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## Attitudes towards Globalization: A Survey

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## **Attitudes towards Globalization: A Survey**

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#### 1. Introduction

After the fall of the iron curtain in Europe, and far-reaching political and economic reforms in many other parts of the world, globalization – defined as the integration of international markets for goods, services and assets – rapidly proceeded in the 1990s and early 2000s: Global exports of goods and services (relative to global GDP) increased from 19 percent in 1990 to 27 percent in 2005 (World Bank 2022), and the sum of countries' external assets (relative to global GDP) rose from 57 percent to 149 percent (Lane and Milesi-Ferretti 2018; Milesi-Ferretti 2021). For some years, integrating countries into the world economy that had formerly been locked away was perceived as a welcome development, and enhancing globalization was considered an obvious policy goal. Towards the turn of the millennium, however, skeptical voices both inside and outside academia started to become louder (Greider 1997; Klein 2000; Rodrik 1997; Stiglitz 2002), and critics pointed both at the problematic distributional effects and the possibly detrimental aggregate consequences of globalization.

For a while, critical attitudes towards globalization were perceived as being located at the fringe of society, and the international exchange of goods, services and assets kept intensifying, especially after China's 2001 entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, in the mid-2010s, several developments indicated that an "anti-globalist backlash" was under way: first, the outcome of the British "Brexit" referendum in June 2016 signaled that a majority of voters in the UK wanted their

country to leave the European common market.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, the US American election of Donald Trump as a presidential candidate with an explicitly protectionist ("America first") platform foreshadowed the substantial increases in tariffs that were implemented in 2018.<sup>2</sup> These policy outcomes documented that anti-globalist sentiment had moved to the heart of societies. By now, the notion of governments substantially and persistently curtailing the international exchange of goods, services and assets and adopting a nationalist approach to economic policy has turned from an extremely unlikely development into an uncomfortably realistic perspective.<sup>3</sup>

The seismic shifts observed in the recent past make it important to understand the forces that are driving attitudes towards globalization at the individual and aggregate level: Does the recent backlash against international economic integration reflect the economic grievances of an increasing number of "losers from globalization"? And, if so, what are the individual characteristics that distinguish people who welcome globalization from those who reject it? Finally, how important are economic considerations in determining individuals' attitudes towards globalization, and how relevant are motivations that cannot be rationalized on purely economic grounds?

The goal of this survey is to structure and summarize recent research on these questions. Throughout our contribution, we will focus on individuals' attitudes towards international trade in goods and services, as well as (albeit to a somewhat lesser extent) capital flows. By contrast, we will not consider attitudes towards international migration, although these also concern globalization in a broader sense of the term.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we will follow the literature in often blurring the distinction between

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It might be argued that Brexit supporters hoped that their country would get rid of the European Union straightjacket and, instead, embrace a more intensive version of globalization. However, the notion of a "Global Britain" was sufficiently vague in 2016 to conjecture that the Brexit vote revealed a rejection (rather than support) of deeper international economic integration. This interpretation is also corroborated by empirical research on the determinants of Brexit votes (Becker et al. 2017; Alabrese et al. 2019; Colantone and Stanig 2018b) which suggests that "leave" supporters were rather interested in less (rather than more) globalization.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> While it is important to note that, at a global level, trade policy already became more protectionist before 2016 (Haugh et al. 2016; Walter 2021), the proliferation of trade restrictions in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2007-2009 took part without governments fundamentally questioning the rationale for free trade.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Notably, the administration of US president Biden has reversed many decisions that were taken during the Trump presidency. However, most of the "Trump tariffs" are currently still in place.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Research shows that individuals' attitudes towards different facets of globalization – like international trade and immigration, but also, in the European context, transfers of political powers to the supranational level – are often correlated with each other (de Vries 2018; Kriesi et al. 2008; Mader et al. 2020). This may be taken as evidence that these different facets of globalization (in a broad sense) are interconnected in people's minds, too.

individuals' general attitude towards trade and their preferences towards specific trade policies. Finally, we will refrain from surveying the huge literature on the emergence of the populist radical right in general, although individuals' susceptibility to (right-wing) populist rhetoric may reflect their attitude towards globalization.<sup>5</sup>

Our survey is structured as follows: We will start by reviewing different ways of measuring attitudes towards globalization. In the subsequent section, we will sketch the hypotheses that link these attitudes to economic considerations and summarize the empirical evidence. Finally, we will discuss how attitudes towards globalization are affected by non-economic factors, focusing on the role of nationalism and xenophobia as well as generalized trust.

