critical to consider all options available to solve this difficult issue.

At the end of the day, the difficult decisions on policy tradeoffs—whether to reshore production at the expense of national pocketbooks, whether to forge ahead with new treaties and institutions, or whether to stay the course, are appropriately left to elected leaders. But political scientists play a key role in contributing to the general starting direction of research on those topics, and this research contributes a small piece.

CHAPTER 4

Policy Responses to Import Dependence in the United States

This paper investigates the factors shaping US policy responses to dependence on foreign-made goods, extending previous experimental research on American public concern. It posits that policy responses are significantly influenced by two primary factors: the strategic nature of the product and whether the dependence is on an ally or an adversary. Specifically, it hypothesizes that more strategic goods and goods sourced from adversarial nations will elicit more urgent and robust policy interventions. Employing a qualitative methodology, this research conducts a deeper look into the current policy environment by examining academic work, news reports, and enacted legislation. The analysis focuses on three case studies: semiconductors, oil, and pharmaceuticals. The findings indicate a strong correlation between the strategic nature of a good and the status of its source country as an ally or adversary with the importance and intensity of US policy responses. The paper contributes to the political science literature by qualitatively linking public opinion and experimental findings with real-world policy outcomes in the context of trade dependence, offering a nuanced understanding of how policymakers navigate these complex threats to national and economic security.

4.1 Chapter introduction

Two critical questions that both policymakers and political scientists face today are whether Americans are concerned with threats from dependence on trade, and how they want their policymakers to respond to this threat. This is an important starting point, but a logical extension of this line of research is an investigation into how US policymakers have responded, and what has shaped those responses. In other words: what are the determinants of the policy responses in the United States to the threat of dependence on trade?

I posit that two factors will affect the policy responses to dependence threats: whether or not the product is strategic and whether the dependence is on an ally or an adversary. I

define strategic importance as whether a good is important for military power and economic development.

I hypothesize that the more strategic a good is, the more critical a priority policy responses will be, and therefore we will see more focus on addressing the issue as it relates to that good. The protection of national security is of the utmost importance for policymakers, and addressing threats to this, or immediate threats to economic development, will be top priority items. I hypothesize the same outcome for goods where our dependence is on an adversary versus on an ally. Allies are likely to continue trading in a crisis, or work together to solve a supply issue, and highly unlikely to use dependence as an instrument of statecraft, while adversaries have a strong incentive to do the opposite.

To test these hypotheses, I conduct a qualitative study, examining other academic work, reviewing news articles in reputable publications, and looking at actual legislation and other policy actually adopted. I use strategic importance and country of dependence as independent variables, and policy responses as the dependent variable. I selected semiconductors, oil, and microchips as goods to study as they vary on these dimensions. I find that there is a strong connection between the two characteristics I identified—strategic importance of the good and the relationship, allied or adversarial—and the degree of salience and therefore policy response.

This paper makes an important contribution to the political science literature by bridging the gap between existing analyses of geopolitical shifts in supply chains and studies of public opinion and undertakes a qualitative analysis of how well actual policy responses match both of these factors. This goes further than a quantitative analysis would allow, looking closely at the responses and making a necessarily complex and nuanced determination as to which are the most critical issues of the day.

Beyond academic contributions, this paper offers important insights for policymakers during a time of increasing geopolitical complexity and conflict. This research sets a framework for understanding how different types of risk from trade dependence affect how high on the policy agenda the issues might be, and how this might vary between different goods. This may be the result of political pressure from voters, bureaucratic processes, or other factors, and must be considered when determining how to allocate limited political capital and taxpayer dollars towards the challenges we face today; both are areas worth further research.

4.2 Background and motivation

In today's interconnected global economy, reliance on foreign-made goods is as prevalent as ever, primarily due to the economic gains from comparative advantage. However, this reliance has also emerged as a potential strategic vulnerability. Ongoing disruptions—whether that is

the COVID-19 pandemic, demand shocks from the explosive growth of AI leading to supply shortages of semiconductors, or escalating geopolitical tensions—have exposed the fragility of global supply chains and underscored the threat to national security that dependence on foreign-made goods might pose in some cases.

My motivation for this paper in large part stems from the fact that there has been a seismic shift in the national conversation about dependence on foreign-made goods. A recent heightened focus—wherever that focus may be coming from—on issues like semiconductor shortages, energy supplies, and critical health products illustrates a growing perception that dependence on foreign sources carries not just economic risks but also strategic liabilities. Our reliance on trade is not new, and yet the conversation among average Americans (and even the focus from policymakers) is new (Bown, 2022).

As a result of this, there is a strong need to understand how the US is recalibrating its trade and industrial policies when confronted with this issue in an attempt to safeguard both economic and national security interests. What factors are policymakers most strongly considering when making policy changes? Why are Americans concerned with some goods but not others? How can we best balance protecting national security and strategic competitiveness with maintaining the economic gains from trade that are so clearly benefiting us? These are all critical questions in this era of rapid global change.

Many political scientists and economists have examined these topics. From a descriptive and exploratory perspective, scholars have described the rise of China (Malkin, 2022; Roberts, Choer Moraes and Ferguson, 2019) and conversely have documented the recent shift in supply chain activity (Alfaro and Chor, 2023), and have also explored whether domestic winners from trade prefer a less hostile approach towards China (and vice versa) (Kleinberg and Fordham, 2013). Many other scholars have examined public opinion on the matter through surveys (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2011; Tanaka, Tago and Gleditsch, 2017; Bulman, 2022), including parallel surveys in the US and China (Nguyen, Sattler and Schweinberger, 2024) and the US and India (Carnegie and Gaikwad, 2022). I have myself examined similar topics via surveys. However, I would like to contribute a unique link between the two by very closely focusing on the public push for these policy changes.

I decide to take a qualitative approach in this paper as I believe that this approach allows examination from an angle that other approaches do not, for several reasons. First, policy responses are often complex, are not large in number, and can be hard to quantify. Doing so may result in statistical problems, and is simply a poor fit. Second, the qualitative approach allows details on process and outcomes to be explored in a way that a quantitative approach simply could not. Finally, this method allows for a focus on a hand selection of the most important cases to strongly demonstrate the evidence, which might otherwise be watered down

by trying to combine all cases into a set of numbers. Overall, my approach will provide a unique and rich dive into the current state of responses to trade dependence threats.

4.3 Theory and hypotheses

Here I hypothesize as to the reasons behind variation in policy responses, and give a brief overview of the theoretical mechanisms behind my hypotheses.

4.3.1 Outcome variable: the policy responses

We have seen policymakers pursue many strategies aimed at mitigating dependence on foreign-made goods in the past few years, both in the Trump and Biden administrations—particularly in sectors deemed critical for national security and economic stability. One prominent category of policy response has been the use of protectionist measures. This includes the imposition of tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers aimed at reducing imports of key goods and encouraging domestic production. These measures have often been justified on national security grounds, with policymakers arguing that overreliance on foreign supply chains—especially from adversaries—can compromise US defense capabilities and economic resilience. These protectionist policies carry economic risk, of course, but this has been less emphasized by politicians, and seems to have been largely ignored by voters, up until very recently.

In parallel with these approaches, policymakers have pursued strategies to bolster domestic production through industrial policy. These policies include offering grants, tax incentives, and low-interest loans to companies willing to reshore manufacturing or diversify their supply chains. For example, recent proposals have sought to incentivize production in critical sectors such as semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and energy equipment. By providing financial support and regulatory certainty for domestic companies, these policies aim to reduce reliance on countries that may be politically or strategically unreliable over the long term. Such measures reflect a broader trend toward using targeted economic interventions as a tool for enhancing national security.

Direct state coordination is yet another solution to the challenge of import dependence. Instead of providing tax incentives or grants, the state could partner with researchers, companies, investors, and other key stakeholders to come up with a new way to approach the problem. This has the benefit of getting increased buy-in from all parties. Though startup costs may be significantly higher, there is a high chance that this will create a resilient, long-term solution.

