# Organizing for Issue Linkage: How External Ties Shape Domestic Support for Liberalization

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**Abstract**

This article examines how domestic groups' international ties shape their positions on trade negotiations. I argue that issue linkage can expand domestic support for trade liberalization when affected domestic groups have the capacity to enforce the linkage. In turn, enforceability depends on whether domestic groups can rely on international organizations to gather compliance information and mobilize for enforcement failures. I test this argument by analyzing environmentalists' positions on U.S. trade–environment linkages—an area where existing theories strongly predict successful mobilization. Using an original dataset, I show that environmental groups support trade–environment linkages when they have extensive ties to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) that can provide compliance information and ensure the enforcement of environmental provisions. Through case illustrations, I demonstrate how some groups are able to leverage external ties to advocate for enforcement and support trade linkage, while other groups without such ties tend to oppose linkage.

Keywords: issue linkage, international organization, coalition building, trade negotiations, environment
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# Introduction

How do governments build domestic coalitions for economic cooperation? Under what circumstances do coalition strategies successfully garner broad domestic support for major policy change and lead to an agreement? The United States has long used issue linkage – the practice of combining multiple issues in a single negotiation—in order to boost domestic support for trade liberalization. To broaden pro-trade coalitions at home, the U.S. government has demanded that partner countries comply with stringent standards across major policy areas such as labor (Osgood and Ro 2022), human rights (Hafner-Burton 2011), intellectual property rights (Shadlen 2017), and the environment (Bastiaens and Postnikov 2017; Morin et al. 2018). Even though these side agreements featured relatively well-designed enforcement mechanisms, and partner countries were often eager to comply with U.S. demands, only a subset of domestic stakeholders joined the pro-trade coalition, and others persistently refused to do so (Destler and Balint 1999; Kay and Evans 2018). Under what circumstances are these issue linkages credible enough to convince otherwise skeptical groups to support them and join pro-trade coalitions?

Domestic groups are more likely to support issue linkage when they have the capacity to enforce the linkage. I argue that groups build this capacity through outside ties to international organizations, which are better equipped to overcome the challenge of enforcement. Those outside ties offer several advantages. They provide centralized repositories of compliance information and useful benchmarks to identify rule violations. This makes it easier for domestic groups to sound the alarm when problems arise. Ties to outside forums also enable domestic groups to mobilize external actors against linkage violations, creating a sense of inevitability around enforcement action. Without these outside ties to provide monitoring and enforcement benefits, domestic groups may dismiss issue linkage as a luxury they cannot afford. They alone lack organizational resources to identify linkage violations effectively; they also struggle to lobby their government to enforce linkage and penalize partner countries.

To validate the theory, I focus on trade-environment linkage in U.S. trade negotiations,

a hard case for my theory, where existing theories of issue linkage strongly predict successful mobilization. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), U.S. policymakers have been incorporating environmental provisions in trade agreements. Prevailing theories of issue linkage would predict that the addition of environmental issues to trade negotiations would mobilize support from domestic groups in the United States without sabotaging trade negotiations, as environmental issues have tended to be more salient in the United States than in its partner countries. To ensure the credibility of the issue linkage to environmentalists, negotiators subjected environmental clauses to commercial dispute settlement mechanisms and institutionalized enforcement mechanisms. Given the increasing influence of U.S. environmental groups in such a permissive political opportunity structure, the prevailing theories would predict that environmentalists would see the trade-environment linkage as a favorable opportunity to achieve policy gains. However, my original data on trade-environment linkages complicate these existing theories, demonstrating that environmental activists with similar access to politicians diverged into different trade cleavages—some aligned with the pro-trade camp and others with the anti-trade camp—in response to the same trade agreements with the same legal design.

I present two sets of evidence in support of the theory. First, employing an original dataset of thirty-two environmental groups' positions on U.S. trade-environment linkages from 2002 to 2023, I document a new finding that environmental activists with extensive ties to environmental inter-governmental organization (IGOs) tend to support trade-environment issue linkage. Drawing from rich data including environmentalists' letters, press releases, and news articles, the quantitative analysis finds that those with greater outside ties are consistently more willing to trade concessions with the government. These findings are robust to the inclusion of important control variables such as the agreement design, the environmental groups' revenues, their campaign donations, and their access to the executive and legislative branches. I next illustrate the mechanism – information pooling and audience costs – through case studies. By comparing two environmental groups' strategies to combat illegal logging

in the 2010s, I show that the Environmental Investigation Agency, a pro-linkage group, was more supportive of trade deals due to its extensive ties with relevant IGOs compared with the Sierra Club, an anti-linkage group.

This paper enhances our understanding of the factors that lead to domestic support for economic cooperation, a pressing issue in times of isolationism in major industrialized economies. In the midst of trade wars, scholars question how a new free trade regime and supporting coalitions can be built. Responding to early bouts of coalition failure, many academics and policymakers in the United States have called for more progressive trade coalitions that incorporate labor and environmental interests (Goldstein and Gulotty 2021; Rodrik 2017; Clausing 2019; Warren 2019). U.S. politicians have followed this advice by incorporating non-trade issues into trade agreements. But issue linkage has not always been successful in bringing together a broad trade coalition; some stakeholders – e.g., environmentalists and labor groups – remained unconvinced that the linkage is sufficiently credible despite its relatively well-designed enforcement mechanism (Hester 2015; LeClercq et al. 2024). The findings presented in this paper show that re-establishing a new trade order may not come through well-designed trade agreements alone; I document the vital role of international organizations in making credible commitments to coalition partners during the negotiation of these agreements. Rebuilding a trade regime will be harder without this IO support to grease the wheels of coalition building.

Despite the urgency of this question, scholars pay little attention to how such unlikely coalitions can come together and bring about major policy change. A substantial body of literature has examined how preferences and institutions influence domestic support for international cooperation during economic negotiations. First, preference scholars argue that issue linkage may facilitate international cooperation when negotiating parties value linked issues differently, highlighting the importance of selecting "right" issues to link (Tollison and Willett 1979; Davis 2009; McKibben 2013, 2016). However, this approach is inadequate to explain how exactly the inclusion of a salient issue leads to an increase in domestic support

— i.e., why domestic groups such as unions, environmentalists, human rights activists believe the promises of issue linkage when they are not sure about the prospect for enforcement (see a related discussion in Moravcsik 1998)? This paper addresses this gap. Unpacking the pathway from raw preferences to coalition decisions, I theorize how domestic groups assess the enforceability of concessions differently and how their organizational ties shape coalition decisions on a micro-level.

Second, institutionalists contend that issue linkages, like many policy concessions, tend to gain credibility when they are embedded and enforced in well-designed institutions (Martin 1993; Davis 2004; Carnegie 2014). With a well-designed agreement, scholars argue that issue linkage is likely to elicit strong support especially in countries with permissive political opportunity structures (e.g., the US, the EU; see Postnikov and Bastiaens 2020, Farrell and Newman 2018). Alternatively, this paper shows the limitation of institutionalization as the only solution to coalition formation even in a favorable domestic political environment. Departing from treating issue linkage as a formal and static institution, my findings emphasize the often-overlooked role of the dynamic relationship between domestic actors and global forums in broadening domestic coalitions for policy change (Farrell and Newman 2014; Tallberg et al. 2013; Keck and Sikkink 1998). These insights advance our understanding of coalition-making by showing that the success of negotiations is not merely a matter of mechanically adding or subtracting issues or designing a stronger enforcement mechanism on paper. Instead, it requires examining the broader system that enables such strategies and understanding how domestic actors are embedded within that system.

## The Existing Literature on Issue Linkage

In international negotiations, negotiators frequently combine multiple issues for joint settlement. Earlier studies have investigated the causes and effects of issue linkages, some focusing on the substantive relevance of linked issues and others on the tactical motivations for such

linkages (Tollison and Willett 1979; Haas 1980; Sebenius 1983; Oye 1993; Eichengreen and Frieden 1993; Lohmann 1997; Davis 2004; Poast 2013; McKibben 2013, 2016; Farrell and Newman 2018).

Among the many effects of issue linkages, this paper focuses on how issue linkage builds domestic coalitions, a critical factor in negotiation outcomes (Putnam 1988; Davis 2004). Consider an example of a trade–environment linkage. Suppose that a majority of domestic constituents in Country A oppose trade liberalization, but that a sizable subset of this majority is willing to reconsider their position in exchange for environmental concessions (e.g., preserving an important forest in Country B). If negotiators focus solely on trade liberalization, talks are likely to fail. But by incorporating environmental concessions into the agreement, they can broaden domestic support in Country A and move forward with liberalization. In this scenario, the two countries can facilitate cooperation by exchanging concessions only because the domestic audience in Country A (i.e., environmental groups) is willing to trade its support of the package deal for environmental gains (Putnam 1988).[1] Liberal IR scholars have argued that issue linkage would play an increasingly important role in achieving international cooperation: as domestic constituencies develop diverse interests, there emerges the political space for logrolling among states to exchange concessions across different issue areas (Keohane and Nye 1977).

The literature has suggested three mechanisms by which issue linkage facilitates international cooperation: issue characteristics, the credibility of bargaining institutions, and political opportunity structures. Below, I review existing studies of these three mechanisms and argue that these approaches alone cannot adequately explain how issue linkage influences domestic coalitions, focusing on the case of U.S. trade–environment package deals, a hard case with generalizable implications.

[1]Putnam (1988) considers a similar dynamic with the case of the 1978 Bonn accord (p.447).

### Issue characteristics

The early literature on issue linkage in trade negotiations examines how issue characteristics determine the success of package deals. To facilitate cooperation and increase the zone of agreement among states, governments must select issues that are valued differently by negotiating parties (Tollison and Willett 1979; Sebenius 1983; McKibben 2013, 2016). The linkage of trade and the environment in NAFTA is a good example. U.S. partner countries cared much more about gaining access to the U.S. market than making environmental concessions, whereas environmental issues were more politically salient in the United States. This approach focuses on inter-state dynamics such as these preference gaps between negotiating parties while underappreciating how domestic mechanisms may moderate the power of issue linkage (see Moravcsik 1998: 65).

### The credibility of bargaining institutions

Another predominant approach highlights the role of bargaining institutions. Scholars in this tradition have argued that without credible commitments, such as to retaliate against sanction free-riders (Martin 1993) or to grant market access in return for compliance with human rights norms (Hafner-Burton 2005), linkages may not increase the likelihood of cooperation. Many scholars in this tradition find the source of credibility in international institutions with high levels of legalization; if a state backs down on the commitments it made in an agreement within such an institution, the state will have to bear costs related to this deception (Martin 1993; Keohane 1984).

In the context of international trade, Davis (2004) shows that governments can signal the credibility of their commitment to issue linkage when their negotiations take place within transparent institutions with elaborate rules. Johnson (2015) argues that with regard to the WTO, the integration of environmental issues into the trade regime was made feasible because of the availability of legal devices such as information-revealing conditions and the structural supremacy of trade laws over environmental laws. Bastiaens and Postnikov (2017)

find that U.S. trade agreements lead partner countries to strengthen their environmental standards more quickly because the United States is committed to strict and punitive enforcement. Altogether, this approach argues that linkages can marshal broad support from domestic audiences only when the commitment to issue linkage is made credible through institutional means.

