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Freer Trade Elites and Fair Trade Masses

**Why has Public Opinion
Mattered so Little?**

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"Quite clearly, the general populace is much more chauvinistic than is the elite"¹

The latest major initiative to open-up the American economy to foreign trade and investments, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), faced stiff opposition. President Clinton almost lost the Congressional ratification vote. Congressional reluctance to support the President on NAFTA, especially among Democrats, reflected the public's skepticism about the benefits of freer trade. In the months before the Congressional vote, public opinion surveys uncovered wide spread opposition, and only shortly before the vote did the scale tilt slightly, to 36 % in support to 31 % opposed, while a significant 26 % remained undecided (see below). The President, however, enjoyed the overwhelming support of "opinion leaders" in business, in the news media, and among politicians and academics. Such gaps between elite and general public attitudes on foreign trade are not new. In fact, throughout the post war period every opinion poll recorded at least 64 % of leaders in business, politics, volunteer organizations and academia would remove trade barriers, never less than 51 % of the polled public viewed restrictions to be necessary (see below).

During most of this time, public policy's main thrust has been to open up the American market for imports and foreign investments. While certain industries have always managed to obtain some form of protection against imports, even the mounting trade deficits of the 1980s have not led to an across-the-board reversal of those market-liberal foreign economic policies. Instead, the free-market direction of public policy has just been confirmed by NAFTA and will be extended once the recently completed Uruguay-Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is ratified. The result has been a considerable increase in foreign trade and investment: the ratio of imports and exports to GNP increased from 6.7 % in 1950 to 25 % in 1990. Thus, public skepticism towards freer trade failed to halt the American economy's internationalization.

Why has public opinion mattered so little? A comprehensive answer would have to go beyond an analysis of public opinion. It would require detailed analyses of the forces of the inter-state system, of economic strategies and necessities, of interest group behavior, and of the strategic selectivity of state structures. I like to reserve such a comprehensive approach for future research. Instead, I want to show that already at the level of public opinion one will find clues to why the public's protectionist preferences did not translate into more restrictive foreign economic policies. The following questions will guide my analysis: What other beliefs, preferences, etc. of the public might have mitigated its protectionist leanings? What kind of discursive practices might have elicited public support or at least public tolerance of freer trade policies?

Before I begin answering these more limited questions, I want to document the gap in attitudes on foreign trade between American elites and the American public. A brief analysis of the factors driving the different views on foreign trade will follow. Why the public's skepticism led not to more protectionist policies, will be analyzed in three steps: first by measuring the importance the public attached to questions of foreign trade, second by quantifying the impact of economic arguments on public attitudes, and third by assessing the effects of ideological appeals on foreign trade attitudes. I will end this part by speculating about the reasons why protectionists have never won the presidency since the days of Franklin Roosevelt. The next part focusses specifically at the 1980s, when mounting trade deficits have lend more urgency to the foreign trade debate. In assessing how these deficits have shifted the discursive terrain between free traders and protectionists, I will look at survey data for how successful the two sides were in determining the importance of trade deficits, their causes, and the remedies. Finally I want to discuss in what ways my findings explain the ratification of NAFTA despite wide-spread skepticism.

1. Oldendick/Bardes (1982: 376)

A Note on Methodology

Before descending into the sea of polling data, a strong *caveat* has to be heeded: Despite the considerable body of polling data available, the questions put to the public have varied sufficiently from time to time to make the comparability of many findings subject to considerable reservation.² Minor differences in the wording of a question can lead to very different patterns of responses.³ The reading of the polling data creates another problem. How should one interpret the *don't knows* and *no opinions*?⁴

These problems in reading the polling data rule out common techniques in handling survey data such as establishing general trends and performing regression analyses. I will, therefore, refrain from visualizing the polling data graphically. Instead, I want to treat the data contextually and with great attention for the way the questions were phrased. I will thereby turn the deplorable insufficient comparability of the data over time into an analytical asset. From a comparison of the responses to the diverse ways of phrasing the survey questions I expect to gain insights into the effectiveness of various discursive practices in the debate on trade.

Most of the polling data has been made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research Data, librarian Mrs. Jo Ann Dion of the Social Science Library of Yale University generously produced an extensive selection from the database, and Thomas Greven brought order into this selection. The polling data is cited here with its Inter-University Consortium identification number (e.g. USGALLUP.62655.R007 as one of the sources for table 1).

The Freer Trade Elites

Within a short time span after the end of WWII, American elites embraced a liberal foreign trade agenda. Big Business and the educational elites spearheaded this move. Already in 1939, representatives of the largest manufacturers had voiced almost unanimously (93 %) their opposition to higher tariffs. Furthermore, by 1945, college educated Americans overwhelmingly (81 %) supported the reciprocal trade agreements⁵ (Almond 1950: 129). Nevertheless, in 1946, still 53 % of the upper income families⁶ interviewed by the National Opinion Research Center adhered to the traditional belief in a high tariff policy for the U.S. (in comparison to only 42 % of the lower income families). The same poll showed, however, that this preference for high tariffs went

2. As Bauer et al. observed: "It is possible, by posing the issue in various ways, to get from the same type of sample and occasionally from the very same sample answers that might seem to point in opposite directions." (1964: 84)

3. This point is well illustrated by the answers to the following two questions posed in April and May of 1972:
Question I: "Do you think the U.S. should cut down on certain kinds of imports from foreign countries, or do you feel we should follow the principles of free trade" (USGALLUP.72POTC.Q16)
Question II: "Do you believe that the United States Government should remove all trade barriers and allow unlimited imports of foreign-made products into this country or do you think it would be better to set quotas or limits on the amounts of foreign-made products which may be sold in the United States"(USORC.72JUL1.R4)

49 % of the respondents to question I supported the principles of free trade, while only 7 % of the persons responding to question II wanted all trade barriers removed. 42 % of those answering question I preferred cutting down on imports, 81 % of the answers to question II called for quotas to be set (8 % resp. 12 % "don't knows"). The differences may stem from the suggestive wording of these questions. Question I evokes the principles of free trade and refers to only certain products, while question II specifies the free trade agenda in terms of removing *all* barriers and allowing *unlimited* imports. In the language of question II a free trade agenda appears more threatening.

4. For example, the responses in table 1 can be taken as evidence for a general approval of a liberal trade agenda. More Americans favored lower tariffs than higher. Public opinion experts Hero and Starr, reading the same statistics, like to point out that "(t)hroughout the 1950's and 1960's, only a minority of those Americans expressing any opinions have favored reductions of tariffs or expansions of imports; the majority of those offering views have advocated either raising trade barriers or keeping them as they were at the time." (1970: 107)

For Hero and Starr, wishing to maintain the status-quo is identical with a protectionist position. This is convincing insofar as the protectionist camp at that time did not ask for higher tariffs but tried to fight the executive's initiatives for lower tariffs. For the 1980s, when the initiative in foreign trade policy shifted towards protectionism, it is less convincing.

5. The Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934 provided authority for the U.S. government to enter into bilateral agreements for reciprocal tariff reductions. Through successive extensions and amendments, it also authorized U.S. participation in the first five GATT rounds of multilateral trade negotiations. It was superseded by the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

6. The top 14% of American households measured according to wealth and income.

along with wide spread approval for the liberal "truth" that "(t)he U.S. must buy abroad in order to sell abroad" (Almond 1950: 125). By 1953, most members of the elites had been won over to the idea of low tariffs. A poll among persons listed in *Who's Who in America* showed a majority of 67 % in favor of lower tariffs. Leaders in education believed most avidly in freer trade (77 % of them; Public Opinion 1972: 1155). A near consensus existed among economists on the benefits of free trade that lasted well into the late 1980s.⁷ Editors of most major newspapers went also on record in support of the liberal trade agenda of the Truman administration. Even the Hearst papers had left the protectionist camp by 1971 (Foster 1983: 94-95, 323). Business leaders were slightly less enthusiastic about a low tariff agenda, only 63 % of the *Who's Who*-businessmen were in favor. Yet, only 15 % of them outright opposed the idea of lowering tariffs from their then prevailing level (Public Opinion 1972: 1155). A poll taken in 1954 revealed that especially small businesses had adopted a more favorable position towards lower tariffs and that the previous gap between large and small businesses on this issue had been almost closed (Bauer et al. 1963: 115). Within the business community, the following industries were most persistently protectionists: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining, and manufacturing (textiles, stone, clay, glass, food processing, chemicals, and precision instrument-making; Lindeen 1970: 110f). But even the most protectionist industries no longer argued for protection in principle. Instead they tried to convince legislators that their industry was a special case and therefore warranted an exception to the liberal trade rule (Bauer et al. 1963: 147).

Though in most instances the position of a business leader reflected his firm's or industry's "objective" interest in trade (exporters for lower tariffs, import-sensitive industries for protective tariffs), the fit between self-interest and opinion on tariff policy was far from perfect. Attitudes on other foreign policy issues influenced business leader's position on trade policy, especially those among them who believed in freer trade (Bauer et al. 1963: 127-148).

Between 1954 and 1978, to our knowledge, no poll had been taken separately for elite opinion on foreign trade issues. Casual evidence from secondary sources suggests that elite consensus on a liberal trade agenda was particularly high during the Kennedy administration and somewhat lower in the Nixon years (Destler 1986: 37-40). In 1978, a Chicago Council on Foreign Relations poll among a cross-section of elites revealed that 75 % favored elimination of tariffs. The Reagan recession of 1982 reduced the number of free traders to 67 % (see table 2).⁸ Among leaders "who held responsible foreign affairs positions in government and nongovernment organizations that had a primary or strong secondary interest in international or transnational affairs" the commitment to a liberal trade agenda was even more pronounced in the mid 1980s. 57.9 % disagreed strongly with erecting trade barriers against foreign goods and additional 27.3 % disagreed somewhat, altogether 85.2 % of these leaders interested in foreign affairs opposed protectionist measures (Chittick/Billinsley 1989: 205, 209).