#### 2. Measuring attitudes towards globalization

There are various approaches to measuring attitudes towards globalization. The outcomes of elections have the advantage of being immediately policy-relevant.<sup>6</sup> However, they come with the disadvantage of reflecting an *average* of attitudes among those individuals who participated in a vote, neglecting those who refrained from casting a ballot. More importantly, election platforms usually combine a large number of different issues. This makes it extremely hard to isolate the role of globalization-related questions.<sup>7</sup> Referendums on globalization-related issues – such as the Brexit referendum of 2016 on the UK's membership in the European Union (Alabrese et al. 2019; Becker et al. 2017; Colantone and Stanig 2018b) or the 2007 Costa Rican plebiscite on joining the Central American Free Trade Area (Hicks et al. 2014; Urbatsch 2013) – offer rare opportunities for more targeted investigations.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Several studies show that the populist radical right has been more successful in regions suffering from intensifying import competition (e.g. Colantone and Stanig 2018a). Rodrik (2021) surveys the literature on globalization as one of the factors behind the recent rise of populism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Autor et al. (2020) relate the success of the Republican candidate in the 2016 presidential elections to regional exposure to Chinese import competition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Still, trade may be (among) the most decisive issue(s) in some elections. An example is Canada's 1988 federal election which, according to Beaulieu (2002), amounted to a referendum on the ratification of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Note, however, that EU membership entailed many aspects beyond the common European market, e.g. national sovereignty in legal questions.

The alternative to using election or referendum results is exploiting surveys that explicitly ask participants about their views on globalization-related issues, e.g. free trade, the relocation of production processes, or the presence of multinational enterprises. Despite various shortcomings - the potentially non-representative composition of the participant pool, the importance of how issues are framed, the risk of ambiguities and misunderstandings, and the possibility that respondents' reactions are either strategic or superficial – survey data offer the invaluable advantage that they usually combine individuals' responses with further information on those individuals' socio-economic characteristics as well as their broader political outlooks. Thus, they enable researchers to identify the factors that are driving attitudes towards globalization at the individual level. As a consequence, most of the studies that we discuss in this survey use survey data that are publicly available – e.g. the American National Election Studies (ANES), the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), the World Value Survey (WVS), the Eurobarometer survey, or the Pew Global Attitudes project.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, many of the surveys mentioned above cover a broad range of countries, which makes it possible to relate respondents' attitudes both to individual and country-level characteristics. In addition to observational studies based on such (cross-national) survey data, scholars have increasingly made use of survey experiments embedded in self-designed polls to study the causal mechanisms driving attitudes towards globalization (e.g. Chilton et al. 2020; Margalit 2012; Naoi 2020; Rho and Tomz 2017; Spilker et al. 2016; Nguyen and Bernauer 2018).

### 3. Economic determinants

Economic theory offers precise predictions on how varying degrees of economic openness affect individuals' real income levels.<sup>10</sup> If we are willing to assume that attitudes towards globalization are predominantly determined by material ("pocketbook") considerations, we can use these predictions to derive hypotheses on the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> These surveys, and the studies that draw on them, focus on globalization-related issues in general, but there is also some survey-based research investigating support for concrete policies – like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (Jungherr et al. 2018; Steiner 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Surveys on the distributional effects of globalization are offered by Dorn et al. (2018), Goldberg and Pavcnik (2007), Kanbur (2015), Lang and Mendes Tavares (2018), and Pavcnik (2017).

individual- and country-level characteristics that are driving individuals' attitudes towards free trade in goods, services and assets. However, winners and losers of trade in terms of income may be delineated along several lines. Previous research has paid most attention to sector affiliation and skill levels, but more recent studies have also looked at the "offshorability" of jobs and the international competitiveness of firms.

In the short run, the specificity of a person's qualification is likely to tie her economic fate to the industry that she is employed in, and the economic impact of globalization therefore largely depends on whether the respective industry expands or contracts as a consequence of being exposed to international competition.<sup>11</sup> This implies that we should expect employees in declining industries to be more hostile towards globalization than employees in industries that are not directly affected – e.g. because they produce non-traded goods and services – or that actually benefit from having access to foreign markets.

