

# Environmental Issue Linkage as Electoral Insurance: The Case of NAFTA\*

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## Abstract

How does issue linkage of environmental protection increase political support for trade agreements in legislatures? Focusing on NAFTA, I advance a view that considers the effect of linkage as moderated by legislators' electoral calculus. I argue that legislators with strong pro-environmental reputations are more likely to increase their support for trade deals with environmental provisions, when they face electoral challenges. Drawing on novel time-series survey data of legislators' positions on NAFTA before and after the finalization of NAFTA's environmental side agreement, I estimate the extent to which individual legislators changed their positions on NAFTA due to the side agreement. I find that pro-environmental legislators in safe districts significantly decreased their support for NAFTA once the side deal was agreed upon, while those in competitive districts stood their ground and increased their support at the final voting stage. This article shows how the effect of international institutions is importantly moderated by electoral considerations.

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Developed democracies have increasingly attached post-materialist issues—whether they be environmental or human rights provisions—to their Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) to increase pro-trade support domestically. Developing countries have accepted them expecting those linkages to facilitate the ratification of PTAs in developed democracies. Scholars view the linkage as institutional strategies that enhance the prospects for international cooperation via inter-state logrolling.<sup>1</sup>

Although the logic of inter-state logrolling is intuitive, the domestic side of the mechanism does not address whether legislators in developed democracies have any incentives to support post-materialist issue linkages. There are two theoretical reasons to investigate the legislative incentive regarding issue linkage: a) because the social benefit of post-materialist issue linkage is *ex ante* uncertain to post-materialist issue voters, legislators find it difficult to make their commitment to the linkage credible to those voters; b) post-materialist issues in PTAs are not sufficiently salient in legislative elections to attract legislators' support even in developed democracies. If issue linkage does not boost pro-trade support from legislators in developed democracies, it is unlikely to facilitate international cooperation on trade. Any explanation of the effectiveness of issue linkage must therefore consider how issue linkage increases legislative support despite the low electoral salience of attached issues and the credibility problem.

I focus on the linking of trade and environmental issues in the U.S. House of Representatives. First, I offer a theory that explains why some members make linkage claims despite the credibility problem. The second portion of the paper investigates why some members lend support for issue linkage despite the low salience of environmental issues during elections. By treating linkage politics as a two-stage process of *linkage signaling* and *partnering*, my theory provides new insights on linkage politics in the legislature.

First, the theory explains why some members condition their support for trade on envi-

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<sup>1</sup>Keohane and Nye 1977; Tollison and Willett 1979; Haas 1980; Sebenius 1983; Oye 1993; Lohmann 1997; Moravcsik 1998; Koremenos et al. 2001; Davis 2004, 2009; Hafner-Burton 2005, 2011; McKibben 2010, 2013; Kim 2012; Poast 2013; Lechner 2016; Postnikov and Bastiaens 2014; Bastiaens and Postnikov 2017; Mikulaschek 2018; Farrell and Newman 2018.

ronmental issue linkage at the signaling stage. Highlighting the role of credibility, I contend that members with solid reputations for their commitment to environmental issues are more likely to make linkage claims. This is because members trusted by environmental voters are better equipped to alleviate the credibility problem. While previous studies view post-materialist linkages as non-tariff barriers, I show that this economic rationale does not trickle down to legislative politics in times of ratification.<sup>2</sup> I show that the protectionist account is not adequate to explain legislative behavior with regard to *environmental* linkages, because environmental standards are not credible means to protect wage decreases to the eyes of traditional losers of trade liberalization (e.g. labor).

