Trade's Progressive Opposition

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Abstract

While right-wing opposition to globalization has recently come to the fore, we describe the more enduring opposition to trade of US progressive groups and their congressional allies. To do so, we collect original data on thousands of progressive groups' opposition to trade and globalization over the past two decades. We describe patterns in the interests of these groups across a new 17 category schema spanning environmental activism, labor rights, religious organizations, and beyond. We then identify a coherent anti-trade voting bloc in the House of Representatives which represents anti-trade progressivism in the Congress. We show that anti-trade progressive groups are linked to these members of Congress through campaign contributions. Overall, we conclude that progressive groups, not left-wing protectionism or right-wing populism, represent the most important strand of opposition to globalization in the United States.

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The US presidential election of 2016 and subsequent multi-front trade war have been interpreted as a triumph of protectionism and populist opposition to globalization. President Trump's disparagement of NAFTA and threatened withdrawal represented perhaps the most consequential facet of this trade war. However, rather than withdrawal and fundamental reorientation of North American trade and supply chains, the resulting renegotiated USMCA largely preserves the forms and commitments of the original NAFTA. It departs primarily in strengthening rules-of-origin in autos, improving labor market protections for Mexican workers, and moderately enhancing environmental enforcement, while efforts to strengthen IP protections for biologics were blocked. Passage of this orthodox trade agreement – shot through with concessions to Democrats and enhanced multilateral commitments – was the Trump administration's top legislative priority for 2019.

We focus on two particular questions raised by the apparent victory of business-as-usual in US trade policy – broadly liberalizing trade agreements featuring key concessions to progressive Democratic priorities – in the case of the USMCA. First, how important is left-wing opposition to trade relative to resurgent right-wing populist economic nationalism? We argue that left-wing opposition represent a more organized and enduring opposition to trade in the US, and one that has achieved substantial Congressional representation. Second, to what extent is left-wing opposition to trade protectionist or progressive? While both tendencies are well-represented, we argue that progressive opposition to trade – centered on concerns over human rights, labor conditions, the environment, and development – explains better the interests, organization, and influence of trade's left-wing opponents.

To make the case on these two points, we begin by assembling the largest ever dataset of anti-trade activity by non-producer interest groups in the US. We find significant coalitional activity around specific issues (like the US-Colombia FTA and Trans-Pacific Partnership) as well as longer-term engagement across all trade issues through the Citizens' Trade Campaign coalition and an array of state and local fair trade groups. Overall, we find nearly 5000 unique members of these coalitions, with especially heavy representation of unions; progressive groups; environmental groups; religious groups; and ethno-cultural identity groups. We highlight that the discourse around trade policies among these groups has focused more on progressive concerns (the environment, human rights, development) than protectionist ones (import competition, jobs, offshoring). We therefore call these groups 'trade's progressive opposition', and highlight their extensive participation in public coalitions, lobbying, and campaign contributions.

We then describe the voting of a coherent progressive anti-trade contingent among Democrats in the House and Senate. To do so, we use unsupervised learning techniques on Congressional voting on trade bills to uncover latent voting clusters on trade, identifying particular clusters that act as trade's progressive opposition in the Congress. This progressive bloc has a strongly anti-trade voting record, and is particularly opposed to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and trade promotion authority. They are somewhat more open to trade policies facilitating development –

GSP, AGOA, and liberalization with China – then a smaller anti-trade bloc composed of traditional protectionists. We then demonstrate that trade's progressive opponents in Congress have used testimony on trade agreements to highlight the concerns of workers and small businesses, but also to champion protections for human rights and the environment.

Finally, we show that trade's opponents among groups and in the Congress are connected by examining a panel of political action committee (PAC) contributions to members of the US Congress. In particular, we find that members of the progressive anti-trade voting bloc receive significantly more campaign contributions from progressive anti-trade groups, whether labor unions or non-unions. These links, and the partial victories of Democrats in Congress in championing progressive priorities in trade agreements, suggest that the organization of interest groups has been channeled into modestly effective political representation.

Overall, we describe three patterns in the politics of American trade. First, left-wing opponents to international trade have shown significant organizational capacity in assembling large coalitions opposed to major trade proposals or to globalization more generally. While both motivations are present, this opposition is broadly more consistent with a story of progressive opposition to neoliberal globalization than of protectionist opposition to foreign trade. Second, these groups have found allies in the Congress among a subset of progressive Democrats, who regularly vote against trade agreements and support stronger protections for workers, human rights, and the environment in trade agreements. Third, these alliances are consecrated, in part, through campaign contributions from anti-trade groups to anti-trade members of Congress.

One point that is very striking about these patterns is that they do not seem to reoccur among the Republican Party. We locate hardly any significant organized opposition to trade among traditional Republican constituencies. We do see a trade-skeptical and intermittently protectionist bloc of Congresspersons from the Republican party, but their opposition to trade is far less dogmatic than among progressive opponents in the Democratic Party. Instead, we see in the Republican Party (or among disaffected right-wingers) periodic flareups of anti-trade sentiment that are fundamentally originating in presidential campaigns or the presidency – early in the Reagan years, the Buchanan and Perot campaigns, and the Trump presidency. While the Reagan and Trump flareups of populist Republican opposition to trade have certainly been highly impactful, they lack intergroup organizational backing and a solid base of Congressional support to make them a long-run feature of Republican Party politics.