In 1990, at the beginning of the Bush recession and after a decade of mounting trade deficits, the percentage of freer trade proponents among the elite declined to 64 % when confronted with the argument that "tariffs and restrictions are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries" (see table 2). At the same time, business executives increasingly endorsed freer trade: 78 %, up from 71 % in 1986. Moreover, on another litmus question on their liberal trade commitment, 86 % of the total elite sample expressed support for opening negotiations on NAFTA (Rielly 1991: 27). The Free Trade Agreement with Canada enjoyed even more support: 93 % (Holsti/Rosenau 1993: 272-3).

In sum, a general consensus among American elites on the benefits of liberal trade existed since the early post-war years. This belief became weaker during the 1980s in the face of significant trade deficits, but remained

7. Economists had been the strongest voice against *Smoot-Hartley* (see the protest note of 1028 economists; reprinted in Ratner 1972: 142-144). A survey by Bruno Frey and associates among economist revealed that 81 % unconditionally supported the statement that "tariffs and import quotas reduce general economic welfare", another 16 % supported it conditionally and only 3 % opposed it (Klamer/Colander 1990: 19).

8. The rising protectionist feelings among the business elite during the 1982/3 Reagan recession is documented by Chamber of Commerce polls. Between 1980 and 1982 the percentage of executives favoring new laws to limit imports rose from 15 % to 38 % (Destler 1986: 151).

dominant among the elites. Only businesses directly hurt by import competition and labor unions dissented from this consensus, however not on principle but for protecting their own "parochial" interests.

The Fair Trade Masses

The American public did not share its elites' freer trade convictions. Although, in 1946, lower income Americans were less likely to call for higher tariffs than their materially better off fellow countrypersons (see above), in the following years whenever the same question was posed separately to members of the elites and to members of the general public, a considerable gap between both responses was exposed. In 1953, while 67 % of the elites supported a reduction in tariffs, only 50 % of those among the general public who were informed about the debate on tariffs (which were 32 % of the respondents) and even less, i.e. 30 %, of all respondents among the general public favored lower tariffs (see table 1).

Thirty years later, as the opinion polls of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations reveal, the gap has not been narrowed (see table 2).

The differences between the nongovernmental leaders and the mass public persisted even after controlling for the foreign policy beliefs of respondents and their partisan identifications and political ideologies (Wittkopf 1990: 159).

This gap was also significant within the Democratic party, historically the Party in favor of liberal trade. A poll in 1958 found that considerably more Democratic party leaders (convention delegates) favored lower tariffs than Democratic followers (registered as Democrats), i.e. 43 % of the leaders and only 25.3 % of the rank and file preferred lower tariffs. Trade was one of the issues where the leadership was most out of step with its followers (McClosky et al. 1960: 422). Even more pronounced was the gap within the United Autoworkers (U.A.W.) in the mid 1960s. While all members of the executive board expressed their support for lower tariffs and expanded imports in general and mutual tariff cuts on U.A.W. products in particular, only 11 % of local U.A.W. leaders agreed in principle to lower tariffs. Just 52 % of these local leaders approved of reciprocal cuts in tariffs on items produced by union members. Among the members themselves this proposition was even slightly less popular (48 %; Hero/Starr 1970: 194 and their table 4-1).

While the public viewed free trade with suspicion, it was not hostile to foreign trade in general. As early as 1940 and 1945, about 70 % of a Roper poll sample viewed foreign trade favorably (USROPER.40-017.R03, -45-048.R06A). What enjoyed public support was the notion of fair trade, i.e. trade among nations based on reciprocity, taking place on an equal playing field, and supplemented by mechanism that would protect or at least compensate those adversely affected by foreign trade. In other words, Americans favored foreign trade when it would not hurt any of their fellow countryperson. The reciprocal trade agreements from the days of Cordell Hull on were considered fair (even though when asked out of context 71 % of all respondents to a 1950 survey could not identify correctly the meaning of the term "reciprocal trade agreement"; Public Opinion 1972: 918). In 1945, 57 % of the total sample agreed to the reciprocal proposition that the U.S. should "reduce its tariffs on goods other countries want to sell here, provided they reduce their tariffs and other restrictions on our goods." Only 20 % expressed disagreement with this position (Public Opinion 1972: 505).⁹ In a 1946 poll, reciprocity was preferred to protectionism by 59 % to 20 %.¹⁰ The Geneva Agreement of 1947 of reciprocal tariff reductions was approved by 63 % and opposed only by 12 % of a Gallup Poll sample (Public Opinion 1972: 695, see also USNORC.480156.R20B). In the 1980s, the preference for reciprocal foreign trade agreements over higher trade barriers was even more pronounced: between 67 % and 73 % were in favor of a "system under which more American goods and services would be allowed into Japan and Western Europe

9. Even greater support was expressed in a Roper poll (USROPER.45-048.R06B).

10. The question asked was: "What do you think we should do about tariffs and our foreign trade ... Keep out competition from other countries by raising our tariffs, even if this means we don't have as much foreign trade, or try to increase our trade with other countries by agreeing with them to lower theirs, even if this means some competition from foreign goods?" (USROPER.46-057.Q19).

and more goods from those countries would be allowed into the U.S." in contrast to 23 % to 25 % who favored "restricting (...) imports into the U.S." (USHARRIS.031483.R1, -091685.R8, USHARRBW.053083.RC).

The Factors Behind the Different Trade Views

The gap between elite and public opinion on foreign trade was no enigma for public opinion experts Oldendick and Bardes: "Quite clearly, the general populace is much more chauvinistic than is the elite." (1982: 376) They drew this conviction from reading the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) polling data. In 1974, 88.2 % of the public believed that "America's real concerns should be at home," not abroad, compared to 26.3 % in the elite group. But what led the public to give preference to domestic concerns over foreign ones? Was it just chauvinism? Table 3 shows for the period from 1978 to 1986 that "protecting American jobs" was consistently chosen by the public as their primary foreign policy goal, while for the elites this goal ranked behind "world wide arms control", "defending allies", and "securing energies supplies" in importance. In fact, the gap between the elites and the public concerning the importance attached to the "protection of jobs" is very significant: 34 - 43 % versus 74 - 78 % (see table 3).¹¹

The concern for jobs influenced the public's foreign trade stand decisively. Evidence abounds for Destler's observation: "When questions have been posed in terms of jobs or the desirability of imports per se, mass opinion has shown a consistently protectionist tilt." (1986: 150) In the 1980s, when higher tariffs, quotas etc. were said to protect *jobs*, then a solid majority of Americans consistently favored trade restrictions over the principles of free trade (see table 4).

The proposition, that a recession strengthens the public's protectionist leanings, may intuitively be plausible but lacks clear cut evidence. The question "Do you think that the U.S. have to raise tariffs to protect American jobs" drew more affirmative responses in December of 1978 (a boom year) than in February 1983, in the midst of the deep 1982/83 recession: 69 % v. 67 % (USABCHS.031579.R3C; USHARRIS.031483.R5). On the other hand, some evidence exits that during the Reagan recession protectionist sentiments went up: The number of those respondents who believed Japanese competition to be harmful went up from 60 % in March 1982 to 72 % in May 1983 (although this jump may reflect a slightly different wording of the question) down to 60 % in July 1985 and further down to 55 % in October 1986 (USHARRIS.JAPN82.R17, -080585.R1, -091685.R1, -86JAPN.R22; USLAT.68.R44, -99.R036). Moreover, at the onset of the recession in 1991, those who favored restrictions became more numerous (see Table 4).

Given the concerns about employment, it is not surprising that a Roper poll found the strongest protectionist sentiment among factory workers whose jobs were directly threatened by foreign competition (Bauer et al. 1964: 93).¹² Thus, the alleged chauvinism of the masses seems to have its roots in the pessimistic perception of the impact of more foreign competition. In hindsight, the "rivetheads" (Hamper 1991) at the assembly line were more on target in their skepticism towards freer trade than the internationalist UAW leaders who followed their rank & file in calling for protection in the 1980s. Foreign competition decimated the ranks of autoworkers (and of many other workers in manufacturing) and put a strong damper on wages during the 1980s (Mishel/Frankel 1991: 68-128). Thus, despite the relatively low ration of imports to GNP, many Americans believed that their jobs were directly (37 %) or indirectly (23 %) affected by U.S. trade with other countries in the mid 1980s (Nov. 1984; USORC.85JAN.R06, also confirmed for 1987: USHARRIS.061587.R05).

While this concern for jobs may look narrow, parochial and chauvinistic, the leaders' support for free trade was also not just "a matter of principle" as Wittkopf would like to see it (Wittkopf 1990: 159). The principal reasons given for favoring lower tariffs in a 1954 Gallup-poll were "that they would promote freer trade, mean lower prices, eliminate the need for dollar aid to foreign countries." The motive "to help to establish better

11. The CCFR data is consistent with the leadership sample of Holsti/Rosenau: protecting jobs was a very important policy goal for only 31 % of the respondents in 1976 (1984: 269).

12. Another 1959 poll by Gallup showed that in comparison with the general population slightly more unionists and their spouses favored higher tariffs than lower ones (Hero/Starr 1970: 3-1).

international relations" ranked last (An American Institute of Public Opinion release on March 1, 1954, as quoted in Bauer et al. 1964: 101). Again on hindsight, the expectation to benefit from freer trade proved to be correct. As scholar-cum-Secretary-of-Labor Robert Reich has shown, so-called *symbolic analysts* (all persons engaged in problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic-brokering) have clearly profited from the internationalization of the American economy (Reich 1991). And not surprisingly, those among the elites who were more directly confronted with competitive imports, were also less inclined to favor tariff eliminations, i.e. business leaders.