Second, I argue that credibility considerations alone do not explain the effect of environmental linkages on pro-trade support at the partnering stage. Here, I theorize that electoral competition importantly moderates the effect of the linkage on pro-environmental members' support for trade deals. I argue that pro-environmental members increase their support for the linkage only when electoral competition in their districts intensifies. Pro-environmental members facing close elections have stronger incentives to attract campaign donations from powerful trade lobbies in return for supporting trade deals. However, supporting trade deals may antagonize environmental voters, whose support can be decisive in close elections. I contend that pro-environmental members facing electoral challenges can capitalize on the issue linkage to preserve support from environmental voters and still tap into lucrative donations by pro-trade lobbies.

I use the theory to make sense of the case of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the first trade agreement with an enforceable environmental side agreement. Consistent with the general theory, I test two hypotheses. First, I test whether House members were more likely to condition their support for NAFTA on environmental linkages, if they had stronger reputations for their commitment to environmental protection among activists.

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<sup>2</sup>As existing scholarship has viewed social provisions as non-tariff barriers, the motivation to include these provisions has been understood to originate from protectionist lobbies. See Bhagwati 1995. Partially in line with this reasoning, Lechner 2016's study on non-trade issues in trade agreements shows that issue linkage is more likely when there is a large difference in wage levels between home and negotiating countries.

I test the validity of the theory along with the alternative accounts that emphasize partisan and protectionist reasons. Second, I explore how the conjunction of members' environmental reputations and electoral competition produced pro-NAFTA support from those who might have otherwise opposed the trade deal.

I use novel survey data that allows me to capture members' time-varying attitudes on NAFTA in the run up to the final roll call votes for the NAFTA Implementation Act in November 1993. The survey data is useful in two respects. First, the "comments/concerns" section of the survey contains information about each member's concerns with regard to NAFTA. For example, if a member had concerns about NAFTA's environmental impacts, the comment section records "environmental concerns." Using the information, I explore who made linkage claims. Second, the time-series survey provides a rare opportunity to test whether members changed their positions on NAFTA as the executive attached the environmental side agreement. Exploiting the temporal variation, I find that after the Clinton Administration finalized the side accord, pro-environmental members in competitive districts were approximately ten percentage points more positive about NAFTA than pro-environmental members in safe districts.

This article proceeds as follows. First, I identify the puzzle of environmental issue linkages during ratification of the NAFTA Implementation Act. Second, I present a theory that connects issue linkage and electoral politics. Third, the NAFTA section provides historical context. Fourth, the empirics section details the elite survey data and results on both issue linkage claims and the effect of issue linkage on their final votes on the NAFTA bill. Lastly, the article concludes with broader implications of the findings for our understanding of the relationship between electoral institutions and the effectiveness of value-based issue linkage.

# Credibility & Salience in Domestic Politics of Linkage

My theory explores how *value-based issue linkages* make trade deals politically feasible among legislators with strong reelection motives. A long line of studies have shined light on the domestic politics of issue linkage.<sup>3</sup> But much of the analytical efforts have focused on linkages of multiple economic issues (e.g. tying tariff reductions in the agriculture and semi-conductor industries) or economic issues and highly salient security issue (e.g. negotiating trade agreements in tandem with alliance negotiations).<sup>4</sup>

Yet value-based issue linkages are analytically distinct from linkages of material issues. The core political dynamic in my theory captures two underexplored features of value-based issue linkages in trade negotiations. First, legislators find it difficult to make their commitment to environmental protection credible in the context of trade negotiations because of obsolescing bargaining dynamics between environmental activists and pro-trade businesses. While activists can mobilize their broader constituents (i.e. environmental voters) to oppose trade deals running up to ratification, their power subsides dramatically once the constituents lose interest in those deals in the post-ratification phase. By contrast, pro-trade businesses with concentrated interests can patiently lobby their governments to ignore violations of en-

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<sup>3</sup>Davis 2004; Hafner-Burton 2011; Davis 2009; Farrell and Newman 2018. For instance, Davis (2004) shows that trade negotiators strategically package trade negotiations to involve multiple sectors, expecting to counter the strong domestic resistance against liberalization from protectionist industries. Moravcsik (1998) argues that issue linkage does not enlarge coalitions by weakening well-organized interest groups, because toothless linkage is not sufficient to buy support from concentrated interests. As such, issue linkage facilitates cooperation, the argument goes, when stakeholders of linked issues are diffusely organized (i.e. taxpayers or consumers). Similarly, Hafner-Burton (2011) shows how pro-trade leaders strategically link human rights issues to trade negotiations in order to gain support from pro-human rights legislators. Recently, Farrell and Newman (2018) examine how non-governmental actors with a stake in a linked issue gain bargaining power, as linkage creates access to previously unavailable political opportunity structures.