Another important dimension of US policy responses has been the emphasis on comprehensive supply chain resiliency. Recognizing that vulnerabilities in global supply chains can

have far-reaching implications, policymakers have promoted initiatives to map, analyze, and secure critical supply networks. We often do not know what we do not know—knowing what we significantly rely on and where our most significant vulnerabilities lie is a critical first step for some industries, particularly for pharmaceuticals. By identifying and diversifying sources when possible, these policies not only aim to ensure continued access to essential goods during crises but also to reduce the political leverage that foreign suppliers might otherwise have and use against us.

Working with like-minded countries is an important dimension of US policy responses, too. Given the nature of the fragmented supply chain, many of these issues are unlikely to be able to be solved by one country alone. Working together to ensure that efforts are the strongest, and that funds aren't wasted by duplicating initiatives, is an important option to consider. There are many ways this can be done. One is to simply gain more import partners. This does not even necessarily have to be with like-minded countries, although it works best if it is; any increase in the number of suppliers reduces the risk of a single supplier being unable or unwilling to provide goods to the US. Shifting imports to friendly countries is another option (often known as "friend-shoring"). If the US buys from countries that are unlikely to use the supply as a weapon, this will mitigate some of the risk of dependence. Finally, treaties and other international institutions are yet another way to reduce the risk. These institutions can govern the distribution of supply in a crisis, create rules for trade, prevent unfair tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and provide other forms of oversight and governance to ensure the supply chain keeps moving.

These varied policy responses illustrate how addressing dependence on foreign-made goods is a complex issue requiring multiple different approaches. While each approach has advantages and disadvantages, they all have in common the fact that they are responses to a highly salient issue in the public mind when it comes to global affairs.

As noted before, in this article, I discuss both the adopted policy responses—things that have been implemented, ordered, changed, enacted, passed—and things that are pending. In some cases, I include proposals that have failed, so that I can compare the differences in these proposals with the proposals that have passed.

4.3.2 A first explanatory factor: strategic importance of the good

Policymakers are more concerned with strategic products than non-strategic products because they pose a bigger threat to national security, which is both a larger concern to them and something they have a bigger mandate to solve. National security and defense policy is a central goal of any government. Keeping prices low or ensuring availability of important consumer

products are both important goals too, but they aren't more important than securing the homeland—that will always come first. An interruption in these supply chains could harm the United States' ability to defend itself. To compound that threat, an adversary country could specifically use the dependence on imports as a way to accomplish their goal of harming US national security and defense in a conflict or dispute.

Ding and Defoe 2021 come to similar conclusions in their 2021 article. They offer a definition of the strategic importance of a good in their 2021 article, stating that the strategic level of an asset is a product of its importance, externality, and nationalization. They focus particularly on externality, stating that an asset for which there is an externality is both important and rivalrous, and divide strategic goods into three categories: infrastructure-strategic, cumulative-strategic, and dependency-strategic (Ding and Dafoe, 2021).

I will take a similar but more targeted approach when defining whether a good is strategic. I will focus on the importance of the good to military power and economic growth and development. This focused approach incorporates the key parts of Ding and Defoe's framework while avoiding any potential undesirable crossover between the two explanatory variables or irrelevant analysis of positive externalities, which are not highly relevant to my analysis, as positive externalities are intuitively not contributors to responses to threats from trade dependence. Put more simply, we will know a good is highly strategic, as I define it here for this analysis, if it is a critical aspect of US military power or economic growth and development.

Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 1**: There will be a stronger policy response to threats from dependence on strategic goods than non-strategic goods.

4.3.3 A second explanatory factor: dependence on allies versus adversaries

Another dimension I include in my analysis is what country the policy targets. The country from which a nation imports critical goods fundamentally alters the level and nature of the policy response to the inherent risks of trade dependency.

We don't always get to choose where products are made—sometimes they are made in a country with which the US has good relations. For example, the US has the fortune of being able to import a large majority of the oil that it does import from its neighbors and two of its closest allies, Canada and Mexico. 62% of total petroleum imports and 70% of crude oil imports came from Canada and Mexico in 2022(U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2024). The risk of a politically motivated critical supply disruption is, obviously, considered low.[1] Therefore, the

[1]Though Canada responded by implementing tariffs and export controls after President Trump proposed tariffs

policy focus is on enhancing efficiency, building redundancy, and ensuring a stable, predictable supply through partnership. Policymakers have interests in these things, but they do not see this as a critical security concern. Indeed, a great deal of evidence shows the pacifying benefits of economic interdependence (Oneal and Russett, 1999; Oneal and Russet, 1997; Huang and Li, 2024).

However, the US relies heavily on its two biggest adversaries, China and Russia, for silicon, the key ingredient for semiconductors. They have about 80% of the market (National Minerals Information Center, 2024). In contrast to partnerships with allies, this triggers a far more robust and defensive policy response. The primary concern is that the supplier could weaponize this dependence for strategic leverage, cutting off or restricting supplies during a political or military crisis (Clayton et al., 2025). Policymakers are more concerned with dependence on adversaries than they are with dependence on allies for this reason. They have less faith that an adversary will continue to provide important goods in a crisis. Put more plainly: heavy reliance on a critical good is a potential weapon of war. The goal in this case is not to develop partnerships to ensure stability of this trade, because relationships between adversaries are fundamentally rooted in mistrust and the assumption of potential hostility. Instead, the goal is to fundamentally alter the supply chain, reducing dependence to a level that no longer poses a significant threat to national security or economic sovereignty. Scholars argue that this economic statecraft is a tool that policymakers consider in their list of potential coercive mechanisms (Aggarwal and Reddie, 2020).

In addition, ”going after" an adversary country is just more politically popular. A politician can sell a potentially costly import restriction to the public much more easily if it targets a country that is not well liked. An easy strategy to exploit is the idea that trade is unfair (Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein and Rudra, 2024), and it is much easier to make an unfair partner out of an enemy than out of a friend.

Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 2**: There will be a stronger policy response to threats from dependence on goods that are sourced from adversary countries than goods that are sourced from allies, or goods sourced from several different countries.

4.4 Research methods

This study employs a qualitative methodology to provide a deep and nuanced understanding of how the US policy environment responds to trade dependence threats. A qualitative ap-

on Canadian products, it remains highly unlikely that Canada would ever put these barriers on critical goods, at least not in a way that would seriously harm US national security.

proach is necessary to capture the complexity of policymaking, including informal discussions, signaling, and failed proposals, which quantitative methods would miss. I seek to connect experimental findings on public opinion with real-world policy outcomes by analyzing the current state of affairs. I base my findings on a holistic review of academic literature, reputable news sources, and enacted and proposed legislation.

4.4.1 Variables

I employ two independent variables in this study. The first is strategic importance, which I define as importance to military power and economic development and level of risk to existing supply. The second is the source of dependence, whether that is an ally or an adversary. The dependent variable in this study is the policy response, defined broadly to include not only concrete, enacted policies but also the overall salience and intensity of the policy environment surrounding a specific trade dependency.

4.4.1.1 Measurement

I measure strategic importance by assessing each case good's importance to military power and economic development and the level of risk to existing supply. We know whether a good is important to military power or economic development from policymaker conversation around the good as well as the actual use of the good. Level of risk can also be assessed both by examining policymaker conversation and the actual potential risks in practice. I gather policymaker conversation generally from reputable news articles as well as from academic journal articles, seeking out various statements from key individuals about the importance to military power and economic development of a good and the level of existing risk, and I gather information on actual risk of the good by examining the current source of the good for potential barriers to supply.

I measure source of dependence as objectively as possible, though in many cases, the data on the actual source of inputs on products is opaque or unavailable (Swanson, 2020).

I select only a few policy responses to examine, and attempt to explain the most recent major proposals, as undertaking a complete survey of the landscape of policy proposals and responses would be beyond the scope of a single article. However, I believe this approach will allow for sufficient explanation of the variance between the goods and show that my hypotheses are correct.

4.4.2 Design

This study is designed as a comparative analysis of three distinct cases, chosen to represent different combinations of the independent variables. This allows for a systematic examination of how variations in a good's strategic value and sourcing affect the policy response. The variance between these responses (or the lack thereof) will support (or not support) my hypotheses.