### Political opportunity structures

To explain whether issue linkage enhances support for an agreement, some scholars have turned their attention to non-state actors and their domestic policy influence. This approach gives more agency to non-state or sub-state actors such as activists, interest groups, and politicians with minority views. Putnam (1988), for example, argues that a powerful minority within a government can achieve its favored outcome during international negotiations through give-and-take and tradeoffs made during the bargaining process. Farrell and Newman (2018) show that non-state actors are more likely to advocate successfully for issue linkage when there is a permissive and open political opportunity structure. These studies treat package deals as "a window of opportunity" for stakeholders to gain policy buy-in (Kingdon 1984), arguing that stakeholders can influence the negotiation process from the outside by leveraging their mobilization resources and pre-existing access to policymakers (Kay and Evans 2018; Ehrlich 2011).

While policy access is important, other studies show that domestic political institutions can influence domestic groups' support for issue linkage. Focusing on the linkage of trade and security issues during alliance negotiations, Davis (2009) argues that businesses are better positioned to influence linkage decisions in democratic institutions than in non-democracies. Postnikov and Bastiaens (2020) show that environmentalists and labor groups in a majoritarian electoral system are more likely to be successful in incorporating social protection clauses in trade agreements than those in a proportional representation system, because the former can mobilize more easily.

### An Empirical Gap: The Case of U.S. Trade-Environment Linkages

These three factors do not adequately explain why some domestic actors support and engage with issue linkages in trade negotiations while others either stay out of linkage politics or oppose trade agreements, even when they share similar policy objectives and collaborate in other domains of their activity.

This article focuses on the case of U.S. trade–environment linkages. Existing theories would predict that most environmental groups would welcome issue linkage in trade agreements. Since NAFTA, the U.S. government has incorporated environmental clauses in trade agreements to mobilize support from environmentalists. There are three reasons such a linkage could be expected to succeed. First, the preference mismatch—e.g., partner countries' keen interest in the U.S. market and the high salience of environmental issues among U.S. audiences—made the environment a good issue to broaden the pro-trade coalition without sabotaging the trade negotiations. Second, U.S. chapters of environmental groups tend to ensure the legal enforceability of environmental provisions; U.S. agreements subject environmental disputes to commercial trade dispute settlement mechanisms (Bastiaens and Postnikov 2017) and include more precise rules than E.U. agreements do (Baccini et al. 2015; Horn et al. 2010). Finally, due to the relatively permissive opportunity structure of American political institutions, an increasing number of environmental groups have begun lobbying the government on trade (Kitschelt 1986; Audley 1997; Kay and Evans 2018), ostensibly gaining the ability to shape and enforce environmental rules in trade deals. Together, existing theories of issue linkage would expect that the combination of the "right" issues, strong enforcement mechanisms, and a favorable political opportunity structure would sway environmental groups in favor of trade linkages.

However, in a deviation from the existing theories' expectations, there is substantial variation in how major environmental groups have responded to package deals. Figure 1 depicts five prominent environmental groups' positions on major U.S. trade deals. First, the data reveal divisions into pro-linkage and anti-linkage camps across the five major trade agreements

with putatively strong enforcement mechanisms. Even during trade negotiations between the United States and Peru, which followed the Bush administration's landmark commitment to incorporate seven multilateral environmental agreements into all future trade deals—both the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth (FoE) remained reluctant to formally endorse the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement. Even the establishment of the CAFTA-DR Secretariat, an enforcement body for the environmental deal, did not sway the opponents, suggesting that the design of agreements alone is insufficient to garner the support of certain groups (U.S. Newswire 2005).

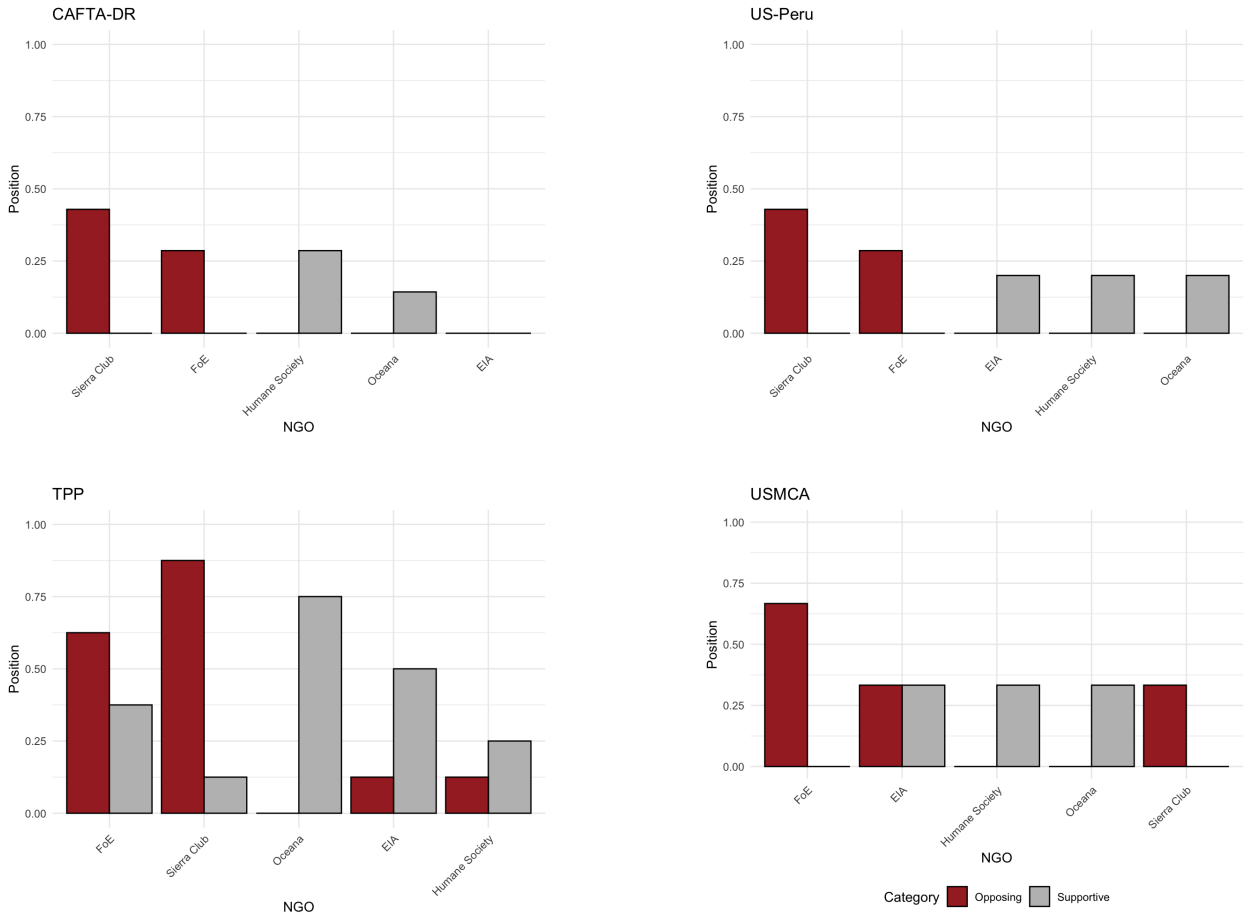



**Figure 1** – Environmental Groups' Positions on Trade Agreements; Y axis denotes the proportion of years in which a group expressed supportive or opposing proposals on the environmental portion of a trade agreement during the negotiation and ratification period.

The variation in environmental groups' support for trade negotiations is not fully explained by existing theories that focus on political opportunity structures either. These theories assume that environmental groups perceive a package deal as a political opportunity to elevate the salience of environmental issues, especially when they can shape the contents of the deal. However, this approach does not explain why environmental groups with comparable access to policymakers, and operating within the same political institution, differed widely in their perceptions of package deals' strategic values.[2] Reflecting the political realities of linkage politics, Audley (1997) argues that some environmental groups ceased engaging with trade issues after NAFTA, as they saw no political opportunities of comparable significance.

# The Argument

Why do some environmental groups consider a package deal a political opportunity, while others reject it, treating a linkage as a threat to their objectives? Environmentalists can be expected to support trade-environment linkages only when they are confident that a linkage will credibly produce environmental benefits. I contend that environmental groups tend to view trade linkages as more enforceable when the environmental groups are well integrated into global environmental governance. Externally connected groups are better equipped to ensure that there are costs to non-compliance than those without such ties, because they can better collect compliance information and mobilize external global actors. Below, I develop the theory in two steps: first, I describe how the enforcement mechanisms in trade linkages are designed and explain the conditions under which domestic groups can sound the

[2]From 2006 to 2020, the FoE and the Sierra Club lobbied on an average of 24 and 96 bills per year, respectively, with their members predominantly donating to Democratic candidates during election campaigns. Oceana and the Humane Society—both frequent supporters of package deals—lobbied on 20 to 50 bills annually and also contributed mainly to Democrats. Although the Sierra Club's greater lobbying capacity suggests better access to policymakers and potential influence over the content of deals, this access did not translate into support for package deals (OpenSecrets n.d.).

alarm about linkage violations; second, I propose two mechanisms through which IGOs can mitigate enforcement challenges.

### Who Sounds the Alarm? Enforceability in Practice

As international agreements often fall short of providing independent enforcement mechanisms, environmental groups may find it difficult to trust that governments will enforce package deals faithfully. However, a robust body of scholarship argues that governments can design agreements that address this enforcement gap by enabling concerned parties to sound alarms over potential violations. Such alarm mechanisms can facilitate compliance in two ways: a) they enhance governments' monitoring capacities by pooling information from non-governmental actors (Dai 2002; Raustiala 1997); and b) they can produce strong audience costs that pressure governments into engaging in enforcement (Chaudoin 2014; Simmons and Danner 2010; Dai 2005).

Many package deals have alarm mechanisms in which stakeholders report violations (fire-alarm oversight), rather than governments patrolling for violations in a top-down manner (police-patrol oversight; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). The US–Peru TPA, for example, established the Interagency Committee on Trade in Timber Products from Peru to implement the Annex on Forest Sector Governance. The Committee can request that the Peruvian government conduct an audit or verification of "particular shipments" of timber products (Interagency Committee 2011). To identify potential instances of non-compliance, the Committee solicits written information from the public, rather than randomly inspecting a small subset of timber shipments. Similarly, a labor linkage in the US–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) includes a Rapid Response Labor Mechanism (RRM). Under the RRM, any individual can file a complaint with the U.S. government regarding working conditions at a facility in Mexico. Based on the complaint, the U.S. government can initiate an investigation of the facility (Bown and Claussen 2024).

In practice, however, domestic groups differ widely in both their access to compliance

information and their ability to pressure the government to engage in enforcement (see Chaudoin 2014). Regarding access to compliance information, some groups are better equipped to monitor the compliance behavior of governments and businesses. Environmental groups with close ties to victims of non-compliance are typically better equipped to monitor compliance behavior (Dai 2002), as are groups with transnational bodies or networks that provide informational ties and serve as effective monitors (Raustiala 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998). In the context of trade-related package deals, it is reasonable to suspect that such ties to external actors can serve as an important tool to monitor compliance and realize environmental gains.[3]

Domestic groups also vary greatly in their ability to pressure their government into compliance and enforcement. Previous studies have examined the role of elections, arguing that domestic groups are better able to push for compliance when they can exert electoral influence on the government (Dai 2005) or when like-minded groups in a target country gain such electoral leverage (Chaudoin 2014). The government may not always have the incentive to enforce a package deal even when environmental groups sound the alarm based on credible information, as governments are typically answerable to multiple groups with competing claims (e.g., anti-enforcement importers versus pro-enforcement environmentalists). Competition over enforcement can be particularly severe in the context of package deals, as the varied interest groups involved may have conflicting interests when it comes to enforcement (Moravcsik 1998). Following this reasoning, environmentalists are likely to support trade linkage when they have the capacity to mobilize broader audiences, effectively tying their government's hands and forcing it to require compliance.