The link between a general concern for jobs and protectionist sentiments among the populace, however, does not warrant to imply a close correlation between direct economic interests and foreign trade beliefs. A study of the foreign policy opinions of union members revealed that "local leaders from aircraft plants were more apt to favor raising barriers to world trade than auto assembly workers, though the United States exported roughly eleven times as much aircraft in value as it imported, whereas it imported somewhat more passenger automobiles (in value in United States dollars) than it exported." (Hero/Starr 1970: 195)¹³ In the 1950s, the educational background was a better predictor of attitudes toward import policy than economic position. The more formal education a person had received, the less likely this person was to be protectionist. Beyond education, the general attitudes toward foreign policy influenced opinions on trade (see below).

The gap between elite and mass opinion confirms the neo-gramscian argument of Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy that what constitutes *common sense* in America differs between elites and public. While certain principles of political and economic liberalism are almost universally affirmed by Americans, liberalism stands only for those who dominate the United States at the center of their ideology. For most other Americans, real religious values share a place with liberalism in their "lived philosophy". The strong preference in liberalism for dealing with all social relations through the market is thereby mitigated by a relatively authoritarian concept of "community", by a sense of mutual support for members, and by the willingness to give charity also to those outside the community (Augelli/Murphy 1988: 35-57). How these aspects of common sense were appealed to in the debates on foreign trade will be discussed later. Here it suffices to state that the public's skepticism to the liberal principle of free trade is not only rooted in its concern for jobs but also in its common sense.

Why Did Public Opinion Matter so Little?

Despite the public's skepticism towards freer trade, public policy makers aimed at trade liberalization until the late 1960s, stayed cautiously the course in the 1970s, and refrained from drastic action on the mounting trade deficits of the 1980s. Recent scholarship tried to prove governmental responsiveness to popular preferences on foreign policy (Nincic 1992, Hinckley 1992, Russett 1990). While this may have been true for security issues, the evidence presented so far does not warrant this conclusion for foreign trade. Power-elite theory which holds that there exists a self-reproducing power elite determining policy seems to be more on target (Domhoff 1990). However, as stated in the introduction, I do not intend to give judgement on which theory explains more accurately the relationship between public sentiments and policy outcomes. Instead, I want to focus on what kind of characteristics of public opinion may have reduced the significance of the public's protectionist beliefs.

Low Public Concern

Low public concern over foreign trade matters worked clearly in favor of elite preferences. Since the question of tariffs interested the public mainly in regards to job security, the general indifference in matters of foreign trade followed from the status of the United States as a net exporter and the rather small contribution of exports

13. Bauer et al. found among businessmen the correlation between self-interest and attitudes towards tariffs, also "far from perfect" (1964: 132).

to the GNP in the post war period up until the late 1960s. In a 1953 Gallup poll only 1 % of the respondents mentioned trade and tariff issues when asked "what is the most important problem you would like to see Congress take up in the new session" (Nov. 24, 1953, RK03).

The indifference towards foreign trade policies was also revealed by a wide-spread ignorance about the issues involved. During the 1950s, according to Bauer et al., "from 25 to 50 per cent of national cross-sectional samples polled by various agencies were unable to give an accurate definition of a tariff" (1964: 82; see also table 1 for the percentage of respondents who claimed to be informed about tariff issues).

The level of public concern did not rise by much when the balance of trade turned negative. In 1972, only 1 % mentioned

problems associated with foreign trade when asked which problem should receive top priority consideration. Even at the height of the trade deficit debate leading to the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, not more than 3 % gave trade issues top priority (see table 5). When the choice of problems facing the nation was narrowed down to five different *economic* issues, the level of concern about the trade deficit rose but trailed the apprehension over the budget deficit by a wide margin (see table 6).¹⁴ However, when directly asked how important "reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries" as a foreign policy goal was, 62 % (1986) and 56 % (1990) of the respondents of a CCFR-poll answered with "very important" (USGALLUP.86CFRP.R21C-90CFRP.R23C).

These low levels of concern gave governmental leaders "the leeway to press the policies they felt were needed" (Destler 1986: 5). This leeway was not without its limits, since in those cases when the public was directly addressed, it clearly spelled out its preferences for securing jobs and reducing trade deficits.

Bauer et al. reported about the danger of arousing the public's interest in foreign trade policies: The campaign of the liberal-trade pressure groups in the years 1953 to 1955 for a renewal of reciprocal trade legislation raised the level of the public's awareness on foreign-trade policies but not the level of support for a freer trade agenda (see table 1). Instead it revealed the extent of protectionist feelings among the public. In its push for the trade Expansion Act of 1962, the Kennedy administration took its lesson from this experience: It avoided broad public agitation as far as possible (Bauer et al. 1964: 95f). The result was that in 1962 "a rather more drastic reform got, if anything, rather less public attention." (Bauer et al. 1964: 83). Studies about the "moody public" (Almond 1950) and the "realist" approach to international relations (Morgenthau 1948) had lent this strategy of low public involvement intellectual justification.

Appeals to Economic Self-interests

Americans faced the issue of foreign trade at least in two roles: as producers and as consumers. As consumers they were interested in foreign products. In an April 1983 poll, 81 % (78 % in Dec. 1978) of the respondents agreed with the following statement: "Many products from abroad are very good, such as autos (...) and the American people should have the chance to buy them at reasonable prices." (USHARRBW.053083.RB4; USABCHS.031579.R3B) The same poll revealed also that 77 % believed that "if our people don't buy American made products more, the U.S. economy will continue to be in real trouble at home." (USHARRBW.-053083.RB1) That the American public held these two contradictory beliefs opened up space for discursive strategies for both sides of the foreign trade debate. The fact that the wording of the interview questions on foreign trade varied over time may actually be of help in assessing the effectiveness of various arguments for and against free trade.

From the preoccupation of the American public with job security followed naturally that for advocates of tariffs and quotas claiming that freer trade threatens American jobs was the most effective discursive strategy in the foreign trade debate. In a Sept. 1985 poll the public found "keeping out foreign goods protects domestic jobs"

14. Similarly, when the field of problems was narrowed down to "foreign policy objectives," the objective "to further the nation's economic interests in foreign trade" was never mentioned by more than 18 % in the years 1985 to 1991 (USLAT.99.R016, -100.R20, -209.R77, -239A.R76, -246.R33).

as the most convincing or best argument "for placing trade restrictions on foreign imports" (USLAT.68.R64-69).¹⁵

For advocates of freer trade, in turn, addressing the "consumer" in the American public seemed to be the natural strategy. Two polls (May 1983, Sept. 1985) asking explicitly which argument was most convincing "against placing trade restrictions on foreign imports" confirmed the expectation that raising consumer concerns were most effective (USLAT.68.R64-69, 99.R081-85). Contrary to these findings, a comparison of tables 4 and 7 reveals that when the disadvantages for consumers were explicitly mentioned within the question on tariffs the number of supporters of protectionism did not decline, it might have actually been higher. However, when the disadvantages were clearly spelled out as higher prices (8/85) or when import restrictions were called "import taxes" (5/83), then significantly fewer Americans supported protectionism.¹⁶ When in a follow-up question, those who had favored protectionism in response to the first question were informed about the consumer costs of protectionism, then again, support for protectionism dropped about 14 percentage points: from 66 % to 52 % in January 1987 and again in February 1988 (tables 8 and 7). Yet, in specific cases like the auto industry most consumers expressed their willingness to pay higher prices.¹⁷ When given a convincing reason, the public was also open - at least in the abstract - to the idea of limiting its purchases of foreign goods: In a 1989 poll, 83 % of the sample were willing to do so "in order to reduce our trade deficit with other countries" (USGALLUP.89192.R04). Thus, the effectiveness of countering the protectionist leanings of the American public with an appeal to its consumer interests was not an automatic given but depended very much on the specifics of this appeal. This may be one of the reasons why the discourse of consumer interests was complemented by other discursive practices.

Traditionally, proponents of freer trade have raised the specter of the Smoot-Hawley, the Tariff Act of 1930. They have argued that the Act's protectionist provisions have deepened the Great Depression by provoking retaliation by other countries which effectively curtailed world trade and U.S. export opportunities. Most recently, Vice President Albert Gore tried to discredit NAFTA opponent Ross Perot by painting him as the modern-day equivalent of Senator Reed Smoot and Representative Willis Hawley in the debate on Cable News Network's "Larry King Live" television show (WSJE Nov. 11, 1993: 8). With an increasing number of jobs dependent on exports, the argument of retaliation can be expected to possess considerable weight with the public.

In accordance with this expectation, the appeal to logic: "if we want to sell our products abroad then we have to allow other countries to sell their products here in the U.S.," drew overwhelming support: 85 % in 1978 (USABCHS.031579.R3A) and 89 % in 1983 (USHARRIS.031483.R3).¹⁸ In the mid 1980s, when asked about the probability of retaliation by other countries, however, only slightly more Americans believed that other countries might retaliate if the U.S. raises trade barriers than those who did not think so (in 1983: 47 % v. 39 %, in 1985: 46 % v. 42 %; USLAT.68.R70, -99.R088).¹⁹ Moreover, export opportunities were valued somewhat less than the preservation of jobs in the face of imports (in 1985 42 % v. 49 %, in 1992 44 % v.

15. In a May 1983 poll the argument "keeping out foreign goods means more profits for American companies" was slightly more often thought of as more convincing. This might have been the result of the confusing wording of the question at that time which might have led many to believe this statement to be an argument against restrictions (see USLAT.99.R081-85).

16. Interestingly, in the polls asking explicitly about the best arguments for free trade the statement "foreign competition forces domestic manufacturers to find better ways to make things and to bring their prices into line" was preferred to "trade barriers make consumers pay higher prices" by a wide margin (USLAT.68.R64-69, 99.R081-85). This confirms the positive connotation the term "competition" possesses among the American public.