4.4.3 Case selection

I selected semiconductors, oil, and pharmaceuticals as the three cases to examine, as they all have at least a moderate level of one of the independent variables, and are major topics of public discourse with respect to foreign trade. However, they provide a good degree of variance on the independent variables. Semiconductors are highly strategic and the US is highly dependent on an adversary; oil is highly strategic but the US is not as highly dependent on an adversary (or any country, for that matter); and pharmaceuticals are not as strategic, and the US is moderately dependent on an adversary for imports.

4.4.4 Basis of inferences

The study's hypotheses are tested by evaluating whether the observed policy landscape for each case aligns with the predicted outcomes. For example, a robust policy response to a good that is highly strategic and with a high degree of dependence would be consistent with both hypotheses. Conversely, a policy response to a non-strategic good, or a good on which the US does not depend on an adversary, that has a more limited scope would support the hypothesis that less strategic goods receive a lesser response.

4.4.5 Why a qualitative analysis?

A reasonable question the reader may ask is why I do not simply undertake an analysis of the number or type of policy responses and compare them across types of goods, or perhaps work the other way around and analyze changes in trade flows and see if there are additional tariffs, restrictions, or other legal barriers for goods in which trade flows have fallen at a greater rate (or risen at a slower rate). But there are problems with these types of approaches if I want to answer the question I seek to answer.

First, how does one define policy responses? There is no specific unit of measurement for policy responses, in the way that I need to analyze them here. Obviously, concrete changes, such as an increase in tariff, an export control, or a piece of legislation that otherwise regulates trade are all clearly policy responses. However, limiting the analysis to only these things misses

a critical pieces that I believe must be included: an examination of the negatives. What policy was considered, but decided against? It is, of course, possible to do this in some way via a quantitative analysis by considering whether something formally proposed got a final yes or no vote. But this misses most of how policy actually fails—Members of Congress discuss (publicly or privately) making an amendment to some legislation, and then never do; a committee staff member writes up a proposal but never brings it up to anyone; an increase in tariffs on a specific good is discussed publicly but walked back after the threat sufficiently accomplished the goal. None of these can be captured but for a holistic review and discussion of the policy environment.

Another issue with a quantitative analysis of policy responses to test my hypotheses is that it would exclude the use of the discussions themselves as part of the outcome variable. We can intuitively understand that policymakers are not going to put as much focus on discussing topics that do not concern the American people, and research shows that both Americans (Hill and Hurley, 2002) and other world leaders (Hall and Yarhi-Milo, 2012) respond to speeches and signaling that politicians invest time and effort into performing. These discussions are important, because even if they aren't translating into policy right now, they highlight the importance of the matter.

Other political scientists have taken similar approaches to different matters. Goldberg and Reed 2023, for example, discuss whether the global economy is destablizing, the reasons for that, and what may be next on the horizon by describing current trade data, public opinion surveys, and the policy environment, and linking that to the causes of recent shifts and whether they represent an impending shift (Goldberg and Reed, 2023). Boylan et al. 2021 discuss the nationalist roots of the trade war and what it means for the future of the conflict by linking current events to the nationalism literature (Boylan, McBeath and Wang, 2021).

4.5 The semiconductor industry: highly strategic, vulnerable to adversary

Semiconductors are indispensable components in nearly every electronic device, from smartphones and computers to automobiles, medical equipment, and critical infrastructure. They are exceptionally important for the United States and for every other highly industrialized economy. Without semiconductors, the modern economy would grind to near a total halt. Though the direct impact of semiconductor fabrication on the US economy is quite low, the secondary impact from being an input to everything else cannot be understated. I here evaluate the overall strategic importance of the semiconductor industry, assess the level of dependence on

adversaries, and discuss the current policy responses. I find that semiconductors are highly strategic and that the US is vulnerable to actions by an adversary to intervene in the supply (even though the US' supply does not come from an adversary, the geopolitical situation relating to Taiwan creates a similar risk), and as I hypothesize, the US has a strong policy response to this threat.

4.5.1 Strategic importance

Semiconductor supply chains are of exceptionally high importance to the United States, both because of the economic contributions and because of the national security implications of these inputs. While domestic production of semiconductors only accounts directly for 0.3 percent of GDP, semiconductors as an input contribute to a much larger percentage—12% by one estimate (Thadani and Allen, 2023). The profound economic consequences of the recent chip shortage, which shaved an estimated $240 billion off US GDP in 2021 and led to 7.7 million fewer cars being produced (Thadani and Allen, 2023), illustrate this deep economic dependency, and the potential for economic harm should a shortage like this happen again. The US also needs semiconductors to succeed in the most promising areas for economic growth. Semiconductors are the essential building blocks for progress in fields such as AI, telecommunications, quantum computing, biotechnology, clean energy technologies, autonomous systems, and advanced robotics. US leadership in these areas is inextricably linked to continued advancements in semiconductors, and access to the latest technology.

The importance of semiconductors extends even deeper into the realm of national security, where they are fundamental to modern military capabilities and strategic advantage. Virtually all major US defense systems and platforms depend critically on semiconductors for their operation and performance. This includes traditional military technologies such as fighter jets, missiles, and telecommunications equipment like radar and navigation systems, but it also includes new frontiers where tomorrow's wars may be fought, like high-performance computing and AI, as countries face threats of cyberwarfare and hacking from both adversary states and non-state actors today.

Investments in the industry seem to have a large multiplier effect. An IMF report found that each dollar of federal investment in semiconductor R&D increased overall U.S. GDP by $16.50 (International Monetary Fund, 2024). Semiconductor progress is a critical prerequisite for advancements in other strategically vital fields. If US performance is moving in a positive direction, the effect could quickly cascade into pushing the US forward as a global leader. On the other hand, a failure to maintain pace in semiconductor innovation could also cascade, hindering progress and competitiveness across multiple strategic areas. In either case, it is

clear to see the strategic weight of semiconductor capabilities beyond the sector itself. However, firms may not be sufficiently incentivized to make the necessary investments, as spillover effects will prevent them from fully realizing the economic benefits.

Finally, we examine nationalization—the degree to which the other strategic factors are rivalrous between nations (i.e., will developments be excludable or inevitably shared). For semiconductors, this dimension of strategic importance is particularly pronounced, driven by intense geopolitical competition, primarily between the United States and China, and the acute vulnerabilities stemming from the supply chain's geographic structure. The semiconductor industry has become a central, perhaps the most critical and most publicly visible, battleground in the broader strategic and technological competition between the United States and China. Both nations perceive leadership in this domain as vital to their future economic prosperity and national security. China's industrial policy goals aimed at achieving semiconductor self-sufficiency and leadership, coupled with US countermeasures like stringent export controls restricting China's access to advanced chip technology and manufacturing equipment, and the massive investment through the CHIPS Act (discussed later in this section), are clear manifestations of this rivalry.

While, as discussed above, the overall advancement in technologies will spill over eventually, companies making the initial investments will reap the first benefits in the form of being first to market as well as more quickly building up supply chains and customer bases. In addition, setting up the infrastructure to fabricate semiconductors is extremely expensive and requires a great deal of specialized knowledge. Very few companies that are not already in the market have the resources, without outside support, to meaningfully enter this market even if they would like to. This creates a strong incentive for governments to make investments that private industry can't in an effort to take a leadership role, and both the American and Chinese governments have made these investments.

Based on the current semiconductor supply chain, semiconductors are a highly strategic good as they are critical to military power and economic development, and under hypothesis 1, should result in a stronger policy response to US dependence than would be expected for US dependence on a less strategic good. I will explore this in sections that follow.

4.5.2 Dependence on an adversary

I focus on country of origin as a determinant of robustness of policy response, and I posit that if the US is reliant on an adversary for a good, there will be a stronger and more urgent policy response than if the US is reliant on an ally, or reliant on several countries. Semiconductors provide an excellent illustration of this concept because of their highly concentrated nature.

The US is a global leader in some aspects of semiconductor production, particularly the initial design and the IP rights of chips, and is a major player in manufacturing the equipment to fabricate the chips. However, for the high-tech chips that are needed for advanced applications like high-performance computing and AI, a single company, TSMC, located in Taiwan, produces over 90% (The Economist, 2023). Regardless of where it is located—even a domestic company—this would be a concerning concentration. But its location in Taiwan provides a particularly difficult problem for the US.