It is my contention that domestic groups' enforcement capacities shape their aggregate decisions to support issue linkage, affecting the shape of trade coalitions. Even when *de jure* institutional design ensures the credibility of enforcement promises on paper, only some

[3]Many enforcement mechanisms are explicitly designed for victims to report potential violations with concrete information on specific cases. For example, a party to NAFTA can initiate the enforcement procedures for the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) only when a formal complaint is filed by an individual or a group.

domestic groups have the capacity to compel enforcement in practice. When assessing their own enforcement capacities, domestic groups will examine their ability to identify linkage violations and inflict audience costs on their government for non-enforcement.

Below, I explain the mechanisms through which IGOs may enhance environmental groups' ability to sound the alarm about linkage violations. Several studies have emphasized how IGOs shape cooperation outcomes by creating a venue for socialization and information-sharing among like-minded actors, rather than through agreement design or formal rules (see Gray 2013; Davis 2023). The mechanisms in my theory build on a similar premise. My theory posits that domestic actors with access to transnational audiences of like-minded groups can leverage their transnational ties domestically to mobilize for linkage enforcement.[4]

### Information Pooling

How do IGO ties shape enforcement expectations? First, domestic groups can better access and generate information on state compliance within linked issue areas when they have access to relevant IGOs. A substantial literature demonstrates that IGOs strategically collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to gather compliance-related information (Tallberg et al. 2013; Green 2013; Raustiala 1997). As this literature indicates, individual NGOs may report on state adherence to treaty obligations, contributing to the broader compliance monitoring process. IGOs then aggregate this information, functioning as centralized repositories that NGOs can draw upon to identify potential breaches of package deals. In this context, IGOs' existing monitoring systems help domestic groups sound the alarm elsewhere: domestic groups with specialized knowledge of these IGO mechanisms are better equipped to interpret and leverage the available information, thereby enhancing their capacity to detect and respond to violations of side agreements embedded within package deals.

For instance, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), a conservation NGO, was

[4]Of course, formal rules may determine the extent of domestic groups' access to IGOs (Tallberg et al. 2013). But once the transnational access is established, environmental groups with such connections may use their transnational ties to enforce similar rules outside of IGOs.

able to uncover illegal logging practices by timber exporters—violations of the US–Peru TPA—by cross-referencing export documents managed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). CITES controls trade in specimen of selected endangered species and all trade of covered species must be authorized through a licensing system (CITES 2025). Such a licensing system makes available a vast collection of compliance records. When a trade-environment linkage embodies principles similar to those of CITES, environmental groups can use CITES' compliance information to identify linkage violations rather than gathering compliance information *de novo*. CITES' export documents were critical in enabling EIA to pressure for the enforcement of the Forestry Appendix in the US-Peru TPA. These documents identified the concessions where timber was supposedly harvested. EIA matched the CITES permits with field visit reports from the Peruvian government and identified a serious mismatch between the two sources (EIA 2012). Sounding the alarm about this violation would not have been possible without CITES' export documents and EIA's expertise with regard to CITES' monitoring process.

If an IGO's treaty reflects similar core principles as an issue linkage, IGO information can also be useful in determining what constitutes violations of the linkage. In order for an agreement to be enforceable, stakeholders should be able to define and detect violations. But provisions in package deals can be too vague for domestic groups to determine whether any violation has occurred (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984); linking multiple issues typically increases contracting costs, making it hard to "specify details in the contract and verify compliance ex post" (Maggi 2016: 551). IGOs can help mitigate this implementation gap. When implementing existing treaties and standards, IGOs generate information and assessment of violations of those rules. Such existing repositories of information can serve as benchmarks that help domestic groups determine what counts as a rule violation and what does not, functioning as guidelines with precedential value.

For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has played a key role in increasing the enforceability of labor provisions in NAFTA and the USMCA. Notably, the

ILO accumulated significant information on Mexico's compliance with the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association. For example, the ILO addressed a complaint about companies' use of "employer protection contracts", collective bargaining agreements between employers and trade unions not agreed to by the workers themselves, a widespread practice in Mexico (Curtis and Manrique 2023). During the investigation and implementation processes, various ILO committees published seven reports and recommendations about violations of related principles, first in 2011 and most recently in 2024 (ILO n.d.). For labor groups in the United States and Mexico, the availability of such information served as powerful ammunition to legitimize their claim of a linkage violation under NAFTA. In 2018, for example, the AFL-CIO and the Mexican National Union of Workers co-filed a complaint with the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC), the labor side agreement to NAFTA, regarding the widespread use of employer protection contracts (AFL-CIO and UNT 2018). In the complaint, the two organizations cited the reports and recommendations from the ILO case to validate that Mexico's new law constituted a violation of the NAALC.

### Audience Costs

Not all domestic groups can easily pressure their government into taking enforcement action. Enforcement entails several challenges for domestic groups. For example, those with conflicting interests may attempt to impede enforcement attempts (Moravcsik 1998; Maggi 2016), or the government may prioritize broader diplomatic relations with the violating country (Davis 2012). Given these varied enforcement problems, domestic groups have reasons to be skeptical of the credibility of issue linkages.

How do IGOs help inflict costs on governments that fail to enforce linked provisions? Domestic groups with ties to IGOs can mobilize external actors within these organizations when national authorities are reluctant to pressure rule violators (Simmons 2000, 2009). This external mobilization addresses enforcement problems in two related ways. First, it amplifies the visibility of complaints related to violations of package deals. Research has shown

that international treaties can increase the salience of relevant issues in domestic politics by leveraging their legal authority (Simmons 2009). IGO involvement can broaden the audience for complaints concerning side agreements, as the IGO seeks to defend the integrity of side agreements that reflect its core principles.

Second, IGO mobilization conveys a sense of 'involuntary constraint,' which limits the enforcing government's discretion, forcing its hand and thus helping it avoid appearing overly aggressive in its enforcement efforts (Putnam 1988). A big challenge in enforcing package deals is diplomatic considerations. The executive is generally sensitive to broader diplomatic relations with foreign countries. To borrow Davis' analogy, acting as the environment or labor police ticketing trading partners for every speeding violation may harm bilateral political relations (Davis 2012: 10). In these circumstances, mobilizing external actors can add a sense of inevitability and legitimacy to the enforcing government's actions. For example, the USTR sought the ILO's involvement as an international observer when it received a complaint regarding a collective bargaining agreement at the General Motors plant in Silao, Mexico (Curtis and Manrique 2023). As the ILO's involvement added a sense of neutrality, the U.S. government could credibly claim that their enforcement action was accredited by a neutral third party. Subsequently, the AFL-CIO applauded the USTR for addressing the violation of labor rights (AFL-CIO 2021). If such mechanisms are valid, environmental groups should be amenable to supporting issue linkages when they have close ties to IGOs.

## Alternative Accounts: Issue Scopes and Ideology

I consider a set of alternative accounts. At first glance, pro-linkage organizations tend to specialize in narrow topics such as wildlife conservation or animal rights, while anti-linkage groups have multiple areas of interest. But no theoretical account has explained why issue profiles should inform environmental groups' negotiation strategies.

First, it is possible that a group's issue coverage may explain their positions on issue

linkage. Environmental groups with a broader issue profile may find it difficult to support trade agreements due to their extensive ties to other advocacy groups. Environmental groups tend to collaborate with advocacy groups in other issue areas; cross-issue collaboration is likely to be more important for groups with a broader issue scope. Given the importance of inter-group networks, an environmental group may choose not to engage with trade agreements if doing so conflicts with the preferences of its partners (Carpenter et al. 2014; Jung et al. 2014).

Second, a group's ideology might influence its linkage position. Previous studies have noticed a rise in conservation NGOs that embrace the commodification of nature (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Audley 1997). It is plausible that those groups would be more amenable to joining a pro-trade coalition due to their favorable disposition toward using market tools in their activism.

# Data

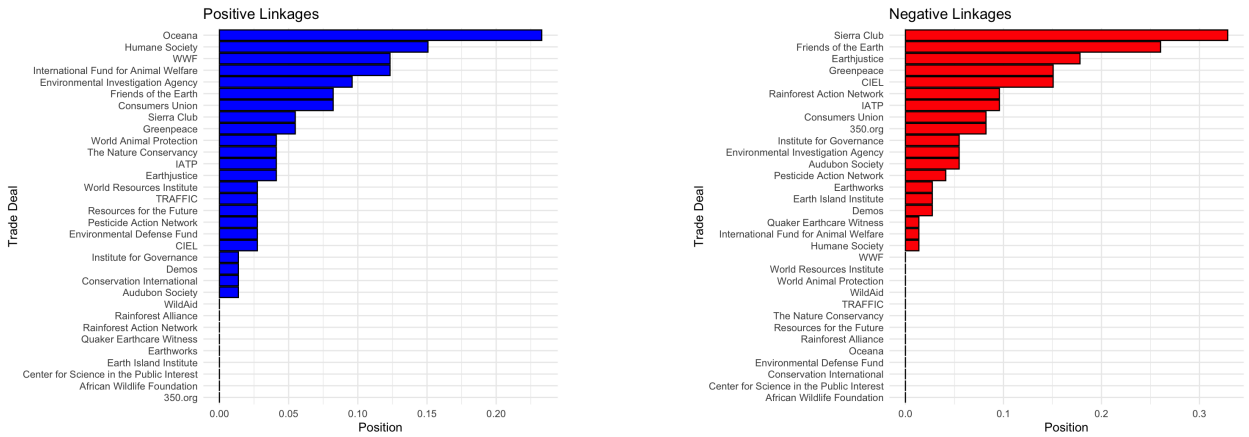
I constructed a dataset that records 32 environmental groups' positions on ten U.S. trade agreements from 2002 to 2023 (see appendix B for how I selected the 32 environmental groups). The dataset offers two binary outcome variables: support and opposition. Support does not necessarily represent unconditional endorsement of a trade agreement. Most environmental groups endorse a trade deal or withdraw their opposition only after they make a series of demands. To reflect this dynamic, I code demands as supportive if the demands are tractable and precise enough for the government to act on them without sabotaging the negotiation. For the same reason, supportive demands may also entail limiting the scope of demands. Supportive demands often focus on the legality of environmental provisions in trade agreements, and such demands are generally limited to environmental issues, rather than addressing other progressive issues such as human rights. In contrast, opposing demands often convey explicit opposition to a trade agreement, calling for systemic reform of

the trade regime (see appendix C for the coding scheme).

The outcome variables are drawn from two sources. First, I use environmental groups' joint letters and statements from several online archives (e.g., the USTR archives and Public Citizen archives) and environmental groups' websites. Although these are useful sources, joint letters and petition documents may overrepresent environmental groups that are hostile to issue linkage. To address this shortcoming, I also searched for environmentalists' positions on trade agreements in news articles from *Inside U.S. Trade*, a trade journal for businesses. Using a protocol, two coders categorized these documents into supportive and opposing demands (appendix C).