17. In response to "the U.S. should extend the auto import agreement with the Japanese that limits the number of Japanese cars sold in the U.S., even if it means that all cars will cost more" (emphasis added) 58 % agreed (thereof 10 percentage points strongly) while only 38 % disagreed (thereof 5 percentage points strongly) in a January 1985 poll (USANLGRP.85SPR.R75).

18. Already in 1946, this logic was expressed almost by as many respondents (see Almond 1950: 125).

19. In 1987, asked whether President Reagan's imposition of "100 % import duties on some Japanese products in retaliation for Japan's 'dumping' of micro-chips" would lead to a full-scale trade war between the U.S. and Japan, only 26 % believed so (USGALNEW.87114.-R13)

48 % (USLAT.99.R031, USGALLUP.322018.Q40). It may, therefore, not come as a surprise that when the polling question implied that import barriers might protect jobs but also endanger export opportunities, a majority still favored protectionism (table 8).

Whether the export or the consumer argument was more effective in reducing protectionist sentiments is difficult to judge.²⁰ In combination, however, both arguments led to a reversal in public opinion. In a 1987 poll, those who favored protectionism (66 % of all respondents) were confronted with the costs to the American consumer and then, in a follow-up question, those who hung on to their protectionist beliefs (53 % of the original respondents) were asked if they still favored trade barriers even if "other countries would then move to keep out American products". At this third level of questioning only 37 % of the original respondents stayed protectionist (table 8). A 1992 poll that combined the consumer and export argument confirmed this reversal in public opinion: 54 % opposed trade barriers (see table 8, Date 2/92).

Ideological Appeals

As already mentioned, not just a rational calculus of economic self-interest informed the public's attitudes towards free trade, but also its common sense and its various foreign policy beliefs. The polling data reveals links between general attitudes toward internationalism/isolationism and opinions on trade. For the 1950s, Bauer et al. found that most protectionists were isolationist and most liberal trade supporters were internationalist in their foreign policy outlook (1964: 86-103).²¹

Since internationalism enjoyed public support in the post war years (Wittkopf 1990: 6-9), it made sense for proponents of freer trade to link their trade concerns to broader themes of American international activism. These themes were: securing peace, spreading democracy, and containing communism. The idea that trade among nations fosters peace reached well back into the last century (Rosenberg 1982). The events following "Smoot-Hawley" lent this idea broader appeal. There is ample evidence that the collapse of world markets in the 1930s had strengthened the position of advocates of autarchic *Großraumwirtschaften* in Germany as well as in Japan (Ziebur 1984). In the aftermath of World War II, the argument that trade barriers create world tensions carried, therefore, great weight among policy makers (Destler 1986: 4). Many years later this statement was still consistently judged as "a good argument against putting restrictions on imports" by more than 53 % of Americans interviewed (see table 9). However, in comparison to the argument "foreign competition forces domestic manufacturers to find better ways to make things and to bring their prices into line" it was seen in 1983 and 1985 as much less convincing (USLAT.68.R64-69, 99.R081-85).

Another widely shared belief in the business community was that foreign trade and investment were among the best means for spreading democracy around the globe (Rosenberg 1982: 7). In the trade debates of the 1950s, the slogan "trade, not aid" had convinced many politicians who opposed "government give-aways" to other countries to vote for extensions of the Reciprocal Trade Act of 1934 (Bauer et al. 1964: 149). By 1972, at least among the American public this slogan had lost its popularity. The statements "help underdeveloped countries sell their products in the United States" and "lower tariffs, open trade" received support only from 8 % of the respondents (5 % respectively) trailing by far "send medical help" (52 %) or "train their students in our universities" (29 %) as the most favored "foreign assistance policy for the U.S." (USHART.720DC.R21B). Even more unpopular was the proposition "to encourage investment of U.S. corporations in these countries" (-R21C). Helping "Third World countries by letting them sell goods to the U.S." remained unpopular in 1987: 60 % disagreed (USSIRC.860DC.R18B).

20. Directly comparable are only the answers to two polls of May 1983 (see tables 7 and 8). Asked whether they would rather protect U.S. industries threatened by imports or those which exports fewer respondents (56 %) favored restricting imports than when given the choice between jobs and lower prices (68 %). However, the export question drew also many more "don't know" answers than the consumer question (18 % to 6 %).

21. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of protectionists were internationalists and a reasonable proportion of liberal traders were isolationists (Bauer et al. 1964: 99).

The theme "anti-communism" persuaded many erstwhile Republican isolationists to adopt the internationalist outlook of the Truman administration (Westerfield 1955: 201-226). Policy makers saw expanded world trade as a way to strengthen the ties with the western allies (Zeiler 1992: 64f). However, in a Roper poll in the 1950s that asked for reasons in support and in opposition to tariffs, anti-communism ranked very low: only 8 % of the sample gave as a reason for their support of lower tariffs arguments such as "It would keep other countries from becoming a prey to Communism" (Bauer et al. 1964: 101). In the late 1960s, unionists, with belligerent feelings towards the Soviet Union were significantly more protectionist than those who believed in detente. A conservative, more virulent anti-communist view on most issues of foreign policy went along with support for protectionism (Hero/Starr 1970: 150, 182). A significant negative relation between "militant internationalists" foreign policy attitudes²² and support for the elimination of tariffs existed also in the 1980s (Wittkopf 1990: 90f, 301). Thus, appealing to anti-communist sentiments did not generate more support for freer trade -- at least among the hard-core anti-communist public.

Furthermore, "cooperative internationalists"²³ were not much less opposed to freer trade during the 1980s (Wittkopf 1990: 90f, 301). Thus, both strands of the public's internationalism have lost sight of the link drawn by the policy elites between international activism and a freer trade agenda. Eugene Wittkopf, a noted expert in public opinion on foreign policy, explains this apparent contradiction between general internationalist beliefs and protectionist leanings with the observation that "the mass public equates political internationalism with economic nationalism" (1990: 105). Since most ordinary Americans lack individual opportunities to profit from the world markets, it makes perfect sense that they pursue a more collectivist approach to internationalism, i.e. a nationalist one. This is the more so to be expected when the public feels (rightly or wrongly) that it has been shortchanged by the internationalization of the U.S. economy. The polling data confirms this "nationalist" impulse in recent decades.

But why did the public's economic nationalism not turn into a form of political isolationism? The position of the U.S.A. at the apex of the western world and nowadays as the sole remaining superpower seems to have allowed internationalism to blend with nationalism. American power in the world gives cause to feelings of pride among its citizens, a sentiment not unknown in other nations whose government dominated world politics. As many observers of U.S. foreign policy have pointed out, this pride in their government's ability to "lead" the world is buttressed by the commonly held belief in American exceptionalism, in America's special mission in the world. Proponents of freer trade, therefore, have tried to convince the public that this leadership role, in which so many Americans have taken pride, might be jeopardized by a lack of commitment to a liberal world market order. Before I will have undertaken a comprehensive study of the public free trade discourse, anecdotal evidence has to suffice. President Kennedy, for example, advocated his Trade Expansion Act as a way to enhance "our stature in the Free World" (as quoted in Zeiler 1992: 66). That many Americans want to see the U.S. as a strong leader of the world and not as a nation begging for special favors, became abundantly clear during the Bush visit in Japan in early 1992. His asking for a piece of the Japanese market for Detroit's Big Three automobile manufacturers, whose chief executives had accompanied him, crowned by his *faux pas* at a formal dinner with the Prime Minister, drastically increased the number of those who disapproved "the way Bush is handling foreign trade" from 46 % in Jan. 6 of 1992 to 58 % in Jan 31, 1992 (USGALLUP.92FEB.R-13F, JAN12A.R13K).

As much as the idea of a *chosen people* fuels missionary zeal, however, the religious philosophies of the American people also warrant traditionally, in case other people reject American leadership, either sentiments of withdrawal or a hyper-aggressive stand against foreigners. In the wake of the Vietnam war both impulses were played out (Augelli/Murphy 1988: 58-71). This disillusionment with America's role in the world has complicated the task for free traders in overcoming the public's tendency to view internationalism and free trade

22. The term *militant internationalism* captures the following orientations towards involvement in world affairs: a high threat perception of communism, a willingness to use American troops abroad, a sense of global responsibility and a belief that the vital interests of the nation are wide-ranging (Wittkopf 1990: 23).

23. *Cooperative internationalism* defines following positions: a desire for closer ties between the United States and the Soviet Union, a conviction that the United States should pursue an active role in world affairs, but with an emphasis on cooperative ties with other nations, and a belief that the vital interests of the nation are wide-ranging (Wittkopf 1990: 25).

as two separate agendas. While President Carter succeeded in bringing the Tokio Round of GATT negotiations to a satisfactory end for liberal traders, he lost support among blue-collar workers who felt that the President had neglected their concern about plant closures (which many blamed on foreign competition) and who were angry about his letting the United States appear weak in the struggles with OPEC, the Soviet Union, and revolutionary Iran (Ferguson/Rogers 1986).

In contrast, Ronald Reagan's success in making the public believe that the United States "stand tall" again among the nations of the world, may have been part of why the mounting trade deficits during his administration did not create more public opposition to his trade policies. George Bush used quite consciously the "window of opportunity" (Gergen 1992), that America's impressive victory against Iraq had opened, for initiating the NAFTA negotiations with Mexico. When the enthusiasm about the victory in the Gulf had faded and was supplanted by "America, it's time to take care of our own" themes, NAFTA became very difficult to "sell" to the American public. To garner support for NAFTA, President Clinton and especially Vice-President Albert Gore portrayed NAFTA as an issue of American leadership, as a "symbol of where we want to go in the world" (Business Week, Nov. 22, 1993: 26) -- apparently with success (see below).