Although Taiwan is generally considered a strong ally of the US, as an advanced industrialized nation and robust democracy, relations are complex due to the US's One China policy, precluding recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state and complicating other aspects of the relationship. The US also maintains a policy of "strategic ambiguity" as to whether it would directly come to Taiwan's defense, yet unequivocally supplies a great deal of weapons. China's influence over other nations' recognition of and relationship with Taiwan adds a significant degree of uncertainty to this supply that would not exist if Taiwan were widely officially recognized as a sovereign state. China's persistent territorial claims over Taiwan and its increasing military assertiveness create a plausible scenario where the US supply of advanced chips could be disrupted. There would be few good options for the US in this case.

China also directly controls some key raw materials for fabrication of advanced technology, in particular gallium (controlling 98% of the unprocessed supply) (Berg, Ziemer and Anaya, 2024). China has leveraged this in the past already, with mixed results, and could undertake future efforts to attempt to block supplies to accomplish political aims.

Overall, due to the highly concentrated nature of the semiconductor industry, the US is highly reliant on adversaries or on countries that are vulnerable to its adversaries for its supply, and under hypothesis 2, this should result in a greater and more urgent policy response to US dependence than would be expected for US dependence on an ally or on multiple countries. I will explore these policy responses in the next section.

4.5.3 Policy responses

4.5.3.1 The CHIPS and Science Act

The CHIPS and Science Act, passed by Congress in 2022 and signed into law by President Biden, provided just over $50 billion in funding specifically for domestic research and development and manufacturing of semiconductors, as well as investment subsidies, tax credits, and other incentives. It also provides overall investment in domestic science and technology R&D. It was a bipartisan effort. It signals a policy shift towards securing supply chains that are deemed vital for national security, while attempting to reduce the strategic vulnerabilities high-

lighted during global disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating geopolitical tensions with major semiconductor-producing nations (Swanson, 2023). The Act has other provisions that attempt to reduce the potential negative effects of reliance on adversaries for critical infrastructure. For example, manufacturers of chips who receive funding are restricted from expanding their facilities in "countries of concern" (China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea) for ten years (Tankersley and Swanson, 2023).

The legislation is not without its detractors, however. Some are concerned that these restrictions could actually dissuade the use of the incentives in the Act as firms may worry about the viability of their long-term strategy if it must exclude the possibility of expanding operations in China (Shivakumar, Wessner and Howell, 2023). President Trump in his first address to Congress noted that the Act is "horrible" and should be scrapped (Mickle and Swanson, 2025), as he believes his strategy of tariffs is preferable as a method to coerce investment in the US in chips. It is unknown whether this strategy will be effective (The Economist, 2025).

Nevertheless, the CHIPS and Science Act is a bold intervention, passed in an attempt to decisively reassert US leadership in a strategically vital industry and significantly lessen reliance on foreign-made semiconductors. It is a significant experiment in industrial policy; one that the US has not undertaken in some time. Though it may appear that it is just one piece of legislation, this is a paradigm shift that represents a clear bipartisan showing that this is a significant issue worth spending significant resources. According to hypotheses 1 and 2, a highly strategic good, for which the US are dependent on an adversary, would be what is necessary for a large policy response like this—and we clearly see that here.

4.5.3.2 Rip and Replace

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program, more commonly known as the Rip and Replace program, directly translated national security concerns into specific domestic infrastructure mandates. It was established by the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019 (Wireline Competition Bureau, 2024). The program's goal is to eradicate equipment and services from telecommunications networks that are deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to national security. Specifically, it targets equipment from Huawei and ZTE, both Chinese telecommunications equipment providers, providing funding for smaller US telecommunications providers, who may have purchased equipment from Huawei and ZTE due to its cost-effectiveness, to replace their existing equipment from these banned providers with new equipment (Wireline Competition Bureau, 2024).

The program has been quite popular. Although only given just under $2 billion for its initial appropriation, the FCC has approved more than $5 billion requests deemed necessary for

national security. It used its authority to borrow funds from the Treasury, and will repay the funds via auctions of wireless spectrum licenses. However, it has not been as fast as desired. Most projects are requiring extensions beyond the statutory one year after funding, both due to the delay in reimbursement and due to supply chain difficulties(Neenan, 2025).

The Rip and Replace program is a unique policy to examine as a case study on the inherent friction between federal security mandates and the market realities of critical infrastructure sectors. We can clearly see the tangible costs—much higher than Congress initially anticipated—of decoupling from globalized supply chains and highlight the immense challenge of retrofitting established networks. Judging from this program, it could be argued that the long-term efficacy of this type of strategic intervention hinges not only on the availability of trusted alternative technology but more pressingly on the political will to fund these transitions at taxpayer expense.

In addition, the Rip and Replace program and the next program I will discuss, the Microelectronics Commons, represent state investment in partnerships with private industry. These efforts may be critical to success, given the heavy concentration of capital and other production capacity in the semiconductor industry.

4.5.3.3 Microelectronics Commons

Though mostly born out of the already mentioned CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, the Microelectronics Commons deserves a deeper dive as it truly draws together many different groups to try and create homegrown solutions to the problem of dependence on foreign-made goods. The Microelectronics Commons (henceforth just the Commons) is a national network of regional innovation hubs deliberately structured to bridge what is called in the industry the "lab-to-fab" transition—a chasm between academic research or early-stage prototyping and scalable, high-volume manufacturing. It does this by bringing together research institutions, private industry, and the Department of Defense (where it is housed) along with other government agencies (Lopez, 2023). $240 million was awarded in 2023 to eight regional hubs, mostly led by top research universities.

The goal here is multifold: the US government is attempting to advance US leadership in this industry generally, by trying to make it easier to thread the needle between research and development to market, and further, the government is trying to keep research conducted in the US in US fabrication facilities, rather than being either outsourced or even stolen altogether(National Security Technology Accelerator, 2025). The latter is a major concern and is evidenced by the fact that the Commons has a heavy focus on sensitive technologies such as electromagnetic warfare, encryption and other secure computing, and 5G and 6G communications.

Like the Rip and Replace program, the Commons shows a unique and innovative approach to addressing the problem of dependence on foreign-made goods. However, in this case, it goes beyond simply directing investment in replacement. The Commons seeks to create a long-term pipeline, starting from research universities and ending in the hands of the military or large domestic manufacturers, attempting to create a resilient domestic supply chain. The long-term success is yet to be determined, and the will to fund these efforts will likely be a large factor.

4.5.3.4 Tariffs: Section 232 and Section 301

The Trade Expansion Act of 1962 provides a tool to the President that the Trump administration has used extensively this term to apply tariffs to select industries: Section 232. This policy tool allows the executive branch to investigate the impact of imports on national security and, if a threat is determined, to impose remedies such as tariffs or quotas to protect domestic industries. The administration has opened investigations into ten industries under this authority. One of these investigations has been semiconductors, with a public notice published in the Federal Register in April 2025 (Bureau of Industry and Security, 2025).

The purpose of the investigation into the foreign supply of semiconductors is to scrutinize the impact of things like foreign government subsidies, predatory trade practices, and state-sponsored overcapacity which may have artificially suppressed prices and eroded the domestic manufacturing base. The key task for the Department of Commerce, who will lead the investigation, is to determine whether the quantity and circumstances of semiconductor imports threaten to impair the United States' ability to meet its own national security requirements, thereby providing a legal and evidentiary basis for corrective action (i.e., tariffs)(O'Neil, Huesa and Paz-Soldan, 2025).

As the Secretary of Commerce, and the Under Secretary of Commerce responsible for the investigation, are both political appointees, it is hard to believe they would deliver a finding to the President that contradicts his presupposition. However, this investigation is still important, as it shows the successful use of existing tools (several decades old) to legally advance the executive's goals, especially in a particularly politically charged time.

Tariffs were also directly introduced under a separate provision, Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. These were not specific to semiconductors at first but were part of a broader set of tariffs on Chinese goods intended to combat intellectual property theft and forced technology transfer. Section 301 has a primary purpose of allowing the executive branch to address trade imbalances, but it seems as though the Trump administration is using it as a response to unsuccessful efforts to use other powers after being stopped by courts(Bade and Mackrael, 2025).