So, while right-wing populist opposition to globalization has recently risen to prominence, we conclude that the activities of left-wing – particularly progressive – anti-trade groups represent the most organized and enduring opposition to trade in the US, and one that has achieved substantial Congressional representation. In contrast with the Republican Party – an awkward fit for anti-trade populists given its connections with big business and competitive US agriculture – the progressive wing of the Democratic party provides a welcoming venue for anti-trade activism. Scholars of trade

should therefore not lose sight of left-wing opposition to trade. The remarkable efflorescence of Republican anti-globalization under Trump may not last, while progressive opposition has shown it has the ability and motivation to endure.

Left-wing Opposition to Trade

We survey the extant literature on left-wing and progressive groups' political activities around trade and globalization with a special focus on the United States. The largest portion of this literature has focused on labor unions, which have played a prominent role in the study of American trade politics from the beginning (Schattschneider et al., 1935; Bauer, de Sola Pool and Dexter, 1963). By contrast, the literature on non-union left-wing opposition to trade in the US is far smaller. In both cases, there is a need to systematically document the public activities of these groups in opposition to trade and globalization since the battles over NAFTA and creation of the WTO, as well as to document their links to members of Congress.

One branch of the literature on unions has focused on the essentially economic preferences of labor as a factor of production, and its conflict and cooperation with other factors, particularly land and capital. The early debate over workers' trade preferences settled on factor mobility as the core theoretical driver for whether workers would be united over trade policy in opposition to owners of capital (Rogowski, 1989); or, if workers would be divided amongst themselves but allied with capitalists in their own industry according to its comparative (dis)advantage (Frieden, 1991; Hiscox, 2002; Dean, 2015). Subsequently, the literature on workers in contemporary trade politics has focused on several additional features of modern trade. First, the literature investigated disputes between skilled workers, with which the United States is relatively abundantly endowed, and unskilled workers (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005). Second, scholars focused on the threats to workers confronting offshoring-induced job losses, as well as programs or institutions to compensate trade's losers (Margalit, 2011; Walter, 2017; Rommel and Walter, 2018; Owen and Johnston, 2017). Third, the literature has recently examined firm-level drivers of workers preferences (Dancygier and Walter, 2015).

Most of this work focuses on the distributive consequences of trade liberalization as a driver of policy preferences. Labor unions play a secondary role in the analysis in the sense that their specific activities, organization, and particular attitudes (which may differ from workers') are not the focus of investigation. Instead, union activities are used to generate data on workers' preferences or to understand workers' political actions. In a similar way, the recent focus on non-material drivers of workers' and voters' preferences over trade has naturally focused on workers as individuals and on individual- and community-level drivers of trade policy preferences. Ahlquist, Clayton and Levi (2014), Ahlquist and Levi (2013) and Kim and Margalit (2017) represent important exceptions

that focus on the important role that labor unions play in shaping the positions and voting of their memberships on trade-related issues. In this way, they cover both the drivers of workers' preferences and an important political activity that labor unions undertake to influence trade policy outcomes.

A separate branch of the literature has dealt explicitly with labor unions as interest groups, especially their activity around the North American Free Trade Agreement (Shoch, 2000). This work focused on political action committees (PACs) formed by unions and how funding provided by PACs influenced Congressional voting on NAFTA (Steagall and Jennings, 1996; Engel and Jackson, 1998; Rudolph, 1999). These studies demonstrated that labor PACs influenced politicians, especially Democrats, to vote against NAFTA. The power of labor unions in FDI regulation is discussed in Owen (2015, 2013), which finds that industries with higher levels of unionization are more likely to have higher restrictions on inward FDI.[1] Labor unions have also received attention in the study of labor rights provisions of free trade agreements at the global level (Kim, 2012). For example, Raess, Dür and Sari (2018) shows that unions are highly successful in changing the labor provisions in trade agreements when at least one member country of PTA has a powerful union within the country. Hafner-Burton (2011) emphasizes the role that unions, among other groups, play in demanding protections for labor and human rights in trade agreements.

Surveying the literature on labor unions and trade in the US, the evident gap in the literature is the need for wide-ranging description of the labor unions that have engaged in organized activities around trade polities since the 1990s. Moreover, the relationships between unions and anti-trade members of Congress uncovered in an earlier generation of scholarship have not been directly examined since. These same gaps are even more obvious in the study of non-labor left-wing and progressive groups' activities on trade and globalization in the US. While many studies have examined small subsets of these groups, the full scope of their identities and activities have simply not been described in the recent trade literature.

This is an important gap to fill for several reasons. First, scholars have uncovered rich trade politics around non-union left groups in the European Union. Dür and De Bièvre (2007) finds that NGOs have gained access to policy-makers but failed to secure commensurate policy victories, though a recent succesful campaign against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement focused on outside lobbying strategies and citizen engagement may suggest a path to political efficacy (Dür and Mateo, 2014; Dür, Bernhagen and Marshall, 2015). An earlier generation of scholarship also investigated non-union trade groups prominent role in the fight against the WTO (Weir, 2007; Seoane and Taddei, 2002). After the 'Battle in Seattle', the role of non-union progressive groups in fighting trade has not been systematically examined in the US. Describing the activities of these groups in as comprehensive a manner as possible after the year 2000 is a crucial first step towards understanding their impact.

[1] See also Pond (2018).

Second, and as with labor provisions of trade agreements, recent scholarship show that specific FTA provisions – on human rights or the environment respond to the demands of domestic interest groups, including left-wing NGOs (Lechner, 2016; Ehrlich, 2010; Margalit, 2012; Osgood and Feng, 2018). Much of this work has focused on evaluating the effects of these provisions (Hafner-Burton, 2005; Kabeer, 2004; Shadlen, 2004) or on normative evaluations of their content (Weiss, 2002; Petersmann, 2000; Bagwell and Staiger, 2001; Maskus, 2002). We focus instead on the domestic politics of left-wing opposition to trade, while also highlighting where left-wing groups have contributed to the debate on FTA provisions within the United States.