In the long run, an individual's industry-affiliation should become less important as a determinant of her attitude towards globalization since it becomes increasingly possible to move from one industry to another. The Heckscher-Ohlin model of international trade is based on the notion that factors of production are mobile across industries and posits that countries export goods that use their abundant factor intensively. As a country opens to international trade, those industries expand, while industries using a country's relatively scarce factor intensively contract. Based on this argument, the Stolper-Samuelson theorem (Stolper and Samuelson 1941) demonstrates that the real remuneration of the abundant factor increases as a result of intensifying trade, while the real remuneration of the scarce factor declines. This, in turn, implies that the distributional effects are determined by individuals' factor endowments – most notably, their skill level, as reflected by their educational attainment – rather than their industry affiliation. More specifically, the Stolper Samuelson theorem predicts that in skill-abundant rich countries high-skilled individuals benefit from international trade, while low-skilled individuals experience real

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Industry-specificity of factors of production is the key property of the Ricardo-Viner ("specific factors") model of international trade.

income losses. In developing countries, which are abundantly endowed with low-skilled labor, the predicted pattern is reversed.<sup>12</sup>

Empirical research finds strong support for the notion that individual factor endowments matter for attitudes towards trade: Using data from the ANES, Scheve and Slaughter (2001) demonstrate for the US that support for free trade is higher among individuals with a higher educational attainment. Mayda and Rodrik (2005) exploit the multi-country coverage of the ISSP and the WVS to document that the marginal effect of an individual's educational attainment on her support for free trade is positive in rich countries, but negative in poor countries (also see O'Rourke and Sinnott 2001). Considering per-capita GDP as a proxy for countries' skill abundance, this supports the idea that attitudes are affected by mechanisms along Stolper-Samuelson lines.<sup>13</sup> Jäkel and Smolka (2013) provide further support for the relevance of Stolper-Samuelson effects by demonstrating that the marginal effect of an individual's skill level on her support for free trade is positively related to her country's endowment with high-skilled labor. In the same vein, Jäkel and Smolka (2017) show that those individuals whose skills are more abundant in their country of residence are more likely to express a positive attitude towards free trade.

Mayda and Rodrik (2005) also provide evidence for the importance of an individual's industry affiliation and demonstrate that individuals who work in importcompeting industries are less likely to support free trade than individuals working in industries producing non-traded goods and services. Likewise, Hays et al. (2005) report that individuals employed in sectors with a high ratio of imports to value added are more protectionist.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Walter (2017) combines the factor-endowment and the industry-affiliation perspective and shows that the effect of a person's skill level on her demand for redistribution and her perception of job risk depends on whether the industry she is employed in is exposed to foreign competition or not.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Note, however, that Feenstra and Hanson (1997) argue that the relocation of intermediate goods-industries from the US to Mexico benefited skilled workers on *both* sides of the US-Mexican border (also see: Menéndez González et al. 2023).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> As Mayda and Rodrik (2005) emphasize, the varying effect of the skill level across countries supports the argument that education does not influence attitudes towards trade because it provides individuals with deeper insights on the beneficial consequences of economic integration (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006), but because globalization brings sizable economic gains to high-skilled individuals in rich countries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> By contrast, Scheve and Slaughter (2001) and Bloningen (2011) do not find industry affiliation to matter for trade policy preferences.

An important phenomenon characterizing the expansion of globalization in the 1990s and early 2000s was the increasing fragmentation of production processes across different countries, i.e. the emergence of offshoring. As a consequence, the discussion about the distributional effects of globalization has shifted from individuals' skill endowments and industry affiliations to the "offshorability" of their occupations. Following this line of argument, individuals who perform routine activities which do not require direct personal interaction should be more concerned about the possibly detrimental effects of globalization on their material wellbeing. This conjecture is supported by the analyses of Bloningen and McGrew (2014), Owen and Johnston (2017) as well as Egger and Fischer (2020), who demonstrate that job routineness and offshorability are significant determinants of individuals' opposition to free trade.

Building on the 'new new' (or heterogeneous firms) trade theory (Melitz 2003), recent work has brought the international competitiveness of firms into the picture. To the extent that individuals benefit from their firms' higher productivity (Egger and Kreickemeier 2009, Helpman et al. 2010), employees of firms that stand to profit from trade should be more supportive of it. Lee and Liou (2022) find that employees of trade-oriented firms are less protectionist, net of sectoral differences, individual skill endowment, and offshorability. This effect is particularly large for managers and employees with high skill levels.

Most theories that relate individuals' attitudes towards trade to economic considerations focus on the effect of trade on individuals' wages, but there are some notable exceptions: Scheve and Slaughter (2001) demonstrate that individuals who own real estate in regions that are more exposed to foreign import competition are less positive about free trade. More generally, there is evidence of a local channel in that individuals who live in regions negatively affected by import competition view trade more negatively (Campello and Urdinez 2021). On the positive side, Kiratli (2023) finds that individuals who live in areas with many high-growth enterprises – that may benefit from free markets – are more likely to see globalization as an opportunity.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Note that, while these results may reflect an (indirect) effect of trade on an individual's wealth and income via the local economy, they could also reflect a genuinely sociotropic reaction to the impact trade has on one's region.