4.5.3.5 Export controls

Yet another method used by both the Trump and Biden administrations for addressing the semiconductor arms race is the export control toolbox at their disposal. There have been several attempts, of varying degrees of success, to block the export of technology, beginning in 2022.

Perhaps the best known is the Entity List, which is maintained by the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) within the Department of Commerce. Parties on this list are believed by the BIS to be acting contrary to US national security and are therefore subject to a license requirement for certain exports. Huawei and SMIC are two major Chinese companies on this list. A similar but slightly different method is the "US Persons Rule", which requires that US persons who are parties to certain types of transactions get a license for such transactions. In 2022 the BIS instituted a requirement that US persons obtain a license to participate in activities in China that involve advanced semiconductor production (Allen and Goldston, 2025).

Other methods target goods themselves, or uses of the goods. The BIS maintains a Commerce Control List, on which are products that require a license to export. This license can be further restricted to specify what the goods are to be used for. In addition, the US has coordinated with allies to enforce these export controls across borders, to avoid evasive efforts seen in the past.

These types of responses are likely less to immediately reduce US dependence on foreign-made goods. However, the goal with export controls as it relates to semiconductors is to ensure that the intellectual property behind advanced technology is not stolen, or that sensitive, classified applications of new technologies can stay domestically produced, ensuring that the US remains competitive while also secure.

4.5.3.6 Partnerships with allies

Recognizing the inherent limitations of unilateral action in reshaping a deeply interconnected global industry, the United States has made robust coordination with allies a part of its semiconductor supply chain strategy. These diplomatic initiatives aim to construct a resilient, secure, and technologically advanced semiconductor ecosystem among a coalition of trusted nations. Today's supply chain cannot rely on a single country, not even for the United States, so coordination with allies is critical. A primary vehicle for this coordination has been the US-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC). Within this forum, both parties have established dedicated working groups to tackle shared supply chain vulnerabilities. Key initiatives include developing a joint early warning mechanism to detect and respond to semiconductor supply chain disruptions and fostering transparency in government subsidy programs to prevent a counterproductive "subsidy race." These efforts also include coordination to enforce export

controls (Shivakumar, Wessner and Howell, 2024).

Australia, India, Japan, and the United States also have a forum for cooperation. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is made up of these four countries and has resulted in several working groups to help address the problem. It is not a formal alliance, as India would not be comfortable with such an arrangement; rather, it is a diplomatic and strategic partnership that results in technology transfer, reduced regulatory barriers, and co-development (Kersten and Yoon, 2024).

These efforts are not the types of efforts that are in each week's major newspaper headlines, but they are critical in securing buy-in from allies to help with a problem the US cannot solve alone. In particular, cooperation is critical to abate evasion of sanctions, which has been a common practice.

4.5.4 Summary of findings

The policy responses to dependence on foreign-made semiconductors are both numerous and significant. This is something that policymakers see as a clear and present danger, and have put in many different methods to try and address it. These efforts take many different forms, such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers, partnerships with other countries, and efforts to ramp up domestic production. We see this strong effort because this is a good with a high level of strategic importance to the US, as semiconductors are critical to US military npower and economic growth and development, and the US has reliance on a country where there is major geopolitical risk. This is all clear evidence that points to Hypotheses 1 and 2 being correct.

4.6 The oil industry: highly strategic, not as dependent on adversaries

The oil industry has long been considered strategically vital both in the United States and on the broader global stage, shaping international relations, driving economic fortunes, and fueling military power. I here evaluate oil's overall level of strategic importance, assess the level of dependence on adversaries, and discuss the current policy responses. I find that oil is a highly strategic good under this framework, but that the United States is not as dependent on adversaries for this good as it is other critical and strategic goods.

4.6.1 Strategic importance

The oil and natural gas industry constitutes a significant component of the global economy, adding to the GDP and employment of each country both directly, through the production and distribution of oil, and indirectly, through industries that rely heavily on oil, such as the transportation and industrial sectors. The US is no exception. Petroleum products overwhelmingly dominate energy use for moving people and goods. In 2023, petroleum products accounted for about 89% of total US transportation sector energy consumption (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023). In the industrial sector, manufacturing relies heavily on petroleum derivatives to make plastics, solvents, fertilizers, and many other intermediate and consumer goods. The price of oil is a critical "Main Street" economic indicator for inflation, global conflict, and more.

From a national security standpoint, the modern national security apparatus retains a profound dependence on petroleum-based fuels, and there is a strong geopolitical imperative to ensure access to global supplies. Therefore, ensuring stable oil supplies and managing import dependency has been a central pillar of US foreign policy. The Persian Gulf has been considered a vital interest of the US not in small part due to the strategic importance of the supply of Middle East oil. Though the more recent rise of domestic production has significantly reduced net imports and shifted primary import sources towards allies like Canada and Mexico, the US still imports substantial volumes of crude oil. This continued import need, coupled with the fact that domestic prices are still heavily influenced by world events, means that energy security remains a key national security concern.

Oil has other characteristics that demonstrate why it is a strategic good. It is a volatile commodity subject to serious negative externalities that must be managed to protect national security, for three reasons: oil prices are volatile, supply is concentrated and can encourage rent-seeking, and supply chains are subject to a few key choke points. This contributes to the "securitization" of oil, making it a security issue rather than simply an economic one (Hancock and Vivoda, 2014). The average consumer can appreciate the volatility of oil prices and their effect on their wallets, but it is hard to overstate just how great an effect this can have. Oil price spikes can fuel inflation, reduce consumer spending, dampen investment, and even trigger recessions. This is certainly true for importing nations, but it is even true for producing regions, as oil is a commodity that is priced on a global level. This volatility imposes costs on businesses and households far removed from the initial cause of the price change, representing a systemic risk not fully captured in the price paid by individual consumers or firms (Parry, Walls and Harrington, 2007). The "resource curse" is familiar to most political scientists, and is a very real dimension of strategic importance here. Abundant oil reserves seem to correlate with authoritarianism, corruption, and rent-seeking behavior. This instability represents a threat to

reliability of oil supplies. In addition, the very nature of oil and gas results in a complex and vulnerable supply chain. Crude oil is concentrated in just a few regions, particularly in the Persian Gulf, and this means that supply chains must rely on a few maritime choke points to transport crude oil to refineries in a reasonable amount of time (Blair and Lieberthal, 2007). These choke points are in regions prone to civil and interstate conflict, terrorism, and piracy (Ross, 2001, 1999).

We can also examine nationalization. Outside of the US, the oil sector is dominated by state actors. The oil reserves of most petroleum exporting states are used for objectives extending beyond profit maximization, though this is certainly a goal as well. Decisions can be heavily influenced by things like national development goals, domestic political considerations, foreign policy objectives, and the need to generate revenue for state budgets, intertwining commercial operations with geopolitical strategy. A substantial portion of the global oil market operates according to this logic of state interest, making the market inherently more politicized and less purely responsive to commercial supply-and-demand signals compared to markets dominated by private firms. There also exists one of the strongest cartels, OPEC, that controls the supply to maximize profit, and this is only effective because of the nationalization of the supply. Nationalized as well are some of the key choke points mentioned earlier, such as the Suez Canal, and geopolitical competition and disputes can affect the viability of passage of oil to refineries.

Very few of the costs of these issues are priced in to what firms or state-owned oil companies outlay or what end users pay. Nor are the costs of the pollution and environmental impact that arise from the use of oil and gas, which has a heavily negative effect on air pollution and can cause contamination of local water supplies, especially in the case of spills, and may even harm ecosystems. This is an increasingly alarming issue for the global public (Hughes and Lipscy, 2013). These factors all but require state intervention, whether that is through domestic regulation, diplomatic maneuvers, a military presence abroad, or other potential avenues, all functions only possible through a government—demonstrating the highly nationalized nature of this good.

As we saw with semiconductors, oil is too a highly strategic good, with high levels of importance to military power and economic development, and under hypothesis 1, should result in a greater and more urgent policy response to US dependence than would be expected for US dependence on a less strategic good. I will explore these policy responses in sections that follow.