Trade's Progressive Opponents among Interest Groups

Data on progressive anti-trade coalitions

Our investigation of left-wing opposition to trade in the United States begins with collection of a new dataset on membership in coalitions opposed to trade. Public coalitions are a ubiquitous feature of American trade politics among pro-trade producers: virtually every major US trade issue of the past 30 years has seen the creation or activation of one or more coalitions of firms, industry associations, and broader business associations to support the pro-trade side of the debate (Osgood, 2019). Pro-trade firms and associations have also benefitted from several long-running pro-trade coalitions or advocacy groups (like the National Foreign Trade Council or Emergency Committee for Trade), not to mention the enormous political weight of pro-trade 'peak' associations like the US Chamber of Commerce or American Farm Bureau. In contrast, anti-trade firms and associations have been collectively disorganized, forming or activating ad hoc coalitions in only a few issues and suffering from a persistent gap in organization of permanent coalitions and broader associations.

The state of play among non-producers groups is, by contrast, not well understood. To resolve this issue, we set out to collect information on any public coalition that we could find with significant membership of non-producer groups – labor unions, issue organizations, political groups, charities, religious groups, and other membership organizations – that has publicly opposed trade liberalization or globalization over the years 2000-present. We began by looking at free trade agreements, which have been a locus of US trade politics activity in the 21st century. At least one coalition of progressive groups formed to oppose the following free trade agreements: the Peru-US trade promotion agreement; the (proposed) Free Trade Agreement of the Americas; CAFTA-DR; the Colombia, Panama, and South Korea FTAs; and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We found no organized opposition to the remaining trade agreements, including AUSFTA. Looking beyond trade agreements, we also found no organized progressive opposition to major trade initiatives including PNTR for China and AGOA, though we did find organized opposition to three Fast Track/Trade Promotion Authority votes.

The progressive campaign against the Trans-Pacific Partnership illustrates the data that we uncovered. The largest organization opposed to the agreement was a coalition formed by the Citizens Trade Campaign. This coalition included over 1500 unions, NGOs, charities, religious organizations, and political groups. The coalition sent letters to members of Congress decyring the likely impacts of TPP on US jobs; the environment and environmental regulation; food safety; access to medicines; human and political rights; and the power of investors. In addition to this main coalition, we also found several other much smaller coalitions (e.g. of environmental groups, agriculture and food groups, and public health groups). The Citizens Trade Campaign website also acted as a clearinghouse for announcements by individual groups on their positions, which we incorporated into our data.[2]

Indeed, a central locus of progressive opposition to trade in the United States is the Citizens' Trade Campaign (CTC) so it is worth reflecting on the importance of this group. The CTC is a long-running coalition of US groups opposed to trade and globalization, which also advocates for fair trade policies. The CTC has a Political Action Committee, though it does not formally lobby. Instead, its political activities seem to be focused on coalition-building and public advocacy campaigns. Several of the coalitions opposed to particular trade agreements or policies were formed by the CTC. We incorporate the complete membership of the CTC from 2005 to 2019 as a separate item in our data set.

In addition to data from the CTC website, we use several other sources to track down public coalitions of groups opposed to trade. First, we looked at the membership of our known coalitions to see if there were other coalitions listed. Second, we searched using key words for coalitions opposed to major trade issues. Third, we uncovered a large number of state-based fair trade coalitions and we incorporated their branches into our data as separate items.

Our resulting data set is structured as a cross section of groups, where each row represents an individual group, for example, Iron Workers Local 397 or the Sierra Club. We then have 28 columns which record if the group: opposed one of the seven FTAs where we identified organized opposition; opposed Fast Track in 2002, 2007, or 2015; if the group was a member of the CTC at any point from 2005-2019 and if the group was a member of CTC's state coalition; and, if, the group was a member of one of 17 state or local fair trade coalitions that publicly report their membership.

We also supplement this data with three additional pieces of information. First, we assign one or several of 19 group type labels to our groups depending on the main focus of their interests and political activities. These labels – 'environmental' for groups focused on the environment; 'union' for labor unions – allow us to summarize the types of groups that have joined these coalitions.

[2] The major coalition organized by the CTC provides the bulk of our data; the smaller coalitions provide a significant number of additional groups that opposed the TPP but a minority of our codings; and the invidividual statements from the CTC provided very few codings (most of which were repeated in other documents).

Second, we match groups wherever possible to lobbying data cleaned and made available by the Center for Responsive Politics. Third, we match groups to data on campaign contributions also from the CRP.

Interest groups that have publicly opposed trade

To illustrate the types of groups that have joined coalitions to oppose trade, Table 1 lists the 41 most active groups in our data. We rank these groups by how many of the national anti-trade campaigns they participated in (with a potential maximum of 11). This set of 'top participants' illustrates the types of groups that appear in our data. The most active group is the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society. This board "equips United Methodists across the globe to faithfully advocate for a more peaceful and more just world". Second most active is Global Exchange, a San Francisco-based "human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice". It describes its remit as falling "from limiting corporate power and greed to oil addiction and global climate change, from the exploitation of the current global economy to the creation of the local green economy." For these reasons, we give it a 'human rights' related group type tag and a more general 'progressive' tag.