During the Reagan administration the militant internationalist's economic nationalism was mitigated by the conservative's belief in the free market. Trade barriers were easily portrayed as further examples of too much state interventionism (e.g. by Pearson 1989). The effectiveness of the appeal to individualism was revealed in a 1989 poll which asked: "Which is a better way for the United States to achieve a more profitable foreign trade--agreements reached between nations on trade, or individual efforts to produce the best products." 56 % of the respondents voted for individual efforts and only 33 % for agreements on trade (USCBSNYT.0711489.-R14). But similarly to the public's view on the welfare state (Ferguson/Rogers 1986: 15), a great majority of respondents (71 %) to a 1992 poll felt that it was "the government's responsibility to restrict the import of foreign consumer products" (USCBSNYT.062292.R52). The belief in individual effort seems to be compatible for most Americans with the expectation of government protection against market risks.

The strategy that seems most compatible with a freer trade agenda and the public's penchant for taking a "tough stand" for American interests and for an American leadership role in the world is a strategy of demanding market access for American products abroad. Especially, since in the mid 1980s the devaluation of the Dollar did not lead to a drastic cut in the trade deficit with Japan, market access talks have become a favorite tool for deflecting domestic protest (Scherrer 1992). Yet, according to the public opinion polls, ordinary Americans kept favoring import barriers to opening-up markets abroad (see below).

In sum, all but the appeal to nationalist pride in U.S. leadership were at best only mildly effective in balancing the public's inclination to support protectionism.

Why Did Protectionists Not Win the Presidency?

Ever since Franklin D. Roosevelt's secretary of state Cordell Hull negotiated the first reciprocal trade agreements, the Presidency has been the main engine for freer trade in the American political system. Even Richard Nixon, arguably the most protectionist leaning President in the post war era, sought legislation to authorize American participation in a GATT trade round (Destler 1986: 30, 63).

However, even a popular President could not overcome the public's skepticism towards free trade. While President Kennedy was pushing for the Trade Expansion Act, 50 % of the respondents to a nationwide poll wanted to see "more restrictions put on goods imported into this country from abroad" (USGALLUP.62-655.R007). An astounding 69 % of a polling sample disagreed in June 1988 with President Ronald Reagan's veto against a law "that would require the President to take tougher action against foreign governments and companies that use unfair trade practices" (USNBCWSJ.070188.R42). Identifying a President with a free trade initiative did not necessarily improve its chance of public acceptance. The sample of a March 1991 poll on public attitudes on NAFTA was split in half, whereby one half was told that "*some people say ... that most trade restrictions with Mexico be dropped to encourage more trade between Mexico and the United States*" and the other half that "*President Bush has recommended ...*" (emphasis added). Despite Bush's immense popularity

in the aftermath of the Gulf War, identifying him with NAFTA did not increase public support for NAFTA beyond the margin of error: it went up from 41 % to 44 % while the percentage of those who believed that "dropping such restrictions would only result in the loss of more American jobs to Mexico" stayed basically the same: 49 % instead of 50 % (USABCWP.429.R44A, B). These survey results correspond with other findings, that the President is not an effective "teacher" of citizens on foreign policy issues (Oldendick/Barnes 1982: 380).

On the contrary, it seems that a President could improve his standing with the public by taking a tough stand against foreign exporters. President Nixon's imposition of an "import tax" in 1971 found widespread support,²⁴ despite the general negative connotation of the term "import tax" (see above).

For a Presidential candidate, however, embracing a protectionist platform was apparently no successful strategy. None of these post-war Presidents was converted to a freer trade agenda while in office, none of them had run for office with a protectionist platform, although they had promised specific constituents relief from import pressure. Overtly protectionist candidates for the Presidency did not win their party's nomination, with perhaps the sole exception of Walter Mondale in 1984. Although committed to internationalism and freer trade throughout his high-profile public career, Mondale demanded more protection for American industries against Japanese "unfair" trade practices. Apparently he was motivated by a concern about the mounting trade deficits and by an interest in the AFL-CIO's endorsement of his candidacy. He seemed to have public opinion on his side. In a January 1983 poll 43 % of the respondents disagreed that Walter Mondale "sounds like he is too much of a protectionist on trade matters (...) in favoring putting restrictions on the cars the Japanese can export to this country." Only 38 % agreed (USHARRIS.021483.R8). However, long before Mondale received his party's nomination, he began to deemphasize trade restrictions. In the general elections of 1984 trade did not become a major issue (Destler 1986: 146-148). Thus, in the end Mondale was actually not an exception to the rule.

In September of 1985 evidence from public opinion surveys seemed again encouraging for a candidacy based on a protectionist platform. In response to "do you think you would be more likely or less likely to support a candidate for public office who is in favor of increasing trade barriers against products imported from abroad?" 43 % of those interviewed chose "more likely", 38 % chose "less likely" (USLAT.99.R098). In September 1987, 51 % of those sampled among adult residents of 12 Southern and Border States said that they would vote for a candidate who "favored quotas and tariffs on foreign imports in order to protect U.S. industry," while only 35 % favored a candidate in support of "free trade and free competition" (USROPER.-987AJC.R11B). And yet, the Democratic candidate favoring protectionism, Richard Gephard, lost badly in the primaries (Drew 1989: 149). All the while the number of Americans favoring restrictions on imports kept increasing. At the time of the televised Presidential debates, more than 66 % of those sampled among registered voters agreed to trade restrictions (see table 7).²⁵ During the Presidential campaign of 1992 all Democratic candidates were espousing some kind of "It's time to take care of our own!" theme. Again, the Democratic challenger most perceptive to internationalism won in the end. By obtaining congressional approval of NAFTA, President Clinton turned out to be a veritable free trader.

So why have protectionists not won the Presidency despite the public's preference for protectionism? Here is not the place to discuss the candidate selection process and the reasons for victory or defeat at election day. I cannot bring forward a definite answer to this question. I can only try to find some clues to this paradox in the voters' attitudes towards foreign trade and Presidential candidates.

Again, the most obvious explanation may rest in the importance the public attributes to trade issues in Presidential elections. Given the public's generally low concern about trade issues, it does not come as a surprise that a March 1990 poll revealed that "unfair foreign trade" did not rank very high on a list of economic

24. In an October 1972 poll, 49 % had mild to very strong positive feelings about the word "import taxes" as against 21 % with negative feelings (USHART.720DC.R22K).

25. The effects of the Presidential debates in 1988 on the public's stand on trade were apparently insignificant. After the 1st debate the number of protectionists dropped by about 5 percentage points. After the 2nd debate, however, that number had snapped back (see table 7).

goals the interview partners thought "the Democratic party should stress" (USANLGRP.90DEMS.RO92). Furthermore, at about the same time 43 % of a sample stated that they were "more likely" to support a protectionist candidate (in 1985, see above), 45 % thought that the Republican party "is better able to handle foreign trade problems" as against 24 % for the Democrats (USNYT.120085.R48). In January 1992, 52 % of one sample thought the Republican party "would do a better job of dealing with foreign trade" (before President Bush's *faux pas* in Japan; USGALLUP.JAN13A.R04K). Shortly before election day, 51 % of another sample thought George Bush was better able to handle foreign trade than Clinton (29 %; USGALLUP.92TR06.Q11C).

Thus, despite the Democrats greater willingness to espouse protectionist views, a majority of Americans viewed the Republicans as more competent in matters of foreign trade. Either the respondents to these polls were misinformed about the parties' platforms or they had a broader understanding of what handling of foreign trade issues meant than just restricting imports. While the former cannot be ruled out, the latter seems to be more plausible. When asked which President "would do better (in) reducing the U.S. foreign trade *deficit*" (emphasis added), 46 % of the respondents answered a Democratic President and 41 % a Republican President in a January 1988 poll (USABCWP.280.R63). In a May 1988 poll, 45 % trusted the Democratic party to be "better able to protect American industry against *unfair* foreign trade practices" (emphasis added) and only 32 % the Republican party (USCBSNYT.88MAY.R21D). A comparison of both types of polls seems to indicate that if the focus is on limiting imports the Democrats were judged to be more competent, while on the issue of foreign trade itself the Republicans were favored.

What those asked about foreign trade meant by foreign trade is not clear. Since the promotion of exports was of central concern to the public (see below), the issue of foreign trade implied probably for most Americans not just im- or exports but also American leadership in the relation with other countries. Since a majority of Americans wanted their President to be also the leader of the "free world" (Wittkopf 1990), they may have considered an exclusive focus on protecting import-sensitive industries as parochial and not befitting for the President of the most powerful nation on earth.

Finally, although the public espoused protectionist views, the term "protectionist" itself may have kept its post-depression, post-Pearl-Harbor negative connotation for a majority of Americans. But I am not aware of any study on the public's attitudes towards the term "protectionism".

The Trade Deficit: Shifted Terrain?

Having assessed the discursive strategies directed at the public's attitudes on foreign trade in general, I now want to turn to the more specific struggles about the mounting trade deficits of the 1980s. While in the period before 1971 initiatives to lower tariffs or to remove non-tariff barriers were discussed before the background of a trade surplus, thereafter any such initiative had to contend with the negative connotation of trade deficits and with the widely shared belief that limiting imports is the most natural remedy for the deficit.

A trade deficit must not necessarily be a burden to an economy. Under certain circumstances a surplus of imports may enhance national economic prosperity. During their industrialization, the U.S. ran a deficit because the rapid development of their resources depended on machinery from abroad. Stated in theoretical terms: A trade deficit will benefit an economy if imports are used to hasten development or to strengthen the future competitiveness of its industries. Moreover, the job impact of a deficit depends on the ratio of the labor intensity of exports to imports. If the labor intensity of exports is higher than of imports than foreign trade may still generate more jobs despite of a trade deficit (as would be the case in trading manufactured goods for oil). The point is, whether deficits are "good" or "bad" depends on circumstance and interpretation. This uncertainty about the effects of trade deficits opens up discursive space. The issue at stake is, whether the trade deficit is a serious problem that warrants dramatic action. Proponents of liberal trade, of course, have tended to downplay the importance of a trade deficit (e.g. CEA 1989: 147-187).