The analysis of how trade affects earnings may also be complemented by an analysis of how it affects individuals' costs of living, e.g. by lowering the prices of imported goods. This is particularly important if – due to non-homothetic preferences – the structure of consumption baskets differs across income groups. Fajgelbaum and Khandelwal (2016) demonstrate that, due to the higher share of imported goods in their consumption baskets, poor individuals benefit more strongly from lower prices than rich ones. Even if these direct price effects may not dominate the negative influence of trade on earnings, they may, at least, dampen the adverse distributional consequences of trade integration. In line with the relevance of the consumer perspective, Baker (2005) finds that individuals who heavily consume imports and import-competing goods are more pro trade, and Naoi and Kume (2015) report that experimentally priming a consumer perspective among survey respondents leads to higher support for trade.

Finally, there is research indicating that trade attitudes may be affected by economic developments unrelated to trade itself. Wu (2022) argues that hostile attitudes towards globalization predominantly reflect individuals' anxiety about technological progress and automation, and that "citizens have a tendency to misattribute blame for economic dislocations toward immigrants and workers abroad, while discounting the effects of technology" (Wu 2022:470). Her analysis of the 2016 ANES indicates that those working in jobs with a higher risk of computerization are more opposed to free trade.

While the forces that potentially determine individuals' attitudes towards international trade have attracted a lot of attention, there is much less research on attitudes towards international capital flows and investment – possibly because items on international investment are less frequent in publicly available surveys, or because international financial integration has numerous different facets, which makes it hard to derive clear predictions on individual attitudes. Using data from the ISSP, Kaya and Walker (2012) show that an individual's skill level is a crucial determinant of her attitude towards multinational enterprises. Using the same data set, Harms and Schwab (2019) demonstrate that the marginal effect of individual characteristics depends on country-specific variables. Most importantly, respondents who run their own business ("entrepreneurs") have a positive view on MNCs in capital-abundant countries, but a negative one in capital-scarce countries. This finding is in line with the neoclassical

prediction that capital flows from rich to poor countries, lowering returns to capital in recipient countries, and further supports the notion that "pocketbook considerations" play an important role in shaping individuals' attitudes towards globalization.

In sum, this literature shows that material self-interests, as suggested by economic theory, affect attitudes towards economic globalization. With a multitude of channels playing a role, these effects turn out to be quite complex. It is perhaps not surprising then that studies have found individuals to hold only limited knowledge of the distributional effects of trade (Díez Medrano and Braun 2012; Rho and Tomz 2017). When survey respondents receive information on these effects, however, preferences become more in line with their material self-interests (Rho and Tomz 2017; Schaffer and Spilker 2019). This suggests that individuals' knowledge and beliefs may shape the degree to which trade attitudes are affected by economic considerations. However, it has also been pointed out that even in the absence of personal knowledge, individuals may form preferences that are in line with self-interest – for example, because intermediary organizations, such as trade unions, inform their attitudes towards trade (Fordham and Kleinberg 2012).

#### 4. Non-economic determinants

The finding that material self-interest goes a long way in explaining individuals' attitudes towards globalization should not mask the fact that most analyses also find significant effects of variables whose role cannot be rationalized on purely economic grounds. Mayda and Rodrik (2005: 1414), for example, demonstrate that non-economic factors contribute as much to explaining the variation in attitudes as economic factors, arguing that "[...], some of our most interesting results pertain to the role of values, identity, and attachments in shaping individual attitudes on trade policy." While the literature has by now looked into a large set of such factors, orientations towards the nation and xenophobia have received the most attention. Mayda and Rodrik (2005) show how various measures of nationalist attitudes. Similar measures of nationalist attitudes are included in many studies of attitudes towards trade and regularly emerge as important predictors of a protectionist stance (Hays et al., 2005; Mansfield and Mutz 2013; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2001; Rankin 2001).

Analogous results are obtained for related constructs such as isolationism (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987; Jungherr et al. 2018; Mansfield and Mutz 2009; 2013), ethnocentrism (Mansfield and Mutz 2009; 2013), nativism (Powers et al. 2021) or xenophobia (Honeker 2022), "cultural threat" (Margalit 2012), and right-wing authoritarianism (Jedinger and Burger 2020) – and reverse ones for cosmopolitanism (Lee and Liou 2022).