Table 2 summarizes our data in its entirety. We identified a total 4988 unique non-producer groups that joined coalitions opposing US trade agreements and globalization, or in support of fair trade policies. This shows the breadth of the left-wing groups that have opposed trade in the US. We also see significant breadth across issues, for example, 2444 groups opposed the TPP; 509, 366, 379, and 361 opposed the Colombia, Korea, CAFTA-DR and Panama agreements respectively. Coalition activity on the Peru agreement (33 groups) and FTAA (61 groups) was more shallow. The three TPA coalitions from 2002, 2007, and 2015 had 9, 724, and 2200 members respectively.

The most interesting feature of Table 2 is the variation in observed numbers of the different group types. Unions are the most common group that has opposed trade representing 40.2% of all groups in our data, though we highlight that some of this size represents a large number of local chapters for large, politically active national unions. 457 chapters of the United Steel Workers opposed trade at some point, for example.

Second most present are groups representing political, religious, ethnic and gender identity-based interests. These are 20.6% of the data. For example, the subcategory of broadly progressive-oriented political groups includes includes chapters of Occupy Wall Street; Americans for Democratic Action; Democratic Socialists of America; the Green Party; and so on. Interestingly, we see a lot of activity from left or progressive-oriented religious groups, for example, many Methodist, Presbyterian and Unitarian Universalist congregations or national organizations. Groups representing specific ethnicities or immigrant communities are also highly active, particularly on trade agreements with home countries.

Table 1: **Most-active opponents of trade in non-producer coalitions**

Group	Num.	Type(s)
United Methodist Church General Board	11	religious
Global Exchange	10	progressive;humanrights
International Brotherhood of Teamsters		union
Sierra Club		environment
United Steelworkers		union
Public Citizen	9	antiglob;progressive
AFL-CIO	8	union
Communications Workers of America (CWA)		union
Inst. for Agriculture and Trade Policy		farming;foodsys
Int. Assoc. of Machinists and Aerospace Workers		union
Witness for Peace		forpolicy
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)	7	progressive
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Lat. Am.		religious
Comm. in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador		ethnocultural
Community Alliance for Global Justice		antiglob;humanrights
Family Farm Defenders (WI)		farming
Friends of the Earth		environment;humanrights
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers		union
Jobs With Justice		laborrights;religious
National Family Farm Coalition		farming
National Farmers Union		farming;union
NETWORK A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby		religious
Progressive Democrats of America		progressive
Rainforest Action Network		environment
Texas Fair Trade Coalition		fairtrade
UNITE HERE		union
Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)		environment
8th Day Center for Justice (Chicago IL)	6	religious
Amazon Watch		environment
BlueGreen Alliance		laborrights;environment
Citizens Trade Campaign		antiglob;fairtrade
Dakota Resource Council		environment
Greenpeace USA		environment
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers		union
Maine Fair Trade Campaign		fairtrade
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns		forpolicy;religious
Michigan Farmers Union		farming;union
Oxfam America		fordevelopment
United Steelworkers Local 1188		union
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)		humanrights
Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition		fairtrade

Notes: .

Table 2: **Group types for opponents of trade in the US**

	Number of groups:		
	In coalitions	Lobbying	Contributing
Labor organizations: 40.2% of total / 42.7% of memberships			
Labor unions	2002	50	58
Identity groups: 20.6% of total/ 20.9% of memberships			
Progressive	464	12	27
Religious	254	2	1
Ethnocultural	240	8	4
Women's rights	72	3	3
Environment: 12.0% of total / 12.8% of memberships			
Environmental	364	20	12
Farming	144	2	2
Food systems	92	1	0
Rights groups: 6.3% of total / 7.2 % of memberships			
Labor rights	162	3	0
Human rights	152	5	2
Domestic development: 4.7% of total / 4.4% of memberships			
Community development	113	6	2
Public health	83	5	0
Consumer	40	3	4
Foreign policy: 3.6% of total / 1.8% of memberships			
Foreign policy	100	5	0
Foreign development	64	12	0
Anti-globalization	18	2	1
Other	127	7	2
Total	4982	148	118

Notes: .

Third largest are groups from the environmental movement. (We include groups interested in farming and food systems in this broad umbrella, too.) Environmental NGOs are the third largest subcategory in our entire data after unions and progressive groups, and play a fundamental role in populating and driving the interests of these coalitions as we show below. Rounding out the groups participating, we see significant action in human and labor rights (6.3% of total); domestic development (4.7% of total); and groups with interests in foreign policy and foreign development (3.6% of total).

In addition to looking at participation in public coalitions, we also examine lobbying and campaign contributions. On lobbying, for which we can determine a specific interest in trade, we present the sum total of all left-wing or progressive groups that lobbied on trade from 1998-2016. These are only 148, a number of whom do not appear in our positiontaking data. We conclude that lobbying by progressive groups is relatively modest in scale compared to the formation of public coalitions and certainly compared to lobbying by producer groups. We also examine the PAC contributions of the groups that have publicly opposed trade. We find that about 118 of these groups have directly given contributions, while 1507 fall under the umbrella of an ultimate organization that has given

Table 3: Progressive opponents of trade in the US

Issue category	Total mentions	Pr. letters
Environment	256	0.79
Labor rights	193	0.72
Food and ag.	113	0.56
Intellectual property	61	0.37
Import competition	58	0.56
Development	49	0.47
Jobs	44	0.44
Human rights	23	0.30
Poverty	23	0.21
Small businesses	2	0.05

Notes: .

campaign contributions (usually a local chapter of a national labor union).