What kind of action is warranted in response to the trade deficit depends a great deal on how the causes of the deficit are interpreted. If unfair trade practices by foreign competitors are seen as the major cause for the

deficit, then protectionist initiatives would be harder to resist than if the blame rests with domestic actors. Winning the argument about the causes of the trade deficit is, therefore, another important step in the policy struggle over foreign trade.

Finally, restricting trade is not the only solution to a trade deficit. The trade balance can theoretically be restored by a devaluation of the domestic currency against foreign currencies, by promoting exports, by negotiating market access for domestic products in foreign countries and by strengthening the international competitiveness of domestic industries by any kind of industrial policy. Thus, the effectiveness and costs of these alternatives to protectionism is another serious issue of contention. If trade liberals cannot persuade the public of the harmlessness of trade deficits, they will have to convince it that any or a mix of these policy instruments shall be preferred to imposing tariffs, setting quotas, or requiring domestic content. I will now look at the opinion polls for how successful the two sides were in determining the importance of trade deficits, their causes, and the necessary remedies.

Do the Trade Deficits Matter?

Dogmatic free traders clearly lost the public debate about whether the trade deficits were a problem or not. The percentage of those responding to the question "how serious a problem do you think it is that we import more than we export" with a "very serious" rose from 43 % in 1977 to 54 % in 1981 and 63 % in 1985 (USROPER.77-9.R12, -81-9.R11, -85-9.R07). In 1989, the number of those who were "very concerned" that they or their family "will be affected personally by the U.S. trade deficit" was again higher than in 1985: 54 % vs. 38 % (USABCWP.203.R24, -89JAPN.R21).

Moreover, in the public's mind the trade deficit was perceived as a threat to America's position in the world. In polls taken in the years 1987 and 1988 more than 65 % of the respondents thought that "America's growing trade imbalance" was a very or even extremely serious "threat to our country's national security interests". The percentage of those who thought it was "not very serious" was below 8 % (USMARTIL.ATS87.R04B; USDYG.288ATS.R03b, -ATS10.R10J). In 1990, between 58 % and 75 % of the respondents to nationwide polls believed that the "economic power of Japan" was "a greater threat to the security of the United States" than "the military power of the Soviet Union" (USCBSNYT.070990.R55; USABCWP.386B.R31).

This concern over the trade deficit, however, shall not automatically be translated into a call for protectionism. As already mentioned, the argument "restricting imports improves the balance of trade" was by far less popular as references to job security in support of tariffs or quotas (USLAT.68.R64-69, -99.R081-85). I will therefore turn to the next level in the struggle about the meaning of the trade deficits.

Who Is to Blame for Trade Deficits?

In defining the causes of the trade deficits, protectionists were less successful. In a 1985 poll, 46 % of the respondents believed that the trade deficit was primarily the fault of the United States, only 36 % thought that other nations were to blame (USGALLUP.85ASIA.R17). The notion that "restrictions by foreign governments on imports of American goods" were causing the trade deficits received more support in an another 1985 poll in which the causes for the deficits were asked item by item. "High salaries and benefits for U.S. workers," however, was the most popular statement (see table 10).²⁶ The tendency to blame mainly labor for the trade deficit was even more pronounced in polls sponsored by conservative organizations (see USNBCWSJ.101585.-R24, USROPER.744051.R07).

Two years later, "unfair trade practices" by other countries were mentioned as a major cause for the trade deficit only by 34 % of the respondents in two Roper polls (USROPER.744051.R05D, 87-5.R10D). Blaming

26. A 1985 Los Angeles Times poll revealed similar opinions (USLAT.99.R070).

foreigners was even less popular in a 1991 poll: 41 % of respondents believed "the world has changed to become a global marketplace, and the U.S. hasn't done enough to adjust to the new challenges of economic competition", 31 % thought "the American work ethic and commitment to quality have declined, and other countries are trying harder", and only 19 % supported the argument "countries like Japan are out to be number one economically, and they ignore the principles of free trade in order to get ahead" (USHART.3361.R13A). The general hesitancy to blame foreigners was also confirmed by questions referring explicitly to Japan, the country which was identified in other polls as the greatest security threat to the United States (see above). In three identically worded polls - from October 1986 until November 1988 - the public was asked to decide which "is the more important reason why the U.S. does not export more to Japan." A majority of the respondents consistently answered that "American products are not competitive with Japanese products" (1986: 56 %, 1987: 62 %, 1988: 53 %) while only 35 % (32 %, 38 %) supported the argument that "the Japanese keep out American products" (USHARRIS.86JAPN.R26, 061587.R03, 121688.R3).

This data series seems to indicate that blaming Japanese protectionism was on the rise from 1987 to 1988. In the following years this sentiment may have gained even more adherents. The support for the proposition "Japan has unfair trade barriers which keep U.S. products out of their market" rose from 38 % in 1989 to 40 % in 1990 and to 43 % in 1991.²⁷ Together with the statement "many Japanese products are less expensive than American products," it became, thereby, the most popular explanation for the trade deficit with Japan (USGALLUP.89JFN.R4, -90JFN.R4, -91JFN.R2), reflecting the public's experience that Japanese products were no longer priced at the low end.

These findings for the mid to late 1980s explain the difficulties labor unions faced in gaining broad support for their calls for protectionism. The protectionist leanings of the American public are somewhat counterbalanced by its perception of the fairness of markets. The liberal belief, that misfortune in the marketplace is of one's own making, is deeply rooted in the political tradition of America. The wide spread experiences with the superior quality of foreign products in the 1970s certainly helped to shape the view that American business and labor share a substantial part of the blame for the loss of competitiveness. Furthermore, stories of hard-working foreigners concerned meticulously about the quality of their products portray the image that traditional American values have been resurrected abroad. It is difficult to criticize foreigners for a work ethics oneself believes in.

Defining Solutions to the Trade Deficits

Despite the public's willingness to blame mainly American labor and business for the trade deficit, the public was very responsive to calls for a more determined approach to allegedly unfair trade practices by other countries. In a 1988 poll 81 % of the respondents thought that "there should be a law that would require the President to take tougher action against foreign governments and companies that use unfair trade practices" (USNBCWSJ.070188.R41). In the same year, an astounding 69 % disagreed with the President's veto against a law "that would require the President to take tougher action (...)" (USNBCWSJ.070188.R42).

The call for tougher trade laws must not necessarily be interpreted as a call for more protectionism. It could also mean support for action aimed at curtailing or abolishing foreign "unfair" trade practices, e.g. market access talks. Depending on how the question was posed, the public understood a tougher trade policy in terms of either protectionism or market access. In a 1985 poll 63 % of respondents favored "restricting the sale of foreign goods in this country" over "pressuring other countries to buy more American goods" as the more effective strategy to end the trade deficit (USCBSNYT.NOV85.R11). In another survey in the same year, respondents also made clear that they favored "import restrictions on Japanese products" over "voluntary

27. The growing feeling that "the Japanese have erected unfair trade barriers against American products" was confirmed by a March 1990 poll: 62 % believed it to be a major reason and 25 % a minor reason. In February of 1992, the support for this sentiment declined slightly to 56 % and 25 % (USABC.90380.R11B, USABCWP.457.R04B).

restraints" by two to one (USLAT.99.R080). However, given the choice between a "25 % surcharge on America's toughest competitors" and "tougher negotiations with other foreign governments to get U.S. products into their countries when we allow their products into this country" respondents to a November 1985 poll preferred negotiations by 73 % to 20 % (USHARRIS.120985.R4). The responses to this latter survey do not come as a surprise, since the highly disliked surcharges (see above) were contrasted with the highly popular idea of reciprocity in foreign trade. When the policy of restricting foreign sales was labeled plainly as "protectionism in foreign trade policies," the public chose by an even higher margin the reciprocal approach in a July 1987 poll (USHARRIS.87KEY.R6D06).

By 1990, the idea of balancing foreign trade through pursuing aggressively market access in other countries had gained more prominence in American trade debates. Apparently it received also more support among the public, although attitudes remained conflicting. In a 1990 Gallup poll the idea "expand U.S. export to Japan" received more support (38 %) than "limit Japanese imports into the United States" (35 %) as among the "two best ways for the U.S. to maintain mutually beneficial economic relations with Japan" (USGALLUP.90JFN.R5). Since multiple responses were allowed in this poll, but only one protectionist statement was presented to choose from, the design of this poll may have had a free trade bias. This is underlined by the results of another 1990 poll which revealed wide-spread skepticism in respect to the impact of market access negotiations: 49 % thought such measures will make "just some difference (...) in reducing the U.S. trade deficit with Japan" another 11 % thought "none at all" (USNBCWSJ.90APR.R11) and 52 % (against 34 %) believed that "the Japanese government is insincere and will not actually remove trade barriers" (-R12).