This article focuses on trade agreements, not trade issues in general (e.g., trade disputes or sanctions). To this end, I limit the scope of the empirical analysis to trade negotiations that are designed to produce an agreement or modify an existing trade agreement. In particular, this paper focuses on the following trade negotiations: the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), and three respective bilateral trade agreements between the United States and Colombia, Peru, and South Korea. In addition, the dataset also covers the WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies and the Inflation Reduction Act's compatibility with WTO rules (appendix H for why I selected these agreements).

The structure of the data is based on the Environmental Group-Year-Trade Agreement. The dataset covers group positions from the start of a trade negotiation to the agreement's entry into force (appendix H for the timeline of the selected negotiations); the final dataset contains 2,336 observations (appendix A for summary statistics). Figure 2 shows the average positions of individual environmental groups for a trade agreement, where 0 represents no engagement and 1 represents support (figure 2a) or opposition (figure 2b).




**(a)** Support **(b)** Opposition

**Figure 2** – Environmental Group Positions on Environmental Linkages in Trade Agreements (Unit: Mean value representing the frequency of expressed support or opposition over time; a value of 1 indicates consistent expression of support or opposition throughout trade negotiations and ratification periods, while 0 indicates no expression of views on trade-related environmental linkages.)

My main explanatory variables are environmental groups' ties to IGOs. I use information from the Yearbook of International Organizations (YIO). The YIO provides information on the IGOs to which an environmental group has ties (i.e., observer status, accreditation, or partnership). Because my theory focuses on an environmental group's ties to environmental IGOs, I select IGOs that fit these categories.[5] IGO ties are coded biennially. Following the previous literature, I employ linear interpolation to estimate the values of the missing years (Murdie and Bhasin 2011; Baccini et al. 2022). Based on the information, I construct count variables that capture the number of IGO ties an environmental group has.

I control for linkage design, revenue, legal capacity, campaign contributions, issue coverage, membership in the Trade and Environment Policy Advisory Committee (TEPAC), presidential ideology, and the proportion of Democrats in the legislature.

The design of a linkage captures the legal strength of the environmental provisions in a trade agreement (variable name: enforcement). If the legal approach explains the suc-

[5]I divide an IGO into environmental or non-environmental categories based on the description of the organization's aim in the YIO database. When the information is unavailable in the YIO database, I trace the organization's website.

cess and failure of linkage politics, we should observe that environmental groups lend more support to a trade agreement with enforceable environmental provisions. Before a trade agreement is signed, environmentalists do not have access to the text of the agreement; they may shape their position on the trade agreement based on their evaluations of prior trade deals negotiated by the government. Once the agreement text is released upon signature, they may update their positions on the new trade deal based on the legal enforceability of the environmental provisions. I primarily use the proportion of enforcement provisions in Morin et al. (2018)'s TREND dataset to capture this dynamic (appendix D for the coding scheme).

The revenue variable represents an environmental group's total annual revenue (variable name: revenue). Political scientists and sociologists have argued that advocacy success is influenced by the availability of resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Audley (1997) noted that environmental groups lost interest in trade issues due to their financial constraints. Jung et al. (2014) test whether resource availability affects the likelihood of movement actors from different issue domains collaborating and advancing a new issue frame. If this line of reasoning is valid, we should find resource-rich environmental groups engaging more frequently with trade linkages and supporting them. I use information from ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer to access environmental groups' tax filings and draw from the total revenue section of the tax documents.

I control for campaign contributions and legal capacity to capture environmental groups' different mobilization strategies and resources (variable names: campaign, legal).[6] Environmentalists use different strategies to promote their causes, and they strategically choose the optimal tactics given the opportunity structures surrounding them. In this vein, comparative politics scholars have conceptualized the U.S. system as relatively open to a variety of political input ranging from lobbying to grassroots organizing to litigation (Kitschelt 1986). Thus, a group's decision to engage in trade issues and support trade linkages may be influ-

[6]This variable is campaign donations made by an environmental group's affiliates and related organizations.

enced by their preexisting mobilization tactics. Following Dür and Mateo (2016), I expect that environmental groups with higher lobbying power may have higher confidence in their ability to influence the implementation and enforcement of environmental side agreements once those agreements are ratified relative to groups that rely heavily on grassroots mobilization strategies. Thus, groups that allocate more resources toward legal actions and political campaigns may support linkages more frequently. I use data from Open Secrets to assess campaign contributions, and legal fee data from ProPublica to capture environmental groups' legal capacities.

I use two variables to capture environmental groups' issue coverage. The first is derived from the YIO, which provides information on the primary activities of these groups. Based on the descriptions, I construct a binary variable indicating whether a group engages in any conservation-related projects (variable name: conservation). Admittedly, this measure has limitations, as the activity descriptions are self-reported through open-ended responses, resulting in substantial missing data and potential inconsistencies. Second, using data from the YIO, I code the number of ties each environmental group has with NGOs focusing on non-environmental issues (variable name: issue scope). If a group maintains multiple such ties, an alternative account suggests that it may oppose issue linkage out of solidarity with its partner organizations in other issue areas.

TEPAC membership is a binary variable that represents whether an environmental group served on the TEPAC under the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in a given year (variable name: TEAPC). The TEPAC is designed to conduct environmental reviews of trade agreements. The USTR appoints members unilaterally, and the committee membership represents environmental groups, industry, agriculture, academia, and consumer groups, among others (TEPAC Charter). Following Dür and Mateo (2016)'s definition of lobbying insiders and outsiders, environmentalists on the committee are lobbying insiders who enjoy access to bureaucrats and executive institutions. All else equal, I suspect that insiders are more willing to make supportive demands that the government can accommodate, as they have

more information about what kind of demands the government is willing to accept.

I also control for variables that capture the broader political opportunity structures surrounding environmental groups. Presidential ideology is a binary variable that represents the U.S. president's ideology: 1 for Democrat and 0 for Republican (variable name: president). Similarly, House Democrats denotes the proportion of congressional Democrats in the House of Representatives. I expect environmentalists to be able to trust a Democratic president more than a Republican president. Similarly, environmental groups are more likely to propose a supportive demand to the legislature when it is controlled by Democrats (variable name: house dems). Thus, I hypothesize that environmental groups are more likely to show supportive attitudes during a Democratic presidency and with congressional Democrats.

# Results

Because the outcome variables are highly zero-inflated, I use a complementary log-log (cloglog) model to estimate the likelihood of group positions on issue linkage. I also employ other models, such as Firth's penalized logistic regressions and multinomial logistic regressions, for robustness checks (appendix E, F).

The main hypothesis posits that groups with more IGO ties tend to show supportive attitudes towards linkages. Table 1 reports the log odds of a supportive stance. In all models, I include trade agreement fixed effects to estimate group positions, controlling for unique negotiation contexts and different relationships with partner countries. In line with the hypothesis, the results show that IGO ties are positively associated with supportive attitudes, showing that environmental groups with more IGO ties tend to propose demands that enhance the legal basis of environmental provisions. The coefficients for IGO ties are generally statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), although their significance drops to the 90% confidence level in Model 3 as *House Dem* is included. In substantive terms, the predicted probability of supportive stance increases from 5.7% to approximately 7% when the number of IGO ties

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IGO Total | 0.06* | 0.06* | 0.05 | 0.07*** |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.03) | (0.02) |
| Enforcement | 3.64*** | 3.34*** | 3.63*** | 1.21** |
| | (0.34) | (0.47) | (0.55) | (0.42) |
| Revenue | −0.22 | −0.30** | −0.29** | −0.17 |
| | (0.12) | (0.11) | (0.11) | (0.09) |
| Campaign | 0.05* | 0.04 | 0.04 | −0.03 |
| | (0.02) | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.06) |
| Legal | 0.10* | 0.09 | 0.08 | 0.05 |
| | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.08) |
| Issue Coverage | −0.06* | −0.02 | −0.02 | |
| | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.03) | |
| TEPAC | | 1.64*** | 1.63*** | 1.10 |
| | | (0.33) | (0.34) | (0.59) |
| President | | 0.75 | 0.72 | 0.55 |
| | | (0.74) | (0.74) | (0.62) |
| House Dem | | | −4.72 | −6.53 |
| | | | (5.31) | (5.25) |
| Conservation | | | | 0.56 |
| | | | | (0.80) |
| Num. obs. | 1836 | 1836 | 1836 | 770 |
| Num. groups: tradedeal | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Deviance | 624.86 | 572.34 | 569.30 | 218.27 |
| Log Likelihood | −312.43 | −286.17 | −284.65 | −109.14 |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.08 | 0.15 | 0.15 | 0.07 |

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$, Standard errors are clustered at the trade agreement level

**Table 1** – Environmental Group-IGO Ties and Support for Issue Linkage

increases from zero to five (IGO mean value), and to 50.5% when IGO ties reach a maximum value of 55, holding all other variables at mean values (Figure 3).[7][8]

Model 1 adds control variables that capture the legal designs of agreements and group characteristics such as issue coverage, revenue, campaign contributions, and legal capacity. Model 2 stacks additional controls that capture environmental groups' access to the executive branch such as TEPAC membership and presidential party. Model 3 adds environmental groups' access to the legislative branch capturing the proportion of Democrats in Congress. Finally, Model 4 controls for environmental groups' specialization in conservation. Notably, linkage design (that is, greater enforceability) is positively associated with linkage support;

[7]To calculate the predicted probabilities, I bootstrapped Model 2 in Table 1.

[8]A few groups have more ties to IGOs than others. Therefore, it is possible that dropping any of these groups might change the results. I test this possibility using the leave-one-out cross-validation technique (see appendix G). The magnitude and significance of IGO ties remain consistent with the main findings.

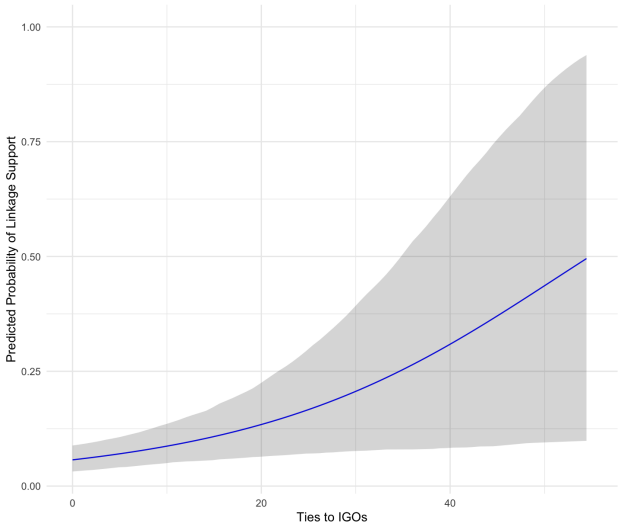



**Figure 3** – Environmental Group-IGO Ties and Predicted Probabilities of Linkage Support

the coefficients on this variable are statistically significant across all estimated models. As previous studies have suggested (Davis 2004; Hafner-Burton 2005), the results indicate that environmental groups develop positive attitudes toward linkages that feature greater enforceability. However, there is weak evidence that group capacity variables such as campaign contributions or legal capacity affect negotiation strategies. While campaign contributions and legal capacity show a positive association with the outcome variable, their significance is not consistently robust at meaningful confidence levels. Among the controls that capture political opportunity structures, TEPAC membership, as expected, is positively and significantly associated with support for linkages. Environmental groups with close connections to the executive branch such as through TEPAC are more likely to exhibit a positive stance and make demands to change specific provisions, thus facilitating trade cooperation. Issue coverage appears to be only weakly associated with positions on issue linkage. While it is generally negatively correlated with support for linkage, the magnitude and significance of these coefficients diminish as additional political opportunity variables are included. As expected, the coefficient for conservation is positively associated with support for linkage; however, its statistical significance does not reach conventional thresholds. For robustness

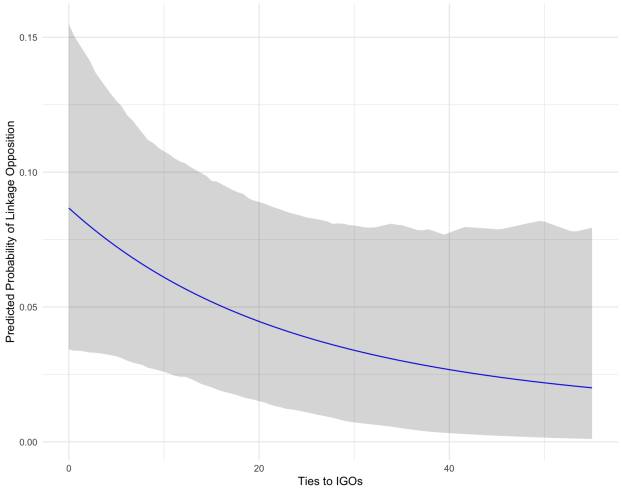



**Figure 4** – Environmental Group-IGO Ties and Predicted Probabilities of Linkage Opposition

checks, I use Firth's penalized logistic regressions and multinomial logistic regressions, and the results reported above are robust to these changes (appendix E, F).