Comparing the organization and political activities of these progressive trade opponents with trade's corporate supporters and opponents helps to contextualize what we have described. From NAFTA to the TPP, trade's supporters among firms and trade associations organized at least one ad hoc coalition for every major trade agreement or Fast Track/PTA fight but the Jordan FTA. Producer opponents of trade organized coalitions for only two FTAs. Trade's progressive opposition lie in the middle, organizing coalitions for 7 US FTAs and 2 reasonably sized coalitions on Fast Track/TPA. Trade's public supporters among producers play an absolutely outsized role in lobbying on trade, while trade's opponents among producers account for a vanishingly small amount of lobbying expenditures. Trade's progressive opponents also account for a very small portion of total lobbying on trade.

Textual evidence on the interests of anti-trade coalitions

Our codings of the group 'types' described above provide an initial indication of the interests of groups that have opposed trade in the in United States. In particular, a plurality of group members are branches of national labor unions, while the remaining groups draw heavily on essentially progressive identity-based groups, the environmental movement, and the human rights movement.

To examine this from another angle, we consider the textual content of the letters or statements of purpose which often accompany the formation of coalitions. We found 43 such letters across the 44 unique national coalitions contained in our data. In order to examine the content of these letters, we developed a set of key word tests for topical content. For example, for human rights content we counted the number of expressions of the string "human right[s]" while for discussions of the environment we searched for mentions of "environment","climat[e]", and "pullut[ion]". The results form these tests are presented in Table 3, which records the total number of times a category's keywords appear across all of the texts, and the proportion of texts in which a category's keywords appear at least once.

Examining the set of topics discussed in the letters, we find a major focus on issues of concern to progressives: the environment, labor rights and human rights, food and agriculture, intellectual property, and development. We see comparatively less focus on issues relating to the domestic challenges of globalization: import competition, jobs, poverty, and small and medium-sized enterprises. While environmental provisions, SPS measures, and labor rights provisions may all serve protectionist ends, the *prima facie* topical interests of trade's left-wing opponents in the US are more consistently progressive than protectionist.

Evidence on the interests of labor unions around trade

[**NB**: We intend to examine in this section the industrial and trade-related characteristics of labor unions that have opposed (and supported) trade in the US. Are the unions primarily drawn from tradable or non-tradabale industries? Do they primarily represent import-competing or offshoring-exposed industries, particularly, in regard to specific trade partners? Is there additional textual evidence on the drivers of unions' anti-trade activities?]

Surveying the evidence on groups opposed to trade in the US, we advance the following conclusions. Opposition to trade from interest groups has primarily come from unions and other groups with a leftward bias in their interests or that are traditional Democratic or progressive constituencies. These groups have shown some considerable organizational skill in opposing international trade. A significant subset of these groups also engage in lobbying and campaign contributions, though the total scale of these activities is small when compared with trade's proponents in corporate America. The general orientation of the groups' interests and our textual evidence suggest that these groups are primarily concerned with what we have termed progressive opposition to globalization rather than opposition rooted in fears of import competition.

Trade's Progressive Opponents in the Congress

Congressional voting blocs around trade

We begin our investigation of progressive opposition to trade in the US Congress by collecting data on trade-related votes in the US House of Representatives and the Senate. Following the timing of our data on public positions by left-wing groups, we consider all votes on bills that are primarily about trade issues from the 103rd Congress (which first met in 1993) to the 115th Congress (which first met in 2017). We find 70 trade bills which we group into 10 different categories of topics: votes on the GATT/WTO; FTAs with developed countries; FTAs with developing countries; Fast Track/Trade Promotion Authority; Permanent Normal Trade Relations excluding China; development-related trade issues like AGOA and GSP; votes on US-China trade relations;

miscellaneous tariff bills; the Export-Import bank; and trade remedies. In the Senate, we find 27 trade bills over the same time period.

In each chamber, we then employ a 2-dimensional item response theory (IRT) model in order to summarize the vote data with a 2-dimensional vector of 'ideal points' for each member of Congress. Using only these summary scores, we are able to correctly predict 90.8% of votes on trade issues by members of the House, reflecting that the model performs well in summarizing information about House voting on trade. In the Senate, the 2-D IRT model predicted 92.5% of votes.

At this point, we want to group members of the house together into like-minded voting blocs to investigate, in particular, whether there is a coherent progressive voting bloc or blocs on trade issues. To do so, we employ a simple unsupervised learning method – k-means clustering – to let the data guide us towards relevant voting blocs that best summarize the data. In particular, we apply our clustering algorithm to the 2-dimensional summaries of Congressional voting. This method requires that we select a number of clusters *a priori*. An "elbow plot" of the within-group sum of squares suggests that the gains in terms of additional variance explained begin to significantly attenuate after 6 groups, so we opted to set $k = 6$ as the number of modeled blocs. After employing the k-means clustering, we find that the cluster means can still correctly predict 87.4% of votes in the House (as compared with 90.8% before clustering). This reflects that the cluster labels are relatively good at preserving information on voting, and that cluster members are voting in similar ways. In the Senate, our post-clustering predictive power degrades from 92.5% to 90.0%, again indicating that the clusters effectively capture voting patterns.

We provide summary data on the identified clusters in Table 4. To facilitate examination, we label two or three of our six clusters in each chamber as representing a progressive and protectionist oppositions to trade, trade moderates, and a large remainder of highly pro-trade members of Congress. We justify these labels now.