4.6.2 Lack of dependence on adversaries

Historically, dependence on foreign oil from volatile regions was a significant national security concern, and ensuring stable oil supplies and managing import dependency has been a central pillar of US foreign policy. This makes oil a good case study to examine hypothesis 2. In the 1970s, around 70% of the US's imported oil from OPEC countries. However, as of late, the US does not significantly rely on OPEC countries for oil, instead relying on ally countries such as Canada and Mexico for imports. In 2022, 52% of imports came from Canada and 10% from Mexico (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2024). The US also has become a net exporter of total petroleum for the first time in decades, indicating that in large part, the US can be self sufficient, even if it is not the most economically optimal choice. Under hypothesis 2, this should result in less of a response to US dependence than would be expected for US dependence on a good with heavy reliance on an adversary.

This is not the case for most advanced industrialized nations, though, and the US cannot ignore the fact that many of its allies rely on petroleum supplies from OPEC members and other Persian Gulf states, nor does the US currently have the capacity to make up for significant gaps in supply in the case of a crisis or a supply reduction by the OPEC cartel. This remains an important facet of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine—a critical consideration of any efforts to solve the conflict is the continued supply of oil to European countries. This will likely factor in to the US response, which I explore in the next section.

4.6.3 Policy responses

4.6.3.1 Strategic Petroleum Reserve

A historical method the US has used to mitigate risk from US dependence on foreign oil is the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), a massive stockpile of crude oil stored in underground salt caverns along the US Gulf Coast, was established in 1975 when foreign oil dependence risk was exposed[2] during the 1973-74 OPEC embargo. During this event, OPEC quadrupled its prices in just 2 months, and halted exports to certain countries, in opposition to their support for Israel. It is not an exaggeration by any account to call this a crisis. Long lines at gas stations throughout the country, airlines had to cut flights, and labor groups in the transportation industry threatened to go on strike. This eventually resulted in a severe recession (Beaubouef, 2007). Something had to be done.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve was established as a wholly government-owned supply,

[2]Previous presidential administrations had recognized a potential security risk and examined creating government stockpiles, but these proposals were unsuccessful, as when there was surplus supply, industry opposition and aversion to "big government" outweighed any potential support (Beaubouef, 2007).

as there was a deep distrust of the oil industry at the time of its creation, so President Ford's proposed market-based solution was rejected. It has just over 400 million barrels of crude oil. The President can use the SPR during times of domestic emergencies, such as weather, natural disasters, or labor strikes, or during international conflicts or political disputes (U.S. Department of Energy, 2025b). The President has authorized an emergency release from the SPR four times since its inception: in 1991, during Operation Desert Storm; in 2005, after Hurricane Katrina; in 2011, during disruptions in Libya, in coordination with International Energy Agency (IEA) partners; and in 2022, as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, again in coordination with IEA partners (U.S. Department of Energy, 2025a). One could also argue that the supply itself also acts as a weapon (at least a defensive one). Cartels are no longer as powerful with this tool, and the supply acts as a deterrent to risky export controls.

Now that the US is more energy independent than it was in 1975, the SPR clearly plays a different role. Rather than responding to major international supply disruptions, shorter-term market imbalances are often a target now, such as the 2022 Ukraine conflict, in which the US supply was not truly in danger. Price support was not the original intent of Congress when designing the SPR (Razek et al., 2023). Recent analyses show that purchases of oil for the SPR raise oil prices, while releases of oil have no measurable impact on prices, further demonstrating that attempts to use the SPR for price adjustments may be fruitless (Stevens and Zhang, 2021). Some even argued that this release was for domestic political expediency, targeting a desire to attempt to lower gas prices as part of a larger strategy against inflation (Mufson and Jr, 2022).

This shift demonstrates that this tool was clearly successful in mitigating the historical risk, and now that it still exists, the political decision remains on what to do with it. As the good remains strategic, it is a difficult political decision to wind down the use of this tool, but the dependence on adversaries is not as present, and one could argue that recent uses are of questionable value to the taxpayer.

4.6.3.2 Tax incentives and deregulation

The US tax code has long contained incentives for oil and gas producers. These incentives act to help compete against state-owned enterprises abroad. The two main tax incentives for oil and gas are the percentage depletion allowance and the deduction for intangible drilling costs. A discussion of the mechanisms of such deductions is beyond the scope of this article (or of this discipline)[3], but these deductions have an over 100 year history, and during the initial era of domestic petroleum production, through the late 1960s and early 1970s, production was

[3]The article by Mona Hymel, cited in this article (Hymel, 2012), provides an excellent overview.

heavily incentivized using these methods (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2000).

Once environmental concerns over burning fossil fuels emerged, Congress ended or limited some of these incentives. However, they were often replaced with different incentives to develop on certain land, as well as some minor incentives for green energy production. However, this change would not last. In the 1990s, national energy security concerns came about yet again (as a result of the invasion of Kuwait) and Congress returned to some of its previous tax incentives. In addition, new tax incentives were enacted in the 1980s to incentivize the production of unconventional fuels such as shale and biomass fuels (Hymel, 2012).

Deregulation was another important economic incentive for an increase in production of oil. Prior to the crisis, price controls existed most everywhere, including in the US. However, these were reexamined in the wake of the crisis, as it was determined that they may be exerting negative pressure on the supply. Both the 1977 IEA Principles for Energy Policy and the 1983 IEA Shared Goals listed domestic energy price normalization as a key part of the multi-country plan for energy security (Scott, 2004). This was, of course, not without risk—during times of rising prices, removing price controls risked fanning the flames of inflation that was already heating up quickly. President Ford's proposal to Congress in 1975—the same bill that established the SPR—was not the full price deregulation that he desired, but it did have the effect of slowly pushing up oil prices through 1979. President Carter further urged Congress to accelerate price de-control in his 1977 energy security proposal, and while he, like Ford, did not get exactly what he wanted, price controls were removed on natural gas entirely and other price controls started to be removed, in addition to a mandate to adjust energy prices to encourage off-peak usage (Parra, 2005).

4.6.3.3 The Shale Revolution

Shale production today is a critical part of US energy supply, and a huge reason why the US is not dependent on adversaries. However, this was not an inevitability. Although humans have been aware of natural gas for thousands of years, it was not used as a fuel source on any significant scale until the 19th century. In the US, widespread use began at the turn of the century in the Appalachian region, but the use remained regional as technology had not caught up yet to allow for transporting over long distances. Production and use rapidly grew over the next few decades and especially after World War II. Concerns about continued supply started to grow, and controls on pricing and production in the 1960s were put into place (Joe et al., 2006).

Shale gas production, a modern production technique that uses hydraulic fracturing (more commonly known as "fracking"), was incentivized for a few reasons, all of which were a result of the same initiatives that created the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, as part of President

Nixon's Project Independence. Regulation was relaxed, controls on pricing and production were removed, and research was coordinated between the government and private industry (Qaimmaqami and Keefer, 2011; Joe et al., 2006). In around the 2000s, shale production became commonplace, and just a decade later, reliance on foreign oil significantly reduced.

Today, in large part because of the shale revolution, the US is resilient against foreign oil interruptions. There is no greater demonstration of this than the war in Ukraine. US gas price increases were never more than 25% above the increases in Europe. While natural gas is not a perfect equivalent for petroleum, the prices before 2010 were closely linked and retain a relationship (Hasanli, 2024). The shale revolution demonstrates the long term opportunities of coordinated government investment in, and targeted deregulation of, strategic industries, and how it can be successful in creating resilient supply that self-perpetuates in the future.

4.6.3.4 Use reduction efforts

Another possible way to reduce reliance on imports of foreign oil and gas is to reduce consumption altogether. Since the OPEC crisis, this has been a key goal of US policy, both for energy security purposes and for environmental protection.

The first major federal policy related to this was the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975, passed under President Ford, which included a mandate for a vehicle fuel efficiency program and a call to double the miles per gallon (MPG) that cars could go in the next decade. President Carter's National Energy Act in 1979 included further efforts, such as taxes and penalties on vehicle manufacturers not meeting fuel efficiency standards, and new standards for fuel efficiency for other items like large appliances. These efforts were both a result of a dire need to reduce reliance on foreign oil as a result of the OPEC crisis, and because of a new and increasing recognition of the environmental effects of fossil fuels. In President Ford's words, the US needed to in the short term "reduce dependence on foreign oil" and "weather the eventual decline in the availability of world oil supplies" and in the long term "develop renewable...sources of energy for sustained growth" (Parra, 2005).