<sup>4</sup>Among others, Davis (2004) investigates the linkage of tariff reductions in the agriculture and manufacturing industries. Davis (2009) and Poast (2013) study the linkage of security alliances and trade.

vironmental clauses.<sup>5</sup> In this obsolescing bargaining environment,<sup>6</sup> environmental voters find it risky to support environmental provisions because pro-trade groups are better equipped to influence governments' decisions on enforcement.<sup>7</sup>

Second, environmental issues, like other post-materialist issues, are not typically salient in elections. In 1993 when the NAFTA Implementation Act was passed in Congress, only 8% of the American public responded that "environmental protection is the single most important election issue" to them.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, only 2% of the public responded that environmental issues affected their candidate preferences in House elections.<sup>9</sup> The low electoral salience of environmental issues is not news; Because legislators are better able to claim credit for geographically-targeted and visible concessions such as pork and remedial packages (e.g. Trade Adjustment Assistance Program), existing literature would suggest that strongly determined veto players facing partisan or economic protectionist voters would prefer those traditional concessions through which they can gain credit from their constituents,

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<sup>5</sup>See Koremenos et al. 2001. For instance, as the authors illustrate, well-organized U.S. beef exporters can pressure the U.S. government to resist domestic pressure to impose protectionist measures on European wine due to their fear of retaliation. The beef industry can monitor the government's policy behavior in the long run due to their concentrated interests. This means that they can manage to mobilize industry actors against protectionist measures because the actors' material interests are tightly intertwined. Because the government knows that the beef industry will mobilize against enforcement failure, the government will faithfully follow the trade rules.

<sup>6</sup>The intertemporal nature of the game makes this ensemble something akin to obsolescing bargaining dynamics. Vernon (1971) coined the term to explain the bargaining dynamics between a host government and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) with respect to Foreign Direct Investment. Vernon says that MNEs have the leverage in their bargain with the host government, because the government has the incentive to attract FDI. However, the bargaining dynamics change over time in the government's favor, as the MNEs increase their fixed assets in the host countries. Similarly, environmental groups have the upper hand vis-à-vis the executive in the pre-ratification stage, because they can mobilize broad networks of issue stakeholders in opposition to trade liberalization. But, once environmental groups lend support for trade agreements due to environmental linkages, their bargaining power in the post-ratification stage subsides.

<sup>7</sup>It is a well-received wisdom that value-based issue stakeholders overcome collective action problems differently than profit-seeking groups with concentrated interests. Environmental stakeholders mobilize to overcome what Hardin (1968) called *the tragedy of the commons*. By contrast, Olson contends that his framework for collective action problems is designed to explain organizations with with an important economic aspect (Olson 1965: 6). Because the environmental benefits of collective actions are diffuse and the costs are concentrated, environmental stakeholders tend to resort to mobilization tactics such as protests and petitions, rather than behind-the-scenes lobbying.

<sup>8</sup>The American National Election Studies, 1992 Time Series Study. Specifically, I focus on VAR 900223: In the campaign in this district for the U.S. House of Representatives, what would you say was the single most important issue to you?