The top quarter of the table provides summary information on votes by members of a given cluster that went in a 'pro-trade' direction across the different issues areas.[3] For example, the members of what we have called a progressive cluster voted uniformly against every extensions of Fast Track/TPA in our data and voted in favor FTAs with developed and developing countries only 10% and 24% of the time, respectively. Their support of the WTO has also been tepid. In comparison with what we have termed a 'protectionist' voting bloc (in column 3), we find that progressive have been more favorable towards trade liberalization with China, extensions of PNTR to other developing or middle-income countries, and development-focused trade policies like GSP and AGOA.

The summary statistics on our clusters reinforce the impression that the cluster we have labeled

[3] We categorize all trade bills as being broadly liberalizing or deliberalizing in their main effects as a preliminary step.

Table 4: Clustering of House members by trade votes

Cluster	Progres.	Protect.	Moder.	Remain.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES				
Proportion of pro-trade votes by issue category:				
WTO	0.59	0.41	0.78	0.96
Fast track/TPA	0.00	0.32	0.53	0.84
FTAs (North)	0.10	0.58	0.75	0.91
FTAs (South)	0.24	0.67	0.73	0.85
PNTR votes (non-China)	0.71	0.46	0.76	0.92
China votes (incl PNTR)	0.33	0.16	0.58	0.83
Development issues (GSP,AGOA)	0.71	0.37	0.73	0.78
Trade remedies	0.35	0.24	0.26	0.29
Misc. Tariff Bills	1.00	0.93	0.99	0.94
Summary of clusters:				
Number of reps.	279	142	225	556
% Democrat	0.94	0.15	0.43	0.34
% Cong prog caucus	0.36	0.05	0.06	0.03
Avg. Nominate (dim 1)	-0.32	0.38	0.12	0.18
SD Nominate (dim 1)	0.23	0.34	0.36	0.37
SENATE				
Proportion of pro-trade votes by issue category:				
WTO	0.29		0.80	0.95
Fast track/TPA	0.09		0.24	0.97
FTAs (North)	0.31		0.41	0.96
FTAs (South)	0.27		0.26	0.92
PNTR votes (non-China)	0.71		0.91	0.87
China votes (incl PNTR)	0.61		0.49	0.70
Development issues (GSP,AGOA)	0.68		0.78	0.93
Trade remedies	0.76		1.00	0.95
Summary of clusters:				
Number of sens.	46		39	153
% Democrat	0.78		0.77	0.30
Avg. Nominate (dim 1)	-0.22		-0.20	0.22
SD Nominate (dim 1)	0.30		0.33	0.33

'progressive' is just that. It is 94% Democrats and a large share of the members have joined the Congressional progressive caucus. In contrast, our protectionist voting bloc is mainly Republicans. Our voting bloc of trade moderates (in column 4) is bipartisan. We conclude that the cluster described in Column 2 indeed represents a coherent voting bloc of anti-trade Democrats – many of whom are self-identified progressives – who are the most anti-trade members of Congress. They make some exceptions from this stance for unilateral reductions in US tariffs for developing countries, and they are also more likely to support FTAs with developing countries than developed countries, though they are generally quite opposed to both. We refer to the members of this cluster as trade's progressive opposition in the House of Representatives.

The results of our clustering in the Senate are somewhat more subtle. We identify one cluster that is majority (but far from exclusively Democrats) and is quite anti-trade. It opposes WTO initiatives, FTAs, and TPA, and is weakly supportive of PNTR extensions, trade with China,

and development-focused trade issues. This group is only 78% Democrats, and so not exclusively Democrats as in our progressive cluster in the House. This cluster (which we have termed 'progressive') is also somewhat harder to distinguish from another cluster (which we call 'moderate'). The differences in the voting records between the 'moderate' and 'progressive' clusters are also not as markedly distinct as in the House. [**NB**: We are giving some thought to collapsing these two blocs together given their similarities.]

Interests of trade's progressive opposition in Congress

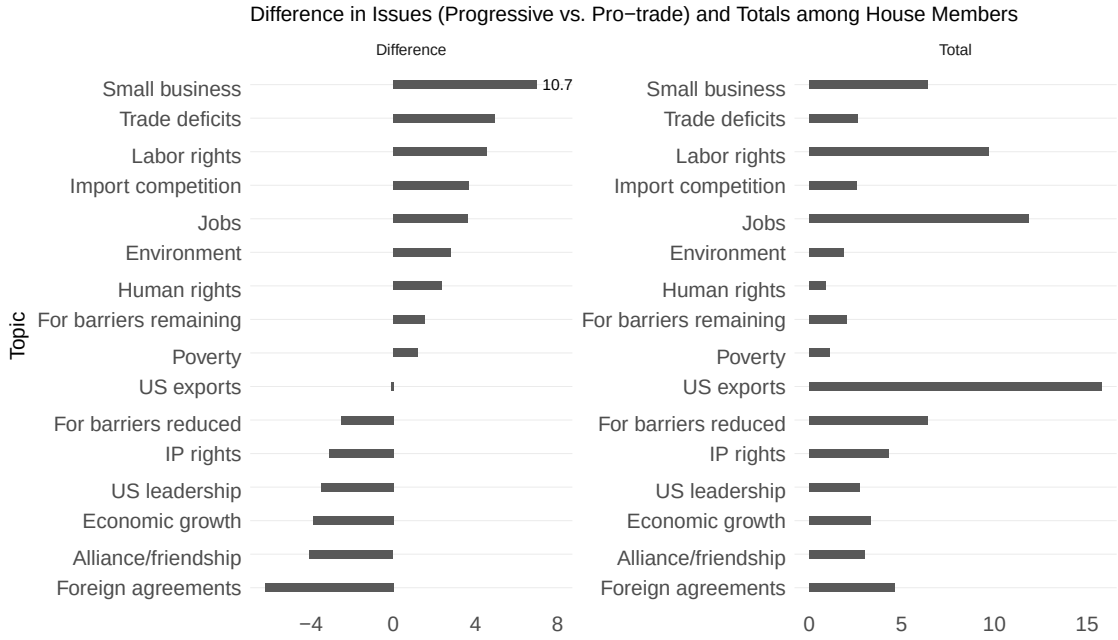
Figure 1 provides descriptive illustration of the interests of trade's progressive opponents in the House. To do so, we examine the topical content of Congressional testimony on US free trade agreements from 1995-present. These data were assembled for Lee and Osgood (2019), and provide topical tags from 63 total topics coded by the authors. Paragraphs may receive multiple tags and so tags are weighted according to the number assigned to a particular paragraph. 55 of these topics are substantive issues, and Figure 1 provides average differences in the share of tags that cover a given topic between members of trade's progressive Congressional opposition in the House and members of the House from the three broadly pro-trade blocs (corresponding to column 5 of Table 4) or in the moderate blocs (column 4 of Table 4).[4] For example, the "Foreign agreements" tag refers to arguments about 'competitive liberalization' – a foreign country's trade agreements making it harder for US exports to compete in some foreign market. This idea is a common trope among trade proponents in the Congress, and accounts for a full 6% more of trade discussion among non-progressive opponents of trade than among progressive opponents of trade.