Like the idea of market access, the strategy of export promotion was slow in gaining support among the American public. In 1981, the public supported Reagan's announcement to cut "by one-third loans by the Export-Import Bank which stimulates sales abroad" by a 58 % to 32 % margin (USHARRIS.030281.R10). By 1983 the idea that "the U.S. government should take a larger role in business planning by helping exporters to compete more profitably in foreign trade" had gained some more acceptance: 38 %, while opposition to government export promotion policies declined to 50 %. In 1985, acceptance went up even further to 41 %, but the opposition was still more numerous (45 %; USLAT.68.R57, 99.R087). This was confirmed by another poll, which let the interviewed choose between "a 25 percent surcharge on America's toughest competitors from abroad" and "to have the federal government put up at least \$500 million to help subsidize U.S. companies that sell abroad, just like other countries do for their companies selling in this country." 49 % of the respondents preferred the surcharge and only 39 % the subsidies (USHARRIS.120985.R2). By 1992, 52 % favored "providing cheap government financing to U.S. companies that want to export products or services overseas" (yet 43 % were against it). In comparison to the 1985 polls the wording of this poll was much less biased against export promotion (it did neither mention "planning" nor a sum like "\$500 million"). Very popular was the idea to provide "technical or marketing help from the government to U.S. companies that want to export products or services overseas;" 60 % v. 36 % of the respondents favored it (USHARRISBW.040692.R5C, -D) Equally popular as a remedy against the trade deficit was the depreciation of the dollar: Asked whether they would "prefer to put a 25 percent surcharge on America's toughest competitors from abroad" or "to take steps to bring down the value of the dollar abroad so that American products would become more competitive" 61 % favored the depreciation of the dollar and only 31 % the surcharge in a November 1985 poll (USHARRIS.-120985.R3).

Besides this monetary form of protectionism, a clear majority of respondents favored domestic content legislation: 67 % (64 %) supported the statement "that 50 % of any Japanese product sold in this country (should) be made in this country" in 1983 and 1985 (USROPER.83-5.R09C, 85-5.R15C).

In sum, the trade deficits seem to have shifted the discursive terrain in favor of protectionist arguments. Most Americans saw in the deficits a serious problem and preferred protectionist remedies like domestic content requirements or devaluation of the U.S.-Dollar over market access strategies and expensive export promotion programs. By how much the terrain has shifted is for the same reasons difficult to ascertain as for any trend in public opinion on foreign trade (see introduction). The public's hesitancy to blame solely foreigners for the wave of imports seems to have mitigated the impact of the deficits on the trade debate.

NAFTA: A Replay?

The public attitudes on foreign trade discussed so far are reflected in public opinion polls on NAFTA, including a significant gulf between elite and public opinion. In 1990, 86 % of the total CCFR-elite sample expressed support for opening negotiations on NAFTA (Rielly 1991: 27), and after they were completed in 1992 this support remained firm, at 84 % (Holsti/Rosenau 1993: 272-3), and did not change during Congressional deliberations.²⁸ The correlation between ideological foreign policy preferences and attitudes on trade is consistent with previous findings: "hardliners" were slightly less supportive (80 %) than "internationalists" (87 %; Holsti/Rosenau 1993: 272-3). Where those from manufacturing industries somewhat less than enthusiastically supported free trade in the 1950s, now they favored NAFTA as strongly as other elites. A 1992 Roper poll among 455 senior executives of U.S. manufacturing companies revealed that 34 % strongly favored, 47 % were mostly in favor, and just 12 % opposed the pact. Support was strongest among large companies in the telecommunication, automotive, banking and high technology industries. The fact that NAFTA enjoyed greater popularity than lowering tariffs (see above) was due in part to expectations of investment opportunities. Only 48 % of those executives ruled out the possibility that "NAFTA will be used by (their) company as a bargaining chip to keep wages down in the U.S.", and only 37 % stated that it is not all likely that their "company will shift some production to Mexico" (Wall Street Journal Europe Reports, Sept. 1992: 1, 6). Again, level of formal education and attitudes towards NAFTA were strongly correlated. In a survey taken shortly before the Congressional vote on November 18, 1993, 52 % of college graduates and 45 % of professionals favored NAFTA, while it was opposed by 42 % of those in union households and 41 % of blue-collar workers (WSJE Nov. 17, 1993: 10).

Replaying the Eisenhower experience, public debate over NAFTA mobilized protectionist forces. In a March 1991 poll, while only 32 % had "read or heard anything about the recent proposal to create a so-called 'North American free trade zone'," astounding 72 % thought that NAFTA "would be mostly good for the U.S." (USGALLUP.0391W3.R21, 040491.R2). By September 1992, however, only 54 % thought NAFTA to be "mostly good" and the positions "mostly bad" and "don't know" gained about evenly (USGALLUP.322019.-Q09).²⁹ In a survey taken in March 1993, opposition to NAFTA grew to 63 % (WSJE Nov. 10, 1993: 6). Again, concern about jobs drove opposition to NAFTA. Indeed, in March of 1991, a full 50 % of those in one survey feared the loss of American jobs (USABCWP.429.R44B). In a September 1993 poll, this number increased to 74 % (Cockburn 1993: 647).

After White House efforts to rally public opinion many opponents became "undecideds". Where a September 1993 poll revealed that 33 % were in favor and 29 % in opposition to NAFTA (WSJE Nov. 17, 1993: 10), two months later, shortly before the televised debate between Vice-President Albert Gore and billionaire Ross Perot (November 9) the percentage of those favoring the pact had risen to 48 %, while 41 % remained opposed (Stokes 1993: 2832). The debate increased support considerably among viewers: from 34 % to 57 % (by a margin of error of 6 %). The undecideds fell to only 7 % from 28 %.³⁰ The general public's attitudes were not changed much by the debate. A poll taken a few days after showed 36 % in favor, 31 % in opposition, and 26 % undecided - not much different from the September poll, especially considering the 3.6 % margin of error. Half of those surveyed said they saw at least some of the debate, and of those 43 % said they favored NAFTA. Of those Americans who said they watched the full 90-minute debate with Mr. Perot, 50 % were in favor of NAFTA (WSJE Nov. 17, 1993: 10).

28. In September 1993, more than 8 in 10 "opinion leaders" - Business, news media, political and academic elites - surveyed by the Times Mirror Center favored NAFTA (Stokes 1993: 2832).

29. In another poll in August of 1992 asking "do you favor or oppose the free trade agreement between the United States and Mexico that would eliminate all trade barriers between those two countries?" only 45 % were in favor and 38 % were opposed to NAFTA (USYANKCS.65225.Q53).

30. Results from a CNN/USA Today poll of 357 adults (as quoted in WSJE Nov. 12-13, 1993: 10). An ABC News Poll is said to have found less increase in support (Duncan 1993: 3105).

Because it is likely that those who watched the full debate had attained a higher level of formal education and, therefore, were more likely to support NAFTA in the first place, the debate's precise impact on public attitudes is very difficult to judge. In any event, those opinion polls were taken as evidence for the administration's ability to gain public support for NAFTA by both the administration and the media (which supported NAFTA almost unanimously, Cockburn 1993: 646). The administration scored on the crucial issues of jobs and leadership. Post-debate attitude surveys revealed that 50 % of the general population thought NAFTA would create more jobs than it would destroy (up from 42 % in October), and more than half said that the views of former presidents and secretaries of state had made them feel more positive toward NAFTA (WSJE Nov. 17, 1993: 10). In trying to overcome the public's apprehension that American jobs might disappear south with a "giant sucking sound" (Perot), Al Gore did not only pointed out that in recent years the United States enjoyed trade surpluses with Mexico, but he also reminded the TV audience of the significant role high tariffs played in bringing about the Great Depression (Duncan 1993). Furthermore, President Clinton attacked unions for using "roughshod, musclebound tactics" and "naked pressure" to intimidate Democratic lawmakers (WSJE Nov. 8, 1993: 2). By so stereotyping unions, Clinton fed the widely-shared belief that high labor costs reduced American competitiveness (see above).

Aware of the fact that the American public has been generally inclined to support U.S. leadership in world affairs, the administration consciously framed NAFTA as a grand foreign policy issue (Newsweek Nov. 15, 1993: 33, see also above). President Clinton kicked-off his NAFTA campaign by convening all living former Presidents, with the exception of Ronald Reagan, for a dramatic public endorsement. In the debate with Ross Perot, Al Gore emphasized America's unique international leadership role and played on American's self-image as an optimistic, can-do people. He thereby came across as more "presidential," in contrast to Perot's inability to escape his image as a protectionist displaying, in the words of Phil Duncan, a "testiness that bordered on anger" (Duncan 1993).

The administration's ultimate success in Congress perhaps contributed to the media's overlooking of the fact that public approval of NAFTA was limited and rather skin-deep; among those favoring NAFTA, only 44 % said they were *strongly* in favor, and among those opposed, 55 % said they were *strongly* opposed (WSJE Nov. 17, 1993: 10).

Summary

Throughout the post war era, on the issue of foreign trade elites and the public have been of different opinions. Whenever adherence to the principle of free trade appeared to threaten jobs, the majority of the public leaned towards protectionist measures. Giving top priority to jobs and supporting tariffs frequently went along with a belief in an active American role in world affairs. In contrast to other foreign policy issues, foreign trade splits the American people more or less along class lines.

The public's overwhelming skepticism about the benefits of free trade did not translate into generally restrictive import policies. For one, the public does not consider foreign trade to be a particular urgent problem. Proponents of freer trade have, therefore, consciously tried to insulate foreign economic policy-making from public debate. The mounting trade deficits of the 1980s have to some extent forestalled this strategy. "Free traders" have failed to alleviate public concerns about these deficits. They were, therefore, forced to seek the public's passive or active consent. In this endeavor, the fact that Americans were of two minds about imports helped. On the one hand, Americans valued the price/performance ratio of imports, and on the other, as producers they felt threatened. However, the effectiveness of countering the American public's protectionist leanings with appeals to their consumer interests was not given automatically, but very much depended on this appeal's specifics. Only in combination with the argument that imposing trade barriers leads to retaliatory action in foreign countries, threatening American exports, did a slight majority of respondents begin to oppose trade barriers.

Beyond this narrow appeal to the economic self-interests the liberal trade agenda was linked to such broader themes of American international activism as securing peace, spreading democracy, and containing communism.