<sup>9</sup>The American National Election Studies, 1992 Time Series Study. VAR 900228: Did you tend to prefer one of the House of Representatives candidates because of this issue?

not value concessions such as environmental linkages.<sup>10</sup> This is especially true in the context of U.S. politics, because legislators operate in smaller electoral districts under weak party discipline.<sup>11</sup>

## **An Electoral Theory of Value-based Issue Linkage**

In this section, I advance a theory that views issue linkage as an electoral strategy. While I recognize that issue linkage is mainly devised to facilitate international negotiations,<sup>12</sup> such negotiation strategies may be futile if they fail to boost support from legislators in times of ratification.

My theory disaggregates the legislative aspect of linkage politics into the signaling and partnering stages. At the signaling stage, legislators make linkage claims to express their preferences on non-trade issues. In the context of trade-environmental linkages, they choose to condition their support for trade deals on environmental safeguards. At the partnering stage, legislators who demanded issue linkage decide whether to partner with pro-trade or anti-trade factions given the linkage.

The two-stage approach is useful in explaining two aspects of legislative dynamics. First, the effect of linkage signaling may vary depending on legislators' prior reputations. The literature on issue entrepreneurship in the U.S. Congress reveals that legislators tend to invest their time advocating for an issue, if they are viewed as experts or reliable advocates in the issue area.<sup>13</sup> Effective signaling takes issue-specific reputations cultivated over a long time. However, studies that view issue linkage as non-tariff barriers do not consider such signaling costs. For example, if a pro-labor member without any prior engagement in environmental advocacy demand environmental provisions, it may not be taken seriously by

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<sup>10</sup>For a relevant argument, see Howell 2013. Additionally, Kriner and Reeves 2015 show that even presidents resort to particularistic strategies to reward their loyal supporters in the U.S. context. For a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between presidents and legislators in the realm of international trade, see Milner and Tingley 2015.

<sup>11</sup>Rickard 2012; McGillivray 2004.

<sup>12</sup>Among others, see Keohane and Nye 1977.

<sup>13</sup>See Kingdon and Thurber 1984; Weissert 1991.

peer members. Second, signaled preferences do not necessarily explain legislators' decisions at the partnering stage, because there might be false positives at the signaling stage. In the context of trade-environmental linkages, false positives are those who disingenuously demand environmental linkages to obstruct trade liberalization due to economic reasons.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, true positives are those who demand environmental linkages hoping to improve environmental outcomes. Because these two groups' objectives are different, their decisions at the partnering stage may differ significantly. Any strong environmental linkages may not satisfy false positives, whereas the same linkage may satisfy true positives. For these reasons, I theorize legislators' decisions on issue linkage on these stages separately.

## **Signaling Linkage Preferences: Policy Reputations as a Solution to the Credibility Problem**

I argue that legislators with pro-environmental reputations are better equipped to change their positions on trade based on environmental issue linkages. Environmental issue linkage can sway legislators, if they can convince environmental voters of the worth of an environmental side agreement.

For environmental linkages to help legislators convince environmental voters without damaging their reputations, voters need credible information from an outsider in order to accurately identify the range of *sincere* legislators who in fact care about environmental issues. Environmental activists can play a crucial role in providing credible information on legislators' true preferences.

How do NGOs generate credible information? NGOs can access politicians when an issue becomes salient due to an increase of media attention.<sup>15</sup> During the high salience period, activists do not necessarily need close ties to politicians to set up meetings with legislators or testify before Congress. As such, activists' interactions with legislators in this time period

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<sup>14</sup>Bhagwati 1995.