By contrast, trade's progressive opponents highlight a series of issues which are core interests for left-wing globalization skeptics, including labor rights and human rights issues; the environment and environmental provisions of trade agreements; and poverty and developmental issues. We also see trade's progressive opponents emphasizing negative impacts of trade and trade agreements that are core elements of a protectionist argument against trade: the challenges of SMEs, trade deficits, import competition, and remaining trade barriers in foreign markets. Trade's progressive opponents avoid discussion of putative benefits of trade agreement (reductions in foreign barriers, stronger IP provisions, economic growth) and commonly used tropes to defend PTAs (US leadership, alliance considerations, and competitive liberalization concerns).

Looking at the right hand side of the figure, it is clear that efforts by progressives to bring their issues to the fore in Congressional hearings have achieved only limited success in domains like the environment, human rights, and poverty. This is also true of allied protectionist arguments against trade: import competition, trade deficits, and unfair foreign competition due to subsidies

[4] We emphasize that only 21 of the 109 testimonies by House members were members of trade's progressive opposition in the House.

Figure 1: Topical content of Congressional testimony: progressive opponents versus pro-trade members of Congress



or foreign trade barriers. On the other hand, discussion of labor chapters/labor rights and SMEs have received some significant coverage.

We thus advance two conclusions about the substantive policy interests of the members of the House whom we have labeled progressives. First, these members advocate both progressive and protectionist arguments around globalization in greater amount than other MoCs. A pattern in favor of progressive arguments only was not in evidence. Second, these members have achieved only modest successes in making progressive issues a major part of the agenda of Congressional hearings on trade.

Links between progressive groups and anti-trade members of Congress

We have investigated the existence and collective organization of trade's progressive opposition in the US among groups, including NGOs, issue organizations, religious institutions, and labor unions. We have also shown that there is a coherent set of House members who vote together on trade issues in a way that is consistent with progressive opposition to trade. The picture is

less clear in the Senate, which has two anti-trade blocs. Members of both chambers have raised issues of importance to progressives and protectionists alike, such as human and labor rights, the environment, and the costs of globalization to American workers. We now wish to show that these two sets of actors are linked in that the progressive anti-trade groups provide political support to the progressive anti-trade members of Congress.

To do so, we begin by assembling data on the political action committee (PAC) contributions of groups to sitting members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The unit of analysis for this data is the House member-cycle, where we use i to notate an individual member of Congress and t to notate an election cycle. We consider Congressional campaign cycles from 1993-1994 to 2017-2018. An ordinary term of the House of Representatives sees more than 435 members of Congress due to mid-term retirements and illnesses. Consequently the total size of our panel (N=5768) is somewhat larger than one might expect for a $T = 13$ cycles of $I = 435$ representatives ($TI = 5655$).

For each representative in the house for each cycle, we sum up all of their PAC contributions from groups that have joined the anti-trade coalitions we describe above at any point. We refer to this variable as $\ln$ PAC contibs from prog. trade opponents$_{it}$. Note that we exclude the small number of producers that have joined these coalitions and focus only on non-producer groups. We create two further versions of this variable which include only the contributions from labor unions and only contributions from non-unions, to investigate whether the patterns might be different across the two classes of groups (or if one of the groups is driving the results). This set of three variables are our main outcome variables in the analysis, and are examine in Columns 1, 2, and 3 of Table 5.

For each member of Congress, we also measure the total number of PAC contributions not emanating from progressive trade opponents. Suppose we were to find that trade's progressive opponents in Congress earn more (or less) contributions from progressive anti-trade groups. This might simply be a result of the fact that progressive opponents in Congress get more (or less) PAC contributions from all groups. We therefore wish to condition the association on total PAC contributions to rule out this potential explanation for the correlation among the variables. We refer to the total of all PAC contributions from groups outside trade's progressive opposition as $\ln$ All other PAC conts.$_{it}$.