As for modern times, the Inflation Reduction Act, despite its name, made nearly a trillion dollars in appropriations, and had a large focus on climate change initiatives. Specific to trade policy, the IRA provides for manufacturing and research and development subsidies for nuclear power and other clean energy and advanced manufacturing through targeted tax credits and subsidies (Rep. Wenstrup, 2024). By setting eligibility criteria that favor products and components manufactured domestically, the Act encourages investments in local clean energy production—spanning solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and other renewable technologies—in an effort to create jobs and fortify the domestic supply chain against international disruptions. A version of a key part of President Biden's platform, this legislation is intended

to serve as a tool for realigning economic incentives to ensure that critical technologies are produced within the United States.

In addition to these economic incentives, the IRA also reflects a strategic policy shift by linking environmental goals with national security concerns. By prioritizing the development of clean energy technologies and associated supply chains domestically, policymakers seek to mitigate risks associated with geopolitical rivalries and supply chain vulnerabilities. The IRA sets a precedent for how climate policy can intersect with broader industrial and national security policy, promoting self-reliance while also increasing energy security. This dual emphasis on green technology and domestic production has important implications for US competitiveness, reducing reliance on foreign-made goods in sectors that are increasingly viewed as critical for national security and economic well-being, while also demonstrating that we can institute effective industrial policy in support of these goals. This is sometimes a politically charged goal—many cases of jobs created are in parts of the country that did not support this legislation, represented by people in Congress who called the proposals "woke climate and social programs that won't work" (Rigdon and Nilsen, 2024).

4.6.4 Summary of findings

The policy responses to dependence on imports of oil are unique, as there are numerous solutions and many of them are significant, but they are mostly legacy solutions that have been carried over to today, and may have limited use in modern times. New policy responses are not common, with the exception of continued efforts to reduce overall consumption of oil—but it is arguable that in the modern era, the purpose is heavily skewed towards meeting environmental goals and away from being an energy security policy. Old policy responses are being re-evaluated or questioned, such as the value of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and what it should be used for today. There is no question that oil remains a critical product, and there is little doubt that at the time these policies were implemented, the US had a heavy reliance on adversaries for its supply of this critical product, but today, the latter is not as true. Therefore, we see few to no new policy responses, though upkeep of legacy responses continues, for now. The evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2 is not as strong for oil and gas, but it is certainly the case that there are fewer *new* responses today than there are for semiconductors.

4.7 Medicines and medical supplies: not as strategic, but somewhat dependent on adversary

Medicines and medical supplies are critical for both the continued health of Americans and for their input into multiple of the largest industries that employ millions of Americans—the biopharmaceutical industry and the health care industry (the point of delivery). It is undeniable that this is vital to national well-being. I here evaluate the overall strategic importance of the medical supply industry, assess the level of dependence on adversaries, and discuss the current policy responses. I find that while medical supplies are critical, they are not necessarily strategic, but the US is dependent to an extent on adversaries for this good. As I hypothesize, this good has the least robust policy response of the three goods examined here.

4.7.1 Strategic importance

It is not difficult to understand how these goods are important both as an economic engine and for public health. The biopharmaceutical and health care delivery industries spend billions of dollars every year and employ millions of Americans. In addition, billions of dollars are spent on research and development within the field. However, what must be explored, especially in comparison to the other two goods I examine in this article, is whether there is a higher level aspect of strategic importance here, or if these goods are simply important. I argue that there is not a higher level of strategic importance, in large part because an adversary could not effectively use this as a tool to target military and security infrastructure and readiness. Cutting off the ability of the US to obtain medicines and medical supplies is certainly a threat, and policymakers should be (and are) concerned, but this is not a threat that could be targeted towards, for example, the US military. I would argue, therefore, that the importance dimension is only partially met.

The medicine and medical supply sector is characterized by some externalities relevant to this analysis. Positive spillovers from biomedical R&D fuel broader innovation and economic growth, while public health interventions like vaccination generate massive societal benefits, justifying significant public investment. In addition, market failures could exist from the cost of production exceeding what manufacturers feel they can spend while remaining profitable, a negative externality also potentially justifying government intervention. However, much of the market is profit-driven, and supply chains are not as subject to choke points as the oil industry, nor are most supply chains as capital intensive as microchips. Other than the concentration of some critical supplies in a small number of countries—which I examine separately, as I have been in the rest of this article—there is also little evidence to show that these products are

significantly state controlled. State actors largely do not determine the supply or prices of pharmaceutical products, or what is produced. They are not able to flex the same type of raw geopolitical leverage historically associated with controlling global oil flows.

Therefore, I argue that medicines and medical supplies are not as much of a highly strategic good, as they are not as critical to military power and economic development. Because of this, under hypothesis 1, we should see less of a policy response to US dependence than would be expected for US dependence on a more strategic good.

However, this is not to say that there are not policy responses, or that dependence on imports of medicines and medical supplies does not present a risk.

4.7.2 Dependence on an adversary

As stated before, hypothesis 2 focuses on country of origin as a determinant of robustness of policy response, arguing that if the US is reliant on an adversary for a good, there will be a stronger and more urgent policy response than if the US is reliant on an ally, or reliant on several countries. The global production of medicines and medical supplies is characterized by significant geographic concentration, creating critical dependencies and potential choke points, and is a good example to study.

The most striking concentration occurs in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). Data indicates that India and China are the dominant global suppliers, particularly for the US market. The US relies on India as the primary source for APIs in generic drugs, which are most of the drugs that are prescribed. This poses a serious vulnerability alone, but India is not necessarily an adversary. China, however, is an adversary, and imports of APIs from China is rapidly growing—up over 650% since 2016, and now at 17% of all API imports (Graham, 2023).

Safeguarding the pharmaceutical supply chain has been recognized as a critical task since before the pandemic, with hearings in the House of Representatives by the FDA in 2019 (Woodcock, 2019). However, this has taken a front seat since shortages unrelated to a specific strategic threat hit the shelves during the height of the pandemic, showing Americans exactly what could happen.

Even though I argue that medicines and medical supplies are not as strategic as the other goods, the dependence on an adversary still represents a chance to do harm. It could, for example, be an easy item to target for retaliatory tariffs.

Overall, due to the limited number of countries from which we can import critical drugs, the US is highly reliant on adversaries for its supply, and under hypothesis 2, this should result in a greater and more urgent policy response to US dependence than would be expected for

US dependence on an ally or on multiple countries. I will explore these policy responses in the next section.

4.7.3 Policy responses

Unlike semiconductors and oil and gas, medicines and medical supplies have not, to my knowledge, had any sweeping, systemic efforts to address dependence on imports. This is consistent with my argument that these goods are not as strategic. Several smaller efforts are currently in force that I outline here.

4.7.3.1 Efforts to track production challenges

There is a patchwork of legislation that attempts to track production challenges to begin a response. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FDACA) authorizes the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take many measures to address medical supply chain challenges (among many other things in the Act). One major provision is that manufacturers are required to notify the FDA of any interruptions to the supply of life-saving drugs, and the FDA is required to publish a list of shortages (Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act, 2021).

The CARES Act, passed in the wake of the pandemic, included provisions to address issues with the medical supply chain, as the problem became quite obvious during the crisis. It amended the FDACA to expand reporting to active pharmaceutical ingredients, a known blind spot in the supply chain. It also required the development of risk management plans by medical product manufacturers.

4.7.3.2 Defense Production Act

The Defense Production Act was used during the COVID-19 crisis to help address this issue. This is a decades old law that gives the President the authority to direct US industry to provide for the national defense. President Trump used the Defense Production Act in 2020 to address medical supply shortages. Some of these efforts included the allocation of products like PPE and hand sanitizer, increasing production of durable goods like ventilators, and providing funds to shore up the domestic base of production. While this is a clear step to decrease reliance on foreign-made goods, the Defense Production Act is not a long-term solution (Shore et al., 2022).