There are at least two complimentary explanations for the negative effect of nationalism and xenophobia on support for free trade. One is that nationalists tend to view trade "as a zero-sum game between nations" (Mayda and Rodrik 2005: 1414) and thus favor isolationism and autarky; whereas individuals low in nationalism are favorably pre-disposed towards the international cooperation they associate with international trade (Mutz and Kim 2017; Mutz 2021). A second explanation centers on the socio-cultural consequences individuals associate with globalization: Margalit (2012: 487) proposes that "people view the material effects of trade as only one component of a broader 'package' of openness that includes processes such as [...] the increasing exposure to foreign influences [or] a shift towards a less traditionalist society." In support of this mechanism, Margalit reports evidence from a survey experiment: When primed to think about cultural changes to the traditional "American way of life", U.S. Americans without college education view economic globalization more negatively.

While attitudes concerning the nation and out-groups have received most attention, these are certainly not the only non-economic attitudinal factors that have an influence. Nguyen and Bernauer (2018) argue that *social trust* is relevant for individuals' attitudes towards international trade, since trade raises uncertainty and forces people to interact with persons and institutions outside the familiar environment.<sup>16</sup> Based on experimental evidence, the authors demonstrate that, indeed, exogenous increases in social trust raises individuals' support for international trade. Among the other determinants that have been shown to influence trade attitudes are preferences over outcomes that can be negatively affected by trade, like concerns

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> This argument reflects Uslaner's (2002) definition of social trust, according to which trust is not just shaped by past experience and strategic considerations, but also extends towards persons and institutions with whom individuals have never interacted before.

about the environment (Bechtel et al. 2012), or basic psychological characteristics, like people's degree of risk aversion (Ehrlich and Maestas 2010; Johnston 2013; Mayda et al. 2007). Another strand of research points to the relevance of political elites, whose opinion leadership may affect how the broader public views international trade (Hicks et al. 2014; Naoi and Urata 2013). As trade is a rather remote policy area for the broader public and involves multiple issues, how political elites talk about trade may shape public opinion. A vivid example is Donald Trump's rhetoric on trade, who devoted a lot of attention to the issue, framed trade as a zero-sum game and meshed this with xenophobic messages. This rhetoric, in turn, seems to not only have attracted voters who were critical of trade to begin with (Rodrik 2021) but also have led his supporters to view trade more negatively (Essig et al. 2021; Plouffe and Kuo 2018).

#### 5. Conclusions

Most scholars agree that both economic and non-economic considerations affect people's attitudes towards globalization. But what is their relative importance? The question how much of individuals' attitudes towards globalization can be explained by "pocketbook" considerations, and how much is driven by motivations that elude straightforward economic reasoning is not a purely academic one: if individuals' negative perspective on free trade predominantly reflected an – actual or expected – decrease in income or wealth, economic policy should aim at compensating the "losers from globalization" in order to preserve critical support for international economic integration. Conversely, if non-economic motivations are dominating the formation of attitudes, establishing such compensation mechanisms is possibly useless.<sup>17</sup>

However, it is difficult to exactly quantify the relative importance of ideational and material self-interest factors. On the one hand, cultural attitudes provide an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Some studies provide direct evidence suggesting that compensation reduces protectionism. Using ISSP data, Hays et al. (2005) find protectionism to be less widespread in countries with more generous social security programs. Studying the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Ritchie and You (2021) uncover that Donald Trump, with his protectionist platform, was less successful both in the Republican primary and in the general election in counties where more workers profited from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA). Kim and Pelc (2021) report that counties that received more TAA support in the past voice less demand for protectionist policies in the form of antidumping petitions. Using a survey experiment, Ehrlich and Hearn (2014) find that informing individuals about the TAA reduces protectionism (only) among those with lower incomes.

alternative path that may link individuals' position in the labor market with their stances towards trade. Some authors have questioned whether the positive association between education and support for free trade in rich countries reflects economic selfinterest on such grounds, suggesting that it instead originates from the more cosmopolitan outlook of college-educated individuals as well as their exposure to economic ideas (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006). On the other hand, people's cultural attitudes may themselves be shaped by the material effects of economic globalization (Colantone and Stanig 2019; Fordham and Kleinberg 2012). For example, recent studies document how attitudes may become more authoritarian (Ballard-Rosa et al. 2021; 2022), more xenophobic (Ferrara 2023) and more nationalist (Steiner and Harms 2023) in response to the local effects of import competition. Finally, it should not be taken for granted that the relative importance of economic and non-economic determinants of attitudes towards globalization remain constant over time. As Harms and Schwab (2020) demonstrate, a higher educational attainment keeps having a significantly positive effect on individuals' attitudes towards free trade across the 2003 and 2013 waves of the ISSP. However, their empirical findings also indicate that the marginal effect of being a potential "globalization winner" has decreased over time. Whether this "eroding enthusiasm of the elites" originates in economic mechanisms or is driven by other forces remains to be shown.

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