<sup>15</sup>Carpenter 2002.

do not generate useful information about legislative preferences about the issue. However, activists continue their attempts to gain access to legislators even when the issue becomes less salient. During the low salience period, activists may find it difficult to gain access to legislators. In this circumstance, if a legislator sincerely cares about the issue at hand, activists will still have access to the legislator. Even when the legislator cannot take a policy action of activists' preference, she tends to give an explanation. It is those interactions in hard times that generate credible information about legislators' true preferences about environmental protection. NGOs carefully document these behind-the-scenes interactions. They often publish these pieces of information in the form of rankings.<sup>16</sup> Other times, they share finer-grained qualitative information of their evaluations about legislators with their members. Thus collected information can serve as credible moral capital for legislators whose reputations may be tarnished if linkage is violated.<sup>17</sup>

Taken together, as activists generate credible information about legislators' preferences over environmental protection, issue voters can screen for *sincere* legislators who are willing to support trade agreements conditional on environmental linkages. On the part of legislators, having good reputations among NGOs helps them reduce the cost of building the credibility of issue linkage. They can build such credibility by serving as a political liaison between environmental NGOs and business communities in the form of proposing draft proposals for side agreements, meeting foreign counterparts, drafting and signing letters to call for enforceable environmental protection clauses, and allocate floor speeches on trade agreements to discuss environmental issues.<sup>18</sup> Because of the credibility cost of issue linkage, legislators with long track records of pro-environment policy efforts and close ties to environmental NGOs are more likely to condition their support for trade liberalization on

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<sup>16</sup>Recent studies on international politics show that comparative information such as rankings is conducive for policy reforms, and enhance the effect of information on international cooperation. See Kelley and Simmons 2015; Doshi et al. 2019; Cooley and Snyder 2015.

<sup>17</sup>Dai 2002. The author provides a framework to explain how voters who care about environmental outcomes need NGOs' expertise to evaluate environmental policies due to the non-visible and technical nature of environmental policies and outcomes.

<sup>18</sup>Most notably, Ron Wyden and Max Baucus served as liaisons between green groups and legislators.

environmental protection, as they can build such credibility at lower transaction costs compared to those without such reputations.

I explore the relationship between policy reputations and linkage claims. The first task is relatively simple and intuitive: if this conjecture is valid, I expect to find that legislators with higher ratings from environmental NGOs tend to condition their support for major trade deals on environmental protection.

*Hypothesis 1: Legislators with stronger reputations among environmental activists are more likely to condition their support for NAFTA on environmental protection and to demand linkage than are those with weaker reputations.*

## **Partnering Stage: Electoral Competition & Issue Linkage**

Do legislators' policy reputations among outside watchdogs fully explain their support for package deals with environmental linkages? In this section, I explore the moderating role of electoral politics in explaining legislators' decisions to support package deals.

While trade may be a low salience issue in general, the issue may still matter in competitive elections.<sup>19</sup> Pro-environmental legislators in competitive districts face an electoral dilemma even if trade is not an electorally salient issue. They may choose to placate pro-trade interests by supporting trade liberalization, and hope environmental voters still support them at the ballot box. When losing a small number of votes may have severe electoral consequences, legislators become risk-averse. Alternatively, they can oppose trade agreements instead of tapping into pro-trade campaign contributions. Either way, the risk of choosing one side is higher in competitive districts, where losing support from one side can have decisive effects on elections.

How does the electoral dilemma help us understand legislators' support for issue linkage? If legislators in competitive districts can convince environmental voters of the credibility of environmental linkages and earn their support for the package deal, they can compensate for

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<sup>19</sup>Studies that investigate the effects of elections in trade politics find that electoral incentives play a marginal role. See Guisinger 2009.

the loss of protectionist voters' support on the ballot.<sup>20</sup> Environmental issue linkage helps pro-environmental MCs resolve the dilemma and incentivizes them to support package deals. Why might this be?

At the core of the theory is the substitutability of electoral resources. Because protectionist and green groups typically rely on mobilization tactics as their primary mode of organization, the electoral resources held by protectionist and green groups are highly substitutable. By contrast, pro-trade groups have increasingly adopted inside lobbying and financial contributions to promote their goals. As such, the electoral resources that legislators can gain from pro-trade and environmental groups are complementary.