I replicate the analysis using a second outcome variable that reflects environmental groups' opposition to issue linkage. Table 2 reports the results. Consistent with the earlier findings, IGO ties are negatively and significantly associated with linkage opposition. Substantively, the probability of linkage opposition decreases from 8.7% to 7.2% when the number of IGO ties increases from the minimum of zero to the mean of five, and to 2% when the number of IGO ties increases to the maximum of fifty-five (see Figure 4).[9][10] However, additional robustness checks reveal that the relationship between IGO ties and linkage opposition is less stable than the relationship between IGO ties and linkage support. Results from Firth's penalized logistic regressions suggest that IGO ties are generally negatively associated with linkage opposition, but the coefficient does not reach conventional statistical significance (appendix F).

[9]I calculate the predicted probabilities from the bootstrapped results based on Model 2 in Table 2.

[10]I conducted a cross-validation analysis by dropping one group at a time. Although the results are largely consistent with the main findings, dropping the Sierra Club from the sample reversed the sign of the *IGO ties* coefficient. See Appendix G for further discussion. Given this, we should interpret the results on linkage opposition more cautiously.

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IGO Total | $-0.04^{*}$ | $-0.03$ | $-0.04^{*}$ | $-0.12^{***}$ |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.03) |
| Enforcement | $-24.10^{*}$ | $-27.05^{*}$ | $-23.86^{*}$ | $-27.08^{**}$ |
| | (11.10) | (12.03) | (9.98) | (8.30) |
| Revenue | $-0.22^{**}$ | $-0.18^{**}$ | $-0.17^{**}$ | $-0.95^{***}$ |
| | (0.08) | (0.06) | (0.06) | (0.10) |
| Campaign | $0.10^{***}$ | $0.10^{***}$ | $0.10^{***}$ | $0.39^{***}$ |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.06) |
| Legal | $-0.00$ | $-0.00$ | $-0.00$ | $-0.02$ |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) |
| Issue Coverage | $0.09^{***}$ | $0.08^{***}$ | $0.09^{***}$ | |
| | (0.02) | (0.01) | (0.01) | |
| TEPAC | | $-0.93^{*}$ | $-0.96^{*}$ | $-0.07$ |
| | | (0.42) | (0.43) | (0.37) |
| President | | 0.85 | 0.90 | 0.91 |
| | | (0.91) | (0.82) | (0.76) |
| House Dem | | | $-7.67^{*}$ | $-5.68$ |
| | | | (3.72) | (4.10) |
| Conservation | | | | $4.14^{***}$ |
| | | | | (0.88) |
| Num. obs. | 1195 | 1195 | 1195 | 526 |
| Num. groups: tradedeal | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Deviance | 663.37 | 643.77 | 634.52 | 252.90 |
| Log Likelihood | $-331.69$ | $-321.89$ | $-317.26$ | $-126.45$ |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.08 | 0.10 | 0.11 | 0.25 |

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$, Standard errors are clustered at the trade agreement level

**Table 2** – Environmental Group-IGO Ties and Opposition for Issue Linkage

It is interesting to compare the strength of the control variables that affect support versus opposition. The strength of enforceable linkage design is significantly correlated with both linkage support and opposition, highlighting its role in garnering support or deterring opposition from activists. Similarly, while group characteristics represented by revenues, campaign contributions, and issue coverage were not associated with support for linkage, these three variables seem relevant in explaining opposition. This finding partially corroborates the conventional wisdom that resource-abundant NGOs tend to be pro-trade (Audley 1997). Campaign contributions are positively and significantly correlated with opposition for linkage, suggesting that groups whose mobilization strategies focus on domestic politics are more likely to escalate the stakes of bargaining. The findings on issue coverage suggest that it is considerably more difficult to gain the support of environmental groups when they are embedded in dense, cross-issue NGO networks, corroborating previous research (Carpenter et al. 2014). In line with the conventional wisdom and earlier findings, TEPAC membership is negatively and significantly associated with opposition.

## Case Illustrations

A critical juncture is the May $10^{\text{th}}$, 2007 congressional–executive agreement between the Bush administration and the Democratic Party. In this agreement, the executive branch agreed to recognize seven Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in future trade deals. According to both political opportunity theory and design theory, Bush's concession should have elicited unified support from environmentalists. According to the opportunity structure thesis, Democratic control of the House through 2011 and the election of a Democratic president in 2008 would alleviate environmentalists' concerns about government defection, thereby increasing the likelihood of ongoing engagement with and support for the issue linkage. Design scholars might argue that the Bush administration's commitment to the seven MEAs and punitive enforcement mechanisms constitutes a credible commitment

to environmental groups, thus enhancing the chances of unified support for the issue linkage within the environmental community.

What transpired subsequently deviates from the expectations of prevailing theories. Despite the May 10th agreement, environmental groups have taken different stances on trade agreements, which have varied depending on their ties to the IGOs whose MEAs were recognized in the agreement. This section illustrates how pro-linkage and anti-linkage groups engaged with trade politics differently depending on their relationship with IGOs and familiarity with specified MEAs despite favorable political environments and legal commitment.

**Pro-linkage groups**

When arguing the strategic value of trade linkages, pro-linkage groups have consistently emphasized how trade agreements can enhance the enforceability of environmental laws, both domestic and international. In defending the CAFTA-DR, for example, the Humane Society International expressed support for the agreement based on the fact that "CITES will be enforced as a result of the CAFTA agreement" in CAFTA countries, as by virtue of its ratification, CITES constituted part of their national laws (Forkan 2007). After the May $10^{\text{th}}$ agreement, the logic of enforceability continued to serve as the cornerstone that bound pro-linkage groups. When the U.S.–Peru TPA (PTPA) was passed in November 2007 following Bush's concessions in May, environmentalists and congressional Democrats called the trade deal a "win for labor and the environment" as it required Peru and the United States to enforce ILO standards and key MEAs (States News Service 2007). Five years after the May 10th agreement, EIA remained cautiously optimistic about trade linkages. The organization expressed that trade agreements could provide opportunities to "address the biggest global environmental issues in a globalized economy" based on the May $10^{\text{th}}$ agreement's positive impact (Von Bismarck 2012).

If my theory is valid, pro-linkage groups support trade linkages because their deep integration into global environmental governance allows them to enhance the enforceability

of environmental laws. This theory predicts that well-connected environmental groups can leverage IGO ties to identify linkage violations and inflict audience costs on governments by mobilizing external actors within those IGOs.

EIA is a good example. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, EIA was deeply integrated in global environmental governance, maintaining ties to various environmental IGOs.[11] As the PTPA came into effect, the organization began using its IGO ties—particularly its ties to CITES—to sound the alarm about linkage violations in Peru. The trade agreement has an Annex with binding obligations related to the management and trade of endangered species protected under CITES. It allows the U.S. to investigate whether illegal timber from Peru is entering the country and to impose penalties if it finds evidence of such violations. Following the ratification of PTPA, the U.S. government established the Interagency Committee on Trade in Timber Products from Peru, which accepts information on Peru's compliance from the public and determines whether to act on the submitted information. The design of the linkage provides for a relatively well-designed alarm system with legally credible promises of strong punishment.

In practice, however, there were challenges to sounding the alarm. First, environmental groups faced difficulties collecting sufficient information on compliance. EIA's 2012 report "The Laundering Machine" documents how EIA's requests for information were often rejected or delayed by the government of Peru (EIA 2012). Ultimately, EIA was able to show a systematic pattern of violations by cross-referencing two sources of data: CITES export permits and the results of supervisory visits to forest concessions by OSINFOR, Peru's forestry oversight body. During a supervisory visit, OSINFOR officials inspect whether extraction activities match the volumes that have been reported in the Balance of Extraction. In its analysis of OSINFOR supervisory reports, EIA identified 200 logging concessions with varying problems ranging from illegal logging to false inventories (EIA 2012).

[11] EIA frequently participated in the annual meetings of CITES, the International Whaling Commission, the Montreal Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the International Tropical Timber Organization.

The OSINFOR data, however, was not sufficient to prove the full chain of custody. To show that illegally logged timber was exported to the United States, EIA cross-referenced OSINFOR's supervisory reports with CITES export permits. Because Spanish cedar and bigleaf mahogany were protected under CITES, their exports required export permit documents. In cross-checking the two sources, EIA found that, in one-third of the cases, timber exports to the United States came from a site where OSINFOR found no legal logging (EIA 2012: 29). Following the publication of the report, EIA petitioned the USTR to carry out audits of timber shipments (USTR 2012*a*). In so doing, EIA recommended limiting the scope of wood to CITES-protected species, bigleaf mahogany and Spanish cedar, as the organization deemed it impossible to get verifiable information on transactions regarding non-CITES species (Inside US Trade 2012).

This case exemplifies how the availability of CITES-related information was essential to EIA being able to sound the alarm under the PTPA. Without the CITES mechanism mandating export permits, EIA would have found it difficult to make its allegation credible. At the same time, CITES, a legal instrument, was not sufficient to bring about meaningful change. Despite CITES' elaborate legal mechanism, some timber exporters in Peru still managed to fabricate documents, evading CITES-related regulations. Environmental groups with expertise on international laws such as CITES and trade politics within the United States, such as EIA, were uniquely able to tap into the multiple sources of information necessary to prove their case.

My theory also predicts that governments may be reluctant to enforce a linkage due to other diplomatic or economic considerations. In line with this reasoning, the USTR often hesitated to use the punitive rules available under the PTPA. When EIA and other advocacy groups demanded a formal review of Peru's implementation of its new forestry law in 2009, the USTR fell short of requesting audits and verification and instead increased technical assistance to Peru (Inside US Trade 2009). In 2012, even after EIA's investigative report was published, the USTR decided not to request audits and verifications based on the assessment

that Peru had made significant progress since the release of the EIA report (USTR 2012*b*).