While this linkage was of crucial importance in forging the post-war consensus among American elites on a freer trade agenda, the public held economic nationalism compatible with international activism. In the 1980s, "selling" free trade as part of a strategy to strengthen the Western alliance failed. In contrast to pleas for accommodating the interests of allies, portraying freer trade initiatives as instances of American leadership was more appealing and fed on the pride Americans feel for their government's ability to lead the world.

Invocation of deep-seated beliefs in individual achievement, and preferences for market over political justice, were not particularly effective in convincing people to view trade barriers as unwanted forms of government interference in the market place. However, these appeals reinforced the public's tendency to blame labor, and to some extent business, for trade deficits. Thus, while the public supported trade restrictions, it held little sympathy for those most forcefully calling for trade protection. Labor, therefore, could not count on active, engaged public support of their campaigns to limit the flow of imports or to block NAFTA.

For most of the public a belief in markets and a preference for limits on imports were not mutually exclusive convictions. Trade barriers were seen as necessary defenses against foreign unfair trade practices. Negotiations for market access abroad, or for prohibiting certain trade practices, would have conformed better with beliefs in market efficacies. However, the public remained skeptical about the effectiveness of efforts to change foreign firm or government behaviors in reducing trade deficits. In comparison to market access strategies or expensive export promotion programs, protectionist remedies, like domestic content requirements or devaluation of the U.S.-dollar, remained more popular.

Many such aspects of public opinion on foreign trade played a role in the NAFTA debates. The deep seated skepticism of the public towards a free trade agreement with Mexico was neutralized by portraying NAFTA as a job creator, by discrediting trade unions as parochial fear-mongers unable to adapt to the new imperatives of the market place, and by invoking American leadership in the Western Hemisphere. The public's expectation in an American government leading the world may explain, by the way, why Presidential candidates espousing protectionist beliefs have not yet managed to win the Presidency.

Table 1: *"By and large, do you favor higher or lower tariffs than we have at present?" Asked of those familiar with the tariff debate, 1953 - 1962*

Date	Higher	Lower	Same	No opinion	Percentage of sample
06/1953	13	30	21	36	100
09/1953	21	50	19	10	32
02/1954	16	40	27	17	45
10/1954	27	49	16	8	46
12/1954	26	42	22	10	52
06/1959	30	40	18	12	37
12/1961	31	40	14	15	52
03/1962	50	11	18	21	100
03/1962	15	38	18	29	46
03/1962	9	57	16	18	13*

* Those who were familiar with the Kennedy tariff initiative

Sources: Gallup Poll 1972, USGALLUP.62-655.R007

Table 2: *Positions on tariffs, elites versus general public, in percent, 1978-1990*

Year	Eliminate tariffs		Tariffs are necessary	
	Opinion leaders	General public	Opinion leaders	General public
1978	75	22	23	57
1982	67	22	28	57
1986	66	28	29	53
1990	64	25	33	54

Question: "It has been argued that if all countries would eliminate their tariffs and restrictions on imported goods, the costs of goods would go down for everyone. Others have said that such tariffs and restrictions are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries from competition of less expensive imports ... Generally, would you say you sympathize more with those who want to eliminate tariffs or those who think such tariffs are necessary?"

Sources: Rielly (1987: 27; 1991: 26f)

Table 3: *Most important foreign policy goals, elites vs. general public, 1974 - 1986, ratings in percent*

Goal	Sample	1974	1978	1982	1986
Protecting the jobs of American workers	elite	34	34	43	43
	public	74	78	78	78
Defending our allies security	elite	47	77	82	78
	public	33	50	50	56
Worldwide arms control	elite	86	81	86	82
	public	66	64	64	69
Securing adequate supply of energy	elite	77	88	72	72
	public	76	78	70	69
Keeping up the value of the Dollar	elite		73	38	35
	public		86	70	

Source: The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations's polls as quoted in Wittkopf (1990: 250f, 284f)

Table 4: *Protection of jobs vs. free trade: "Some people think we should have (...) quotas and tariffs to make shure that American products and jobs do not suffer from foreign competition, others believe we should rely on free trade and not take such measures"*

Date	Yes	No	Not sure
6/1984	55	33	12
7/1985*	57	36	7
9/1986	54	37	9
5/1988**	56	34	10
6/1989**	54	36	10
6/1990**	51	39	10
6/1991**	63	27	10

* Registered voters

** Question included "Free trade must be allowed, even if domestic industries are hurt"

Sources: USGBUSA.84MAY2.R16, USYANK.855731.Q33, USYANKCS.092486.R30, USCBSNYT.062088.R27, -071489.R39, -070990.R17, -061091.R13

Table 5: *Importance of foreign trade issues in comparison to other problems, open ended list, 1972-1992*

Date	Frequency of foreign trade	Most frequently mentioned	
10/1972	1.0%	Drug abuse	46%
09/1984	0.5%	Unemployment	20%
05/1987	3.0%	Unemployment	13%
05/1990	1.0%	Drugs	36%
05/1991	1.0%	Education	12%
01/1992	2.0%	Recession	28%
01/1992*	4.0%	Economy	45%
05/1992	0.5%	Unemployment	16%

* Limited list of answers, registered voters

Sources: USHART.720DC.R11B, USGALLUP.1241.Q03A, -TM09PR.R117, USPSRA.90TM2A.R101, USNBCWSJ.052491.R04B, -012392.R12, USPOS.92JAN.R03,

Table 6: *Importance of foreign trade issues in comparison to other economic problems, 1985-1992*

Date	Importance of foreign trade problems	Most important problem (among five problems)	
10/1985	8%	Budget deficit	42%
10/1987	14%	Budget deficit	34%
1/1988	15%	Budget deficit	38%
1/1989	16%	Budget deficit	43%
3/1990	*7%	Budget deficit	18%
2/1992	*2%	Unemployment	32%

* list of problems open ended

Note: Percentages of respondents choosing among federal budget deficit, unemployment, inflation, foreign trade, and interest rates as the most important economic problems at the time interviewed

Sources: NBC News/Wall Street Journal, CBS News/New York Times, C.N.N./Time/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, ABC News, Los Angeles Times

Table 7: *Protection of jobs vs. consumer choice: "Do you think it should be the policy of the U.S. to restrict foreign imports into this country in order to protect American industry and American jobs ... or do you think there should be no restrictions on the sale of foreign products in the U.S. in order to permit the widest choice and the lowest prices for the American consumer", 1982-1992*

Date	Yes	No	Not sure	Wording/Source
07/1982	72	22	6	USLAT.58.R87
05/1983	68	26	6	USLAT.68.R38
05/1983	55	36	9	import taxes lead to higher prices; USGALNEW.053083.R8
02/1984	67	26	7	USLAT.75.R21
05/1984	65	25	9	registered voters USLAT.81.R032
08/1985	46	44	10	To protect American jobs, do you favor or oppose trade barriers making it more difficult and possibly more expensive to sell foreign goods here? USGALNEW.090985.R08
09/1985	65	27	8	USLAT.99.R057
11/1987	69	21	8	USLAT.132.R53
02/1988	52	10	4	Would you still [support tighter limits on imports], even if you had less choice among products you wanted to buy and some prices went up? registered democratic primary voters; USCBSNYT.-022288.R18A
07/1988	72	21	6	USLAT.158.R28
09/1988	71	19	8	registered voters who said they planned to watch the 9/25/88 Presidential debate USLAT.162.R38
09/1988	66	26	8	Reinterviews of the above who watched the 9/25/88 debate; USLAT.163.R38
09/1988	68	21	10	4 days later, see above; USLAT.164.R38
10/1988	71	21	7	registered voters who said they planned to watch the 10/13/88 Presidential debate; USLAT.166.R38
10/1988	73	18	7	Reinterviews of the above who watched the 10/13/88 debate; USLAT.167.R39
01/1991	67	25	7	USLAT.240.R62
02/1992	70	23	6	USLAT.92-268.069

Table 8: *Protection of industries threatened by imports vs. export industries: "Which is more important to the country as a whole, protecting American industries which are threatened by imported products or protecting American industries which export their products to other countries?", 1983-1992*

Date	Pro-tection	Exports	Not sure	Wording/Source
05/1983	56	26	18	USGALNEW.053083.R9
10/1983	63	31	6	...disagree because retaliation by other countries would reduce the U.S. exports and thus aggravate unemployment in the United States; USHARRIS.120683.R3
01/1987	66	23	11	Would it be a good or a bad idea to put tighter limits on imports of foreign products? USCBSNYT.87JAN.R38
01/1987	52	10	4	Would you still (support tighter limits on imports), even if you had less choice among products you wanted to buy and some prices went up? USCBSNYT.87-JAN.R39
01/1987	37	12	4	...even if other countries would then move to keep American products out? USCBSNYT.87JAN.R39A
02/1988	50	40	10	Others oppose such trade barriers because they might lead to higher consumer prices and problems for American exporters; USGALNEW.88053.R106
02/1992	39	54	7	see above; USGALLUP.0292W1.R16

Table 9: *Is the statement "Trade barriers create world tensions" a good or not a good argument against putting restrictions on imports?, 1973-1985*

Date	Yes	No	Not Sure
11/1973	55	28	17
11/1975	58	26	17
11/1977	53	31	16
11/1984	58	32	9
09/1985	56	36	7
11/1985	58	29	14

Sources: USROPER.73-10.R11BA, -75-10.R22BA, -77-10.R23BA, -84-10.R18D, -85-10.R20D, USLAT.99.R086

Table 10: *The major causes for the U.S. trade deficit as identified by the American public, 1985*

Cause	Approval-rate
High salaries and benefits for U.S. workers	64 %
Restrictions by foreign governments on imports of American goods	61 %
The U.S. budget deficit	60 %
The high value of the U.S. dollar	57 %
Better quality of foreign goods	49 %
American government trade policies	48 %
Better management at foreign companies	39 %

Source: USABCWP.203.R25A-G

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