Our primary explanatory variable is Progressive opponent$_i$ which is a dummy variable that is equal to 1 if a member of Congress is a part of the progressive anti-trade bloc of House members described above or a part of either of the anti-trade blocs in the Senate. Note that this does not vary over time because we have not clustered members of Congress dynamically. We also consider a set of conditioning variables which might be associated with both membership in a progressive bloc and PAC contributions from anti-trade progressive groups. These are: cycle and state dummies; the ln contributions from all other group PACs; dummies for party membership; and the second

dimensions of the DW-nominate score.

We the use this basic set of variables to examine in a regression framework the conditional association between being in the progressive anti-trade group we have uncovered and receiving campaign contributions from progressive anti-trade groups. If we uncover a positive conditional association, then we can say that progressive opponents to trade in the Congress receive more campaign contributions from anti-trade progressive groups than other members of Congress. Thus, there is a relationship between progressive opponents to trade in society and in the Congress.

For the moment, we are entirely agnostic about the causal nature of the relationship though we highlight three possibilities. First, it could be that progressive opponents of trade in Congress receive more contributions from these groups because those groups approve of their ideological commitments, whether in the areas of trade and globalization or outside of it. In this sense, contributions are affirmations for pre-existing beliefs or political commitments. Second, it could be that contributions from these groups cause these representatives to vote in particular ways on trade issues. Third, it could be that other forces are driving the correlation between these variables.

Overall, then, we then estimate subsets of the following linear model:

$$\begin{aligned}\ln \text{PAC contibs from prog. trade opponents}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{Progressive opponent}_i \; + \\ \beta_2 \cdot \text{Independent}_{it} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{Republican}_{it} + \beta_4 \cdot \ln \text{All other PAC conts}_{it} \; + \\ \beta_5 \cdot \text{Nominate dim. 2} \; + \; \mu_t \; + \; \mu_s \; + \; \epsilon_{it}.\end{aligned}$$

We consider these models first among all members of the House using our three separate outcome variables: $\ln$ PAC contibs from prog. trade opponents$_{it}$ from all such groups; and PAC contributions for unions only and nonunions only. We then investigate the same set of models among Democrats only. Rather than report complete models, we include only the coefficient Progressive opponent$_i$ across our array of specifications. These coefficients can be interpreted as roughly the percentage premium in PAC contributions from anti-trade groups received by MoCs in our progressive blocs, possibly conditional on the other variables added sequentially.

Results

The results from these models are reported in Table 5. In the simplest possible bivariate setting, progressive trade opponents in the House receive roughly 167% greater PAC contributions from progressive anti-trade groups. Much of this stark difference is accounted for by differences in party, however. Conditioning on MoC party, anti-trade progressives receive about 20% more contributions from anti-trade unions and 31% more contributions from anti-trade non-union groups. Among Democrats only, anti-trade progressives in the House receive about 34% more contributions from groups that have publicly opposed trade.

Table 5: PAC contribution premia from progressive anti-trade groups to anti-trade MoCs.

	ln PAC contibs from prog. trade opponents:			
	1 All contribs.	2 Unions only	3 Non-unions	4 Democrats
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES				
None	1.67	1.69	1.77	0.34
+ cycle + state	1.46	1.50	1.55	0.30
+ ln All other PAC conts.	1.44	1.47	1.53	0.31
+ party	0.21	0.21	0.31	
+ nominate (dim. 2)	0.20	0.21	0.31	
SENATE				
None	1.10	1.12	0.83	0.36
+ cycle + state	0.89	0.96	0.74	0.67
+ ln All other PAC conts.	0.79	0.86	0.67	0.12
+ party	0.26	0.28	0.26	
+ nominate (dim. 2)	0.27	0.28	0.27	

Notes: All figures are coefficients from dummy variable indicating membership of Representative or Senator in progressive anti-trade bloc. Outcome variables are the natural logarithm of PAC contributions per cycle from all progressive anti-trade groups (in columns 1 and 4), and union and non-union anti-trade groups in columns 2 and 3, respectively.

Overall, our regression setting and results do not help us to make any strong statement about what is causing what. Rather, the strong conditional association between trade's progressive opponents among issues organizations and in the Congress show that these two groups are linked. The groups that have gotten organized to oppose trade liberalization have also gotten organized to give PAC contributions to like-minded (or like-voting) members of the House.

Next steps

[**NB**: This is a preliminary first draft of the paper prepared for the conference. We have several narrower next steps planned at this point. First, we would like to expand our analysis of labor union's motivations for joining anti-trade groups. Are these unions primarily representing import-competing or even tradable goods, for example? Are they representing offshoring-exposed workers? If the answers to these are no, that might support a progressive rather than protectionist interpretation of left-wing trade politics in the US. Second, we intend to provide some more detail on the parent organizations of groups in our data. As an example, many of our unions in the data are locals of national unions. So we would like to replicate our basic descriptive statistics using only national organizations to understand if unions' interest in trade is perhaps being overstated. Third, we have not collected data on support for trade agreements from unions and non-unions. We don't think there are large coalitions of such groups but there may be other sources we could consider.

We identify three broader points in the paper with which we could use your help. First, our paper is largely descriptive right now and we do not test a particular theory. We think there is

some value in that although we are interested in feedback on whether our readers agree! Second, we have not shown the impact or non-impact of trade's progressive opposition which might make an interesting coda. As an example, these groups, and their Democratic agents, have made labor and environmental chapters a key part of the Congressional politics of trade agreements. While the impact of these chapters is debatable, that is a significant political achievement. Third, we have framed the paper around two primary questions: 1. Are left-wing anti-trade groups active and organized? 2. Are left-wing anti-trade groups primarily protectionist or progressive? We certainly welcome feedback on whether these descriptive questions are interesting and important.]

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