Every time the USTR showed reluctance to engage in enforcement, CITES served as an external venue for mobilization. In March 2010, a year after the PTPA went into force, the CITES standing committee warned Peru that it might suspend the trade of mahogany (Fraser 2010). When the August 1st deadline for Peru to comply with provisions in the PTPA Forest Annex passed, the CITES committee stated, "Peru has made more progress on paper than in practice" while the USTR did not provide details about how Peru allegedly failed to implement the Annex (Fraser 2010). At the standing committee meeting in July 2012, three months after the publication of the EIA report, the standing committee reviewed Peru's progress regarding bigleaf mahogany; several members requested that Peru provide clarification on where harvesting was taking place and how Peru calculated the export quotas (CITES 2012: 37). In 2013, the CITES Secretariat issued a notification encouraging parties importing bigleaf mahogany to determine if the accompanying CITES documents were issued under court order (CITES 2016). In January 2016, the standing committee acknowledged that the problem was "continuing and not limited to shipments of bigleaf mahogany," and requested to expand the scope of the notification to all timber species (CITES 2016). In about a month, the USTR requested that Peru verify if a 2015 timber shipment complied with the Forestry Annex in the PTPA for the first time since the agreement entered into force (USTR 2016).

Admittedly, it is difficult to establish direct causality between CITES mobilization and the USTR's enforcement decision. However, the case illustration shows that CITES served as a venue for external mobilization when EIA reported illegal logging practices in Peru. Thus, it is reasonable to suspect that environmental groups with ties to such external forums can be more confident about the enforceability of linkages than those without such ties.

**Anti-linkage groups**

Unlike EIA, the Sierra Club's anti-trade view did not change dramatically following the May 10th Agreement. Although the organization welcomed the government's efforts to strengthen the environmental clauses in the PTPA and pending trade deals, its fundamental stance on trade agreements remained one of skepticism. For instance, the organization described linkages between trade and environmental issues as "less prescriptive and more aspirational" in 2009, questioning the government's commitment to the enforcement of such linkages (E&E News PM 2009).

Unlike many pro-linkage groups, the Sierra Club placed greater emphasis on collaboration with domestic and local partners in its activism than on international instruments. For example, it held rallies with trade unionists representing steelworkers and teachers who opposed the Free Trade Area of the Americas (Business Wire 2003). In June 2006, it formalized this alliance with labor groups, especially the United Steelworkers, in the form of the Blue-Green Alliance, which touted the motto "Good Jobs, a Clean Environment, and a Safer World" (Grant 2006).

Although like EIA, the Sierra Club focused on illegal logging, the latter's strategy was starkly different from the former's. Instead of spotlighting partner countries' compliance with environmental clauses in trade agreements, the Sierra Club directly targeted unfair trade subsidies that had harmful effects on the environment and U.S. labor movements. This strategic choice makes sense considering the Sierra Club's alliance with labor groups and its limited involvement in international forums. In 2007, for instance, the Blue-Green Alliance intervened in a case on the Indonesian government's subsidies of paper products. The Sierra Club wanted to curb the trade of illegally logged timber and wood products, while the United Steelworkers hoped to protect related industries (Business Wire 2007*a*). In this vein, the Sierra Club demanded that the government authorize countervailing duties against companies that profited from illegal logging, and the Department of Commerce ruled that paper products imported from Indonesia were benefiting from unfair trade subsidies (Busi-

ness Wire 2007*b*).

The two organizations with different levels of ties to IGOs developed different stances on trade–environmental linkages. EIA, an organization deeply integrated in the global network of IGOs, was more optimistic about the effect of such linkages and used its ties to IGOs to publicize Peru's poor compliance behavior. In contrast, the Sierra Club, an organization with strong ties to domestic actors, demanded more explicit protectionist measures such as countervailing duties that protected the environment while lending support to the domestic labor movement.

## Generalizable Implications and Scope Conditions

Although the prevailing theories would expect unified support for trade linkages from the American environmental community, this article shows that there is a persistent divide between pro-linkage and anti-linkage groups within the environmental community. Given the strong countervailing conditions derived from the existing approaches, the case of U.S. trade–environment linkage qualifies as a hard test to confirm the validity of my theory (Eckstein 2000; Rapport 2015). Given that issue linkage has not derived uniformly high support under these exceptionally favorable conditions, we must revise our understanding of how this frequently used negotiation strategy works in other less favorable contexts.

That said, my theory has several scope conditions. First, I expect the theory to be particularly relevant in explaining issue linkage where the beneficiaries are politically weak. The theory is built on the presence of cooperation problems that domestic groups may face when joining a pro-cooperation coalition. These cooperation problems can be mitigated if the domestic group can overcome them in other ways. For example, a group of multinational companies who are influential campaign donors may lend unequivocal support for an economic deal in exchange for concessions, if their preponderant political influence mitigates the fears of non-enforcement. Groups without such political influence, such as advocates for civil

rights, gender and sexuality, religious freedom, or the environment, may find it particularly difficult to join the pro-cooperation coalition without a credible outside venue they can use to mobilize for enforcement.

Second, the theory may elucidate the mobilizing effects of enforcement linkage, where "a violation of an agreement in issue A is punished with sanctions in issue B" (Maggi 2016: 514). Such promises of enforcement have played a critical role in expanding domestic coalitions in favor of cooperation, by garnering the support of members of the public who care about human rights and the environment but are indifferent to economic cooperation. On many occasions, however, states consider multiple issues jointly in a single negotiation while keeping enforcement separate for each issue.[12] For example, when two countries negotiate for an alliance and a trade pact simultaneously, they rarely link the enforcement of the two issues. This type of linkage may be designed primarily to make the two countries' security commitments to each other more credible by increasing their sunk costs (Poast 2013), rather than to expand domestic support for negotiations on either of the two issues.

# Discussion

Domestic coalition-building is an important step in successful negotiations. Political leaders have frequently used linkage tactics to build sufficient domestic support to achieve their economic agenda. The conventional wisdom holds that adding the right issue and implementing strong enforcement mechanisms would elicit wide support from domestic groups who care about the issue, enabling inter-state *quid pro quo*. This article refines the conventional wisdom, arguing that issue linkage expands pro-cooperation coalitions only when linkage beneficiaries have the capacity to enforce the linkage. As a pathway to enforceability, I have shown how ties to IGOs help linkage beneficiaries mobilize for enforcement, and how there is a persistent gap in linkage attitudes between potential beneficiaries with and without such external ties, a difference that shapes domestic trade coalitions in important ways.

[12]Maggi (2016) labels them negotiation linkages.

The findings presented in this article have several important policy implications. A long-standing debate on issue linkage has focused on identifying "right" and "wrong" issues to add to a negotiation; the academic discussion has almost exclusively focused on how states' preferences and their intensity affect this calculation. My findings show that domestic preferences alone do not always translate into linkage support. Alternatively, this paper suggests that certain features of linkage beneficiaries crucially moderate the mobilizing effect of issue linkage, specifically the beneficiaries' independent ability to mobilize for enforcement. Following this reasoning, it is possible to speculate that adding a domestically salient issue to a negotiation may not significantly increase support for an agreement if advocates do not have external means to pressure their government to engage in enforcement.

This paper also has implications for what "right design" means in terms of issue linkage. Policymakers, stakeholders, and academics alike have long focused on how formal institutionalization of an agreement can enhance the credibility of a commitment. Formal institutionalization is a crucial necessary step for coalition-building. However, my findings suggest that this is by no means a sufficient condition. In addition to my findings, recent examples corroborate this reasoning. Despite the groundbreaking enforcement mechanism built into the USMCA's labor side deal, a recent study finds that only 35% of workers in Mexico know about this mechanism. Even when they were informed of the mechanism, only about half said they would be comfortable using it (LeClercq et al. 2024). Similarly, many environmental stakeholders stopped using the NAAEC, the environmental side agreement to NAFTA, despite its putatively strong enforcement mechanism, because they realized the policy gains were minimal (Hufbauer and Schott 2005; Hester 2015). Given this gap between design and practice, it would be wise for practitioners to think more carefully about how issue linkage works on the ground, not just on paper.

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# Supplementary Information: Organizing for Issue Linkage

## A. Summary Statistics

Table 1 presents the summary statistics of the main data set.

**Table 1** – Summary Statistic of the Dataset

| Statistic | N | Mean | St. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Linkage Support (DV) | 2,336 | 0.043 | 0.203 | 0 | 1 |
| Linkage Opposition (DV) | 2,336 | 0.055 | 0.228 | 0 | 1 |
| Linkage (categorical DV) | 2,336 | −0.013 | 0.310 | −1 | 1 |
| IGO Ties (only environmental IGOs) | 2,100 | 4.552 | 7.390 | 0.000 | 55.000 |
| Enforcement (%) | 2,240 | 0.164 | 0.107 | 0.000 | 0.750 |
| TEPAC | 2,336 | 0.204 | 0.403 | 0 | 1 |
| President Ideology | 2,336 | 0.466 | 0.499 | 0 | 1 |
| Campaign Contributions (logged) | 2,336 | 5.431 | 4.933 | 0.000 | 13.561 |
| Issue Coverage | 2,100 | 2.899 | 4.894 | 0.000 | 25.000 |
| Revenue (logged) | 2,217 | 16.594 | 1.937 | 11.265 | 21.059 |
| Legal Fees (logged) | 2,118 | 8.975 | 5.018 | 0.000 | 15.913 |
| House Dems (%) | 2,336 | 0.491 | 0.048 | 0.432 | 0.591 |
| Senate Dems (%) | 2,336 | 0.484 | 0.038 | 0.440 | 0.570 |
| Conservation | 923 | 0.823 | 0.382 | 0 | 1 |

## B. Selection of 32 Organizations in Trade-Environment Domain

My dataset covers the positions of thirty-two organizations on trade agreements. As the first step, I include an organization if it a) served on the Trade and Environment Policy Advisory Committee (TEPAC) under the United States Trade Representative (USTR), b) signed a petition or letter concerning the environmental dimensions of U.S.-related trade agreements, or c) gave testimony at a congressional hearing on the environmental aspects of

trade agreements. I included organizations that served on TEPAC because their access to the executive branch makes their positions more influential than those without such access. These are groups that Dür and Mateo (2016) may call *insiders* in trade politics. By including organizations that gave congressional testimonies on trade-environment issues, I also included organizations with access to the legislature, *outsiders* in Dür and Mateo (2016)'s framework. Finally, the dataset features information on organizations that expressed their positions through letters and petitions on environmental components of trade agreements. These organizations may have limited access to either the legislative or executive branch of the government, while influencing trade politics by mobilizing grassroots actors.

The dataset has limitations. First, some organizations—Defenders of Wildlife and the Natural Resources Defense Council—are two major actors that my dataset does not cover. I used the Yearbook of International Organizations (YIO) to construct the main explanatory variables of IGO ties. The YIO database does not have information about these two organizations despite their prominence in trade politics. With the exception of these two organizations, however, I am relatively confident that the dataset features information about relevant organizations that have been involved in U.S. trade politics during the study period.