4.7.3.3 BIOSECURE Act

The BIOSECURE Act (H.R. 8333) would prevent federal agencies and contractors from contracting with, or using the equipment or services of, a "biotechnology company of concern". The bill specifies five particular companies to be included but allows government agencies to propose more (Rep. Wenstrup, 2024). The BIOSECURE Act has garnered significant bipartisan support, reflecting a broader consensus in Washington regarding the perceived strategic challenges posed by China.

However, the BIOSECURE Act does not directly target the problem in the way that the CHIPS and Science Act does. It does not include a large appropriation of tax dollars to build new pharmaceutical factories, and does not provide for any other incentives such as tax credits. It only seeks to regulate American companies' collaborations with foreign companies and safeguard data. It is, therefore, a less robust response.

It has, notably, not yet been adopted. Criticisms include the possibility that disrupting existing relationships with foreign companies could slow down drug development, lead to shortages of critical medicines, and increase costs for US consumers and the healthcare system.

4.7.4 Summary of findings

Responses to a potential threat coming from reliance on imports of medicines and medical supplies are quite few, and are limited mostly to efforts to try and track the issue in the first place to understand the problem, as opposed to efforts to actually address the issue. This is because medicines and medical supplies, though certainly important, are not considered a strategic good, and our dependence on adversaries is present but not at a critical level (or in some cases, may be unknown). Hypotheses 1 and 2 explain this disparity between responses here and responses to imports of semiconductors (very strong) and oil (not as strong as semiconductors, but stronger than here for medicines and medical supplies).

4.8 Chapter conclusion

In this paper, I embarked on an inquiry into a central question of today's political scientists and US foreign policy: how do American policymakers respond to the multifaceted threats posed by dependence on foreign-made goods, and what underlying factors determine the nature and urgency of these responses? Building upon my experimental research indicating public concern over these dependencies, I hypothesized that the strategic value of a given product and the geopolitical alignment (ally versus adversary) of its primary source would be pivotal in shaping

the intensity and focus of policy interventions. Through a qualitative examination of the policy landscape surrounding three critical sectors—semiconductors, oil, and pharmaceuticals—I seek to bridge the gap between public sentiment and policymaker action.

The findings largely affirm my hypotheses. The case of semiconductors, deemed highly strategic and predominantly sourced from a geopolitically sensitive region involving adversarial pressure (Taiwan, with China's influence and direct control over some raw materials), has prompted the most significant and proactive policy response in the form of the CHIPS and Science Act. This comprehensive industrial policy initiative, with substantial financial incentives and restrictions on investments in adversary nations, underscores a clear recognition of both the strategic imperative and the risks associated with dependence on potentially unreliable or hostile actors for such a critical technology.

Conversely, the oil industry, while also highly strategic, currently presents a different calculus regarding dependency. Although historically a major concern due to reliance on volatile regions, the US now sources a significant portion of its imported oil from allied nations like Canada and Mexico and has increased domestic production, becoming a net petroleum exporter. Consequently, while policy interventions like the Inflation Reduction Act aim to reduce overall reliance on fossil fuels and bolster domestic clean energy production (indirectly addressing energy security), the immediate sense of acute vulnerability to an adversary for oil supplies is less pronounced than for semiconductors. This aligns with my hypothesis that dependence on allies, even for strategic goods, results in a different, perhaps less overtly securitized, policy approach compared to dependence on adversaries.

The pharmaceuticals and medical supplies sector, while undeniably critical to national well-being, is less overtly "strategic" in the national security or defense sense, and in the framework I use for strategic importance in this paper, compared to semiconductors and oil, though dependence on adversaries like China for certain components or finished products is a recognized concern. The policy response, exemplified by measures like the proposed BIOSECURE Act, appears more targeted at specific companies or vulnerabilities rather than the sweeping, sector-transforming initiatives seen with semiconductors.

This research contributes to the political science literature by offering a qualitative, nuanced examination of how specific characteristics of trade dependence translate into tangible policy outcomes, thereby connecting "laboratory" findings about public concern with real-world governmental actions. It highlights the interplay between public concern, perceived strategic value, and geopolitical considerations in the formulation of trade and industrial policy. The "deeper look" afforded by this qualitative approach provides a richer understanding than purely quantitative measures might allow.

Future research could expand upon these findings through comparative case studies across

a broader range of products or countries. Additionally, the long-term efficacy and unintended consequences of the current wave of US industrial policy, particularly the CHIPS Act, will undoubtedly be a fertile ground for future scholarly inquiry, both within political science and in related disciplines. In the current era marked by escalating geopolitical competition and a daily-changing national conversation about dependence on foreign-made goods, understanding the drivers of US policy responses is critical to policymakers and academics alike, and I hope that this paper has made a meaningful impact to that conversation.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

I began this project with a fundamental question: how does the US, which relies heavily on world trade and largely is the primary driver of the global trade order, reckon with the current threats from this arrangement? I presented here two experiments designed to test public opinion on the matter, as well as a qualitative analysis of policy responses. But I now turn to what this means. What does this deep-seated anxiety over dependence mean for our understanding of the world, for the future of the global trade order, and for the path forward? The conclusion of this research is not simply that supply chains have become politicized (we already knew that), but that the politics of vulnerability are actively remaking the world.

One aspect of the shift that must happen is an end to a dated framing of "globalism" vs "nationalism". Though this may be something heard more in political debates, it seems to be a framing of some academic papers as well. This is a disservice to the complexity of today's challenges. Acceptance that there is a real threat that must be solved and that some of those policies may look like what would be considered traditionally protectionist policies does not make one a "nationalist" in the traditional sense. This is not necessarily a wholesale rejection of trade.

More broadly, much of the study of trade, and the debate about it, seems to be based on the traditional international trade system created in the WTO and Bretton Woods era that simply sought to maximize economic gains and had national security as an insignificant exception. This world no longer exists. The current framework is ill-equipped to manage an era of strategic competition where trade is explicitly used as a tool of statecraft and supply chains are viewed as strategic assets.

What must come next for the study of trade is a deep analysis of the vulnerabilities in the supply chain. As I have noted in this dissertation—particularly when discussing medicines and medical supplies—we sometimes do not even know what the risk is, much less how to solve it. This is a role that political scientists, public policy scholars, and economists can play a role in. Exploring these supply chains and highlighting where we may have a problem could be a large part of the solution.

The last part of the solution is something that the political scientists cannot do. The politicians must decide, based (hopefully) on their electorate, how to solve this difficult issue. However, I offer this suggestion. Policymakers should consider pursuing a nuanced strategy that targets specific goods, rather than taking a single protectionist or globalist approach. This approach should be tailored to the good based on how critical it is to national security and where we source the good. Where possible, approaching the problem with an expansionist strategy, such as partnerships with allies or new foreign sources for goods, preserves the current global supply chains that we enjoy, and keeps prices low (or even drives them further down) while still targeting the issue. For some goods, this may not be possible. In those cases, they must build the political will, both in the halls of Congress and the bureaucracy, as well as within industry and among the voters themselves, to pay for costly solutions such as tariffs and industrial policy.

Notwithstanding the results herein, a major determinant of which policy will be chosen seems to be the source country. This is for two reasons—practical and political. Politically, it is much easier to build a coalition to spend funds on efforts to reshore production or to bear the brunt of tariffs when you can point to a major adversary that holds the cards in the event of a crisis. Practically, it is more difficult to negotiate over the supply of a good with an adversarial country, and the risk is simply higher, as a friendly country would be unlikely to use cutting off the supply as a weapon (though risk still exists in the form of non-purposeful disruptions, of course). It is certainly true that the strategic importance of the good matters too, and the results of my second survey show that this was more important to respondents, but as a practical matter, this may be a necessary but insufficient reason to respond. If a good is not strategic, it may not even be on the table for a response in the first place.

At the end of the day, no solution is without its risks. Each is costly—politically, economically. And as critical as it may seem to your author and to those reading this paper, trade policy may simply not be on the top of the list, or even in the top twenty spots on the list, of issues that voters expect their politicians to solve, and this issue may receive a corresponding amount of attention. It will be up to the voters to decide how much they wish to invest in solving this critical problem that is but one of many facing us each day.

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