Second, the dataset does not feature newer organizations such as the Sunrise Movement. These organizations are not included in the dataset due to the unavailability of data on the explanatory variables. In addition, newer environmental movements tend not to engage with trade issues as much as traditional organizations. Take the Sunrise Movement, for example. The Sunrise Movement was founded in 2017; by the time of its founding, the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) had already lost traction. Although the Sunrise Movement weighed in heavily on the design of the Inflation Reduction Act and signed a letter in support of a climate peace clause within the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Inside U.S. Trade 2023), the organization has rarely made trade agreements a main agenda for its cause.

| | Support | Opposition |
|---|---|---|
| IGO Ties | $0.06^{***}$ | $-0.12^{***}$ |
| | (0.02) | (0.03) |
| Enforcement | $1.18^{**}$ | $-26.80^{**}$ |
| | (0.36) | (8.28) |
| Revenue | $-0.11$ | $-0.91^{***}$ |
| | (0.11) | (0.11) |
| Campaign Contributions | $-0.06$ | $0.37^{***}$ |
| | (0.06) | (0.07) |
| Legal Capacity | 0.06 | $-0.02$ |
| | (0.08) | (0.02) |
| TEPAC | 0.98 | $-0.14$ |
| | (0.56) | (0.39) |
| President | 0.55 | 0.91 |
| | (0.62) | (0.76) |
| House Dems | $-6.58$ | $-5.59$ |
| | (5.16) | (4.09) |
| Conservation | 0.49 | $3.96^{***}$ |
| | (0.79) | (0.90) |
| Num. obs. | 701 | 477 |
| Num. groups: tradedeal | 9 | 7 |
| Deviance | 214.68 | 251.23 |
| Log Likelihood | $-107.34$ | $-125.62$ |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.07 | 0.23 |

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

**Table 2** – Relationships Between IGO Ties, and Positions on Issue Linkages (Excluding Three Organizations with No Positions)

Finally, as Figure 2 in the manuscript shows, there are three environmental groups that did not express any opinion on trade agreements during the time scope of this study. These are the African Wildlife Foundation, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), and the Rainforest Alliance. I included these organizations in the analysis reported in the manuscript for different reasons. The African Wildlife Foundation and CSPI gave testimonies at congressional hearings on trade topics, demonstrating their policy interest in trade issues. The African Wildlife Foundation's testimony was on the impacts of U.S. consumer demand on the illegal and unsustainable trade of wildlife products (Sebunya 2008), while CSPI gave testimony on U.S. negotiating objectives for the WTO Seattle ministerial meeting (Cohen 1999). Given these organizations' testimonies on trade-environment topics, it is plausible *ex ante* to expect them to engage further in trade negotiations. However, they did not publicly promote their positions on specific trade negotiations during the study period. The Rainforest Alliance is a different case. For example, the Rainforest Alliance benefited from the Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) environmental

cooperation funding under the USAID CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program (USAID 2008). Given the Rainforest Alliance's stakes in the CAFTA-DR capacity-building program, it is plausible to expect the organization to support the trade agreement publicly. Unlike other organizations that benefited from such programs and supported CAFTA-DR (e.g., the Humane Society), the Rainforest Alliance did not openly support the agreement or other trade agreements in the dataset. I test whether removing these three organizations from the dataset changes the main results. Table 2 reports the results: the positive association between environmental IGO ties and positive linkages remains significant ($p < 0.05$), as well as the correlation between non-environmental NGO ties and negative linkages ($p < 0.001$).

# C. Coding Scheme for the Dependent Variable

I categorized environmentalists' linkage positions based on their letters, news interviews, and statements. In analyzing the content of the collected documents, I use the following coding scheme.

### Linkage Support

Supportive demands maximize environmental gains while maintaining trade cooperation. Activists advocating for trade-environment linkages will therefore attempt to maximize environmental policy gains in ways that do not sabotage trade negotiations. For example, they may propose enhancing the enforceability of environmental clauses (e.g., strengthening the legal language of these provisions or identifying clear benchmarks for compliance) without undermining the rationale for the trade agreement. Activists may also propose demands that are clearly defined in scope to avoid disrupting trade negotiations. Therefore, I theorize that supportive linkage demands are design-based and narrow in scope. I categorize an organization's text into the support category if the organization's demand in the text emphasizes

strengthening the legal language of those provisions or identifying precise benchmarks for compliance in a clearly defined issue area. I provide illustrative examples below:

- We think the TPP environment chapter is headed in the right direction, and if the Administration can deliver on its commitment to use TPP to spur greater international action to combat wildlife trafficking, illegal logging and fishing, and eliminate some of the most harmful fisheries subsidies—and hold countries accountable through a binding dispute settlement mechanism—it will be an important step forward on environmental protection (World Animal Protection, International Fund for Animal Welfare, The Nature Conservancy 2015).

- Although some criticize DR-CAFTA on the basis it does not go far enough, I question this because there is clear language in Article 17.2 that the parties undertake to effectively enforce their laws. As I understand it, that also includes multilateral environmental agreements, MEAs, ratified by the parties. So, CITES has to be effectively enforced as a result of the CAFTA agreement (Forkan 2007).

Second, activists who support trade-environment linkages are likely to make demands that are acceptable to governments. Based on this theoretical premise, linkage support is 1 if an organization's demands in a text are confined to clearly defined environmental issue areas with little to no mention of non-environmental agendas. When an organization's demand is limited to a clearly defined scope, it is easier for governments to amend the trade deal.

- We believe the TPP environment chapter is a critical step forward for wildlife protection. These protections are much needed because wild animals in the Asia-Pacific region are subject to illegal and unsustainable commercial exploitation. Many TPP member countries, including the United States, are major consumers of illegally- traded

wildlife, including elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales, and parts and products of other threatened species (The Humane Society 2015).

**Linkage Opposition**

First, I classify a statement as opposition if it explicitly asserts that a trade agreement is harmful to the environment. The first example below falls into this category, as the co-signers directly condemn the systematic negative effects of CAFTA-DR. Second, I code a statement as opposition if it includes demands that call for systemic reform of the trade regime or capitalism more broadly. Although these demands are environmentally relevant, they may be difficult for governments to accommodate within the negotiation timeframe. Consequently, such demands can contribute to delays or even the collapse of trade negotiations. See the second example below.

- The CAFTA-DR harms the Central American countries that are poor and need development. It means they are unable to export sugar that might be worth $1.5 billion at current prices. (...) The definition of "investment" is excessively broad in many ways. (...) In addition to affecting the affordability of medicines, the intellectual property provisions will negatively affect the interests of consumers with respect to seeds, biodiversity and the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples (Consumers Union, Audubon Naturalist Society, CIEL, Center for Governance and Sustainable Development 2004).
- Some have raised the question of whether or not the investor-state dispute mechanism is consistent with the U.S. Constitution given that it can decide cases otherwise subject to the Constitution's provisions on the judiciary. Given that the need for this mechanism is not clearly established, why should the U.S. enter into agreements that might embody an unconstitutional delegation of judicial power? (CIEL, Consumers

Union, Audubon Naturalist Society, Institute for Governance  Sustainable Development 2007).

# D. Coding Scheme for the Enforcement Variable

To capture the agreement design, I use two variables in Morin et al. (2018)'s TREND dataset: the total number of environment-related provisions and the number of enforcement-related provisions.[1] Using the two indicators, I calculate the proportion of enforcement-related provisions in an environmental chapter or side letter. Because the Trend dataset does not have information on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, I follow TREND's coding scheme and calculate the proportion of enforcement provisions in these agreements.

My data set covers the process of designing agreements, ranging from the negotiation stage to the entry into force stage. Before activists see the text of an agreement during the negotiation phase, they may not know whether the legal design of the agreement can ensure enforcement. Therefore, activists may use recent trade agreements to form expectations about the enforceability of the agreement that the government is negotiating. For example, during the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations from 2010 to 2014 (with the agreement signed in 2015), activists may have used previous agreements with Panama, Korea, Oman, Colombia, and Peru to form expectations about the enforceability of the TPP's en-

[1] I accessed the data set on TREND's website (`https://klimalog.idos-research.de/trend/index.html`) on the November 30th, 2024. Following the categorization scheme on TREND's website, enforcement provisions include the following categories: specific non-jurisdictional dispute settlement mechanism (DSM), commitment to consider alleged violation brought by a citizen of any Party, general procedures in DSM, explicit mention of the illegality of extraterritorial enforcement activities, panel's obligation to consult or defer to any relevant entity the interpretation of a party's obligation under a multilateral environmental agreement (MEA), production of an environmental report in inter-state dispute over failure to enforce environmental measures or provisions, cooperation on enforcement, commitment to consider alleged violation brought by foreigners, binding obligations, general measures regarding suspension of benefits as a dispute settlement mechanism, sovereignty in the enforcement of environmental measures, non-binding obligations, factual report on enforcement, consent to use the DSM of a MEA, private access to remedies, procedural guarantees and appropriate sanctions, and finally, environmental experts as panelists or mediators for inter-state dispute over failure to enforce environmental measures or provisions (Morin et al. 2018).

vironmental chapter. Once the TPP text became available upon its signature, activists may have updated their expectations of enforceability based on the newly released TPP text. I conceptualize that activists form their enforcement expectations based on trade agreements from the previous five years in any given year. Consequently, the enforcement variable in my data set is time-varying within a trade agreement.

## E. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results

The main results reported in the manuscript draw from two binary dependent variables: positive and negative linkages. Binary variables are better suited to address cases where an environmental group uses both positive and negative linkages in a given year. It is also easier to interpret the results from logistic models. To ensure the robustness of the main results, I use an alternative dependent variable that categorizes environmental groups' positions into three categories of a) support, b) no engagement, and c) opposition. When an organization adopts both positive or negative linkage strategies during negotiations over a trade agreement in a given year, I record the position that the organization took close to the year-end.

I use multinomial logistic models to estimate the likelihood of linkage positions during trade negotiations. Table 3 reports the log odds of a support and disengagement, relative to opposition. In all the models, I include trade agreement fixed effects, controlling for unique negotiation contexts and different relationships with partner countries. In line with the main hypothesis, the results show that IGO ties are positively associated with support for linkage, showing that environmental groups with more IGO ties tend to propose enhancing the legal basis of environmental provisions rather than opposing issue linkages.

However, the evidence remains inconclusive regarding whether IGO ties increase the likelihood of disengagement compared to linkage opposition. While the coefficients for IGO ties are positively associated with disengagement, the large standard errors prevent definitive conclusions about whether organizations with such ties withdraw from linkage politics.

**Table 3** – Relationships Between IGO Ties and Positions on Issue Linkages (Multinomial Logit Models)

| | Model 1 Disengage | Model 1 Support | Model 2 Disengage | Model 2 Support | Model 3 Disengage | Model 3 Support | Model 4 Disengage | Model 4 Support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IGO ties | 0.036 | 0.093*** | 0.033 | 0.09*** | 0.036 | 0.089*** | 0.136*** | 0.204*** |
| | (0.027) | (0.033) | (0.025) | (0.034) | (0.025) | (0.034) | (0.042) | (0.049) |
| Enforcement | 25.132*** | 28.787*** | 28.05*** | 31.638*** | 24.838*** | 28.748*** | 31.192*** | 31.947*** |
| | (7.464) | (7.539) | (8.068) | (8.145) | (7.242) | (7.311) | (10.616) | (11.526) |
| Revenue | 0.257*** | 0.02 | 0.218** | -0.094 | 0.212** | -0.095 | 1.053*** | 0.806*** |
| | (0.091) | (0.135) | (0.092) | (0.147) | (0.094) | (0.149) | (0.217) | (0.271) |
| Campaign contributions | -0.114*** | -0.044 | -0.117*** | -0.06 | -0.12*** | -0.061 | -0.427*** | -0.425*** |
| | (0.026) | (0.038) | (0.025) | (0.043) | (0.026) | (0.043) | (0.091) | (0.117) |
| Legal capacity | -0.001 | 0.098* | -0.001 | 0.077 | 0 | 0.077 | 0.036 | 0.083 |
| | (0.029) | (0.056) | (0.029) | (0.057) | (0.03) | (0.058) | (0.048) | (0.098) |
| Issue coverage | -0.099*** | -0.143*** | -0.092*** | -0.094** | -0.097*** | -0.094** | | |
| | (0.027) | (0.047) | (0.026) | (0.046) | (0.026) | (0.046) | | |
| TEPAC | | | 0.781* | 2.457*** | 0.796** | 2.455*** | 0.018 | 0.977 |
| | | | (0.403) | (0.47) | (0.405) | (0.471) | (2.051) | (2.115) |
| President | | | -0.903*** | -0.067 | -0.958*** | -0.143 | -0.952* | -0.333 |
| | | | (0.305) | (0.463) | (0.307) | (0.459) | (0.578) | (1.227) |
| House Dem | | | | | 8.271*** | 2.928 | 6.265 | -1.138 |
| | | | | | (2.465) | (3.852) | (4.196) | (8.344) |
| Conservation | | | | | | | -4.446** | -3.587 |
| | | | | | | | (1.841) | (3.667) |
| Constant | -4.801*** | -6.089** | -4.737** | -5.279** | -8.159*** | -6.196** | -17.118*** | -15.384** |
| | (1.84) | (2.752) | (1.912) | (2.543) | (2.053) | (2.873) | (3.647) | (7.657) |
| Trade Agreement Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1, Standard errors are bootstrapped

These findings are consistent with the evidence presented in Appendix F. Overall, the main hypothesis offers a stronger explanation of how environmental groups engage in linkage politics, rather than whether they participate in issue linkage at all.

# F. Firth Penalized Logistic Regression Results

The main results in the manuscript are drawn from a complementary log-log (cloglog) model to address the zero-inflated nature of the dependent variables. Firth's penalized-likelihood strategy is another viable approach (Cook et al. 2018). Using Firth (1993)'s bias reduction method in `brglm` package, I replicate the main results.

Supporting the main hypothesis, the results in Table 4 indicate a positive association between IGO ties and linkage support. Although the signs and significance of the coefficients for control variables are largely consistent with the main results reported in the manuscript, there is a notable change regarding president ideology. While the coefficients for president

**Table 4** – Relationships between IGO Ties and Linkage Support

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IGO Ties | 0.032*** | 0.06*** | 0.061*** | 0.058** |
| | (0.012) | (0.019) | (0.022) | (0.023) |
| Enforcement | | 3.833*** | 3.834*** | 4.116*** |
| | | (1.029) | (1.22) | (1.211) |
| Revenue | | -0.224** | -0.305*** | -0.299** |
| | | (0.104) | (0.116) | (0.117) |
| Campaign Contributions | | 0.055* | 0.042 | 0.043 |
| | | (0.028) | (0.033) | (0.033) |
| Legal Capacity | | 0.098** | 0.08* | 0.079* |
| | | (0.044) | (0.044) | (0.045) |
| Issue Coverage | | -0.061 | -0.019 | -0.017 |
| | | (0.038) | (0.037) | (0.038) |
| TEPAC | | | 1.72*** | 1.705*** |
| | | | (0.261) | (0.263) |
| President | | | 0.727** | 0.704** |
| | | | (0.363) | (0.356) |
| House Dem | | | | -4.859 |
| | | | | (2.972) |
| Constant | -3.136*** | -0.965 | -0.149 | 2.108 |
| | (0.373) | (1.52) | (1.682) | (1.965) |
| Trade Agreement Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1, Standard errors are bootstrapped

ideology from the cloglog models were not statistically significant, they are significant at the 95% confidence level in this new model. Regardless, the magnitude and significance of IGO ties remain consistent with the main findings.

Table 5 presents the results on the relationship between IGO ties and linkage opposition. Contrary to the findings reported in the manuscript, the sign on the coefficient on IGO ties is positive and significant suggesting the possibility that organizations with IGO ties are more likely to oppose linkages. However, the coefficients on IGO ties turn negative as relevant control variables are added to the model, although they do not conventionally accepted reach statistical significance (Models 2-4).

Overall, the findings suggest that the relationship between IGO ties and linkage opposition is less stable and more inconclusive than the relationship between IGO ties and linkage support. Organizations with IGO ties tend to be more proactive in promoting linkage politics and supporting trade linkages. In contrast, when it comes to opposing trade-environment linkages, an organization's issue network and domestic political connections appear to play a more decisive role.

**Table 5** – Relationships between IGO Ties and Linkage Opposition

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IGO Ties | 0.023** | -0.036 | -0.033 | -0.035 |
| | (0.01) | (0.026) | (0.024) | (0.024) |
| Enforcement | | -24.027*** | -26.862*** | -23.664*** |
| | | (7.005) | (7.558) | (6.694) |
| Revenue | | -0.241*** | -0.2** | -0.193** |
| | | (0.088) | (0.088) | (0.09) |
| Campaign Contributions | | 0.108*** | 0.112*** | 0.114*** |
| | | (0.026) | (0.025) | (0.025) |
| Legal Capacity | | -0.005 | -0.002 | -0.003 |
| | | (0.028) | (0.028) | (0.029) |
| Issue Coverage | | 0.097*** | 0.087*** | 0.091*** |
| | | (0.026) | (0.024) | (0.024) |
| TEPAC | | | -0.919** | -0.943** |
| | | | (0.386) | (0.387) |
| President | | | 0.833*** | 0.885*** |
| | | | (0.293) | (0.295) |
| House Dem | | | | -7.734*** |
| | | | | (2.367) |
| Constant | -2.971*** | 4.481** | 4.378** | 7.535*** |
| | (0.33) | (1.763) | (1.825) | (1.958) |
| Trade Agreement Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1, Standard errors are bootstrapped

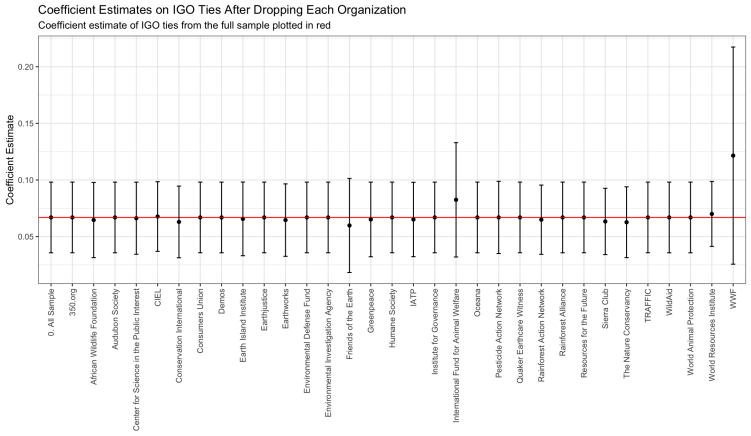
# G. Cross-validation

Some environmental groups may have more ties to IGOs. Therefore, it is possible that dropping any of these organizations might change the results. I test this possibility by using the leave-one-out cross-validation technique. In this analysis, I re-run the fully saturated complementary log-log logistic regression models reported in the manuscript (Model 4), while dropping one environmental group each time. Figure 1 visualizes the results.

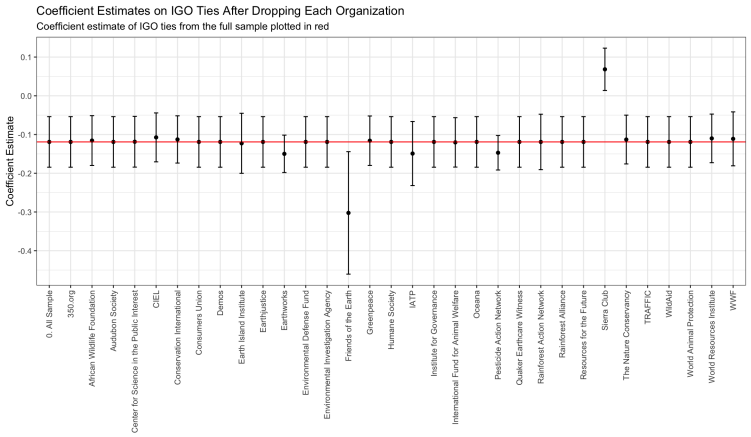
Figure 1a represents the coefficient estimates and 95% intervals on the IGO ties variable for linkage support. Compare the result from the full sample, in the first column, and the rest. This analysis finds that dropping an environmental group does not change dramatically change the magnitude and significance of the coefficient on IGO ties.

Figure 1b shows coefficient estimates and confidence intervals on *IGO ties* for linkage opposition. Although the results are largely consistent with the main results reported in the manuscript, dropping the Sierra Club changes the sign of the coefficient on IGO ties. This makes sense because the Sierra Club has been consistently vocal about trade policies unlike many other environmental groups that have been more selective in their engagement, thus

accounting for much of the variation in the dependent variable. Given the influence of the Sierra Club on the results, we should interpret the results on linkage opposition cautiously.




**(a)** IGO Ties and Linkage Support




**(b)** IGO Ties and Linkage Opposition

**Figure 1** – Leave-one-out crossvalidation results

# H. Timeline for the Selected Trade Deals

I selected trade agreements that are most likely to see environmentalists' engagement. Although the U.S. negotiated trade agreements with Australia (entry into force in 2005), Singapore (2004), and Panama (2012) during the study period, these agreements are not included in my dataset. Compared to other salient bilateral trade agreements, such as the Peru-US Trade Promotion Agreement, environmentalists' engagement with the former was sparse.

I included regional agreements such as the TPP, TTIP, USMCA, and IPEF because environmental groups are likely to engage with these agreements due to the rule-making implications of mega-regional trade deals.

Finally, I included the WTO Fisheries Agreement and environmentalists' demands regarding the WTO's compatibility with the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Although the IRA issue does not constitute a negotiation, environmentalists have attempted to modify WTO agreements by proposing a climate peace clause, highlighting the relevance of the issue.

Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR)
- Negotiation started in 2003
- Signature in 2004
- US ratification in 2005
- Entry into force 2009

US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA)
- Negotiation started in 2004
- Signature in 2006
- US Ratification in 2011
- Entry into force in 2012

Peru-US Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA)
- Negotiation started in 2004
- Signature in 2006
- US Ratification 2007
- Entry into force 2009

Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA)
- Negotiation started in 2006
- Signature in 2007

US Ratification in 2011

Entry into force in 2012

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)
- Negotiation started in 2010

- Signature 2015
- US withdrawal 2017

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
- Negotiation started in 2013
- Negotiation ended in 2019

US-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement (USMCA)
- Negotiation in 2017
- Signature 2019
- US Ratification 2020
- Entry into force 2020

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)
- Negotiation started in 2021
- Signature of the Supply Chain Agreement 2023 (Text available in September, 2023)
- Entry into force in 2024

WTO Fisheries Agreement
- Negotiation started in 2001
- Adoption 2022
- US instrument of acceptance 2023

The Inflation Reduction Act and WTO Rules
- IRA Legislation 2022

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