Pro-trade interests hold financial political resources, whereas protectionist groups are relatively better endowed with mobilization resources. Pro-trade interests, such as MNEs and business associations, gain access to the formal trade policy-making process by financing campaigns and lobbying.<sup>21</sup> Schattschneider (1935) would call them *lobbying insiders*.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the context in Schattschneider's time, recent studies find that inside lobbying in the trade policy-making process is monopolized by export-oriented industries, not import-competing industries.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, protectionist interests (i.e. labor unions) are increasingly reliant on outsider politics as their mode of organization. I call this advantage one of mobilization resources. Unions mobilize their members and the public to write letters to politicians and to participate in protests and petitions in alliance with other advocacy groups.<sup>24</sup> In Tarrow (1998)'s words, protectionist movements resemble contentious collective actions that are "distinct from lobbying." As such, the ways in which the two groups can influence electoral

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<sup>20</sup>Corroborating this line of reasoning, existing studies show that politicians' responsiveness to environmental groups' demands changes depending on electoral concerns. List and Sturm 2006 show that incumbents are more likely to form their decisions on environmental policies in line with green voters demands, "if elections are competitive and attracting additional votes is particularly valuable." Dai (2005) presents a theory to show that well-informed green voters can pressure governments to comply with international environmental agreements, if policymakers face high electoral pressure. In general, electoral competition increases the electoral significance of green voters despite the low salience of the issue.

<sup>21</sup>Osgood 2017; Kim 2017; Milner 1997.

<sup>22</sup>Also see Dür and Mateo 2016.

<sup>23</sup>Rodrik 2018; Woll 2008.

<sup>24</sup>See Von Bülow 2009.

outcomes are different. Pro-trade interests provide campaign finance behind the scenes such that politicians can use the resources to buy median voters' support through political ads.<sup>25</sup> Protectionist interests are better able to mobilize ideologically extremist voters to oppose specific candidates by launching protests or distributing negative information about those candidates.

While environmental groups adopt various organization methods, contentious collective actions tend to be their main mode of organization. While environmental lobbies have grown significantly over time, many environmental NGOs deliberately choose not to lobby for various reasons and adopt outside mobilization as their primary means of affecting political outcomes.<sup>26,27</sup> For example, Hadden shows that networks among environmental NGOs are critical in explaining environmental movements.<sup>28</sup> Overall, because environmental groups specialize in mobilization, rather than insider lobbying, what they can bring to the table is similar to that of pro-protectionist groups.

In consideration of the electoral resources held by pro-trade, protectionist, and green groups, I theorize that legislators in competitive districts have stronger incentives to pursue a complementary strategy such as issue linkage. The Downsian model shows that it is important to attract the support of ideologically median voters in order to win elections.<sup>29</sup> Studies find that voters with poorer political information are more likely to be moderate and to change their candidate preferences than are issue voters with strong political preferences.<sup>30</sup> To attract support from moderates, therefore, it is advantageous to tap into lucrative campaign contributions from pro-trade interests and to thereby increase the can-

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<sup>25</sup>See Gawande et al. 2009.

<sup>26</sup>See Dunlap and Mertig 2014.

<sup>27</sup>In the U.S. context, the proportion of environmental campaign contributions is typically meager compared to other economic interest group lobbies with a stake in trade policies. Environmental lobbies constituted only one tenth of labor lobbies in U.S. politics, when NAFTA was ratified. Specifically, environmental campaign contributions around the time when NAFTA was being negotiated in 1992 were \$1.6 million, while the contributions made by a group of U.S. transportation unions in the same year amounted to \$12 million. Center for Responsive Politics. Available here.

<sup>28</sup>Hadden 2015, 2014.

<sup>29</sup>Downs 1957.

<sup>30</sup>Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Palfrey and Poole 1987; Federico and Hunt 2013.

didate's mass media exposure.<sup>31</sup> As such, green legislators in competitive districts hope to tap into pro-trade contributions. However, the pursuit of pro-trade money risks activating broader anti-trade mobilization by protectionist and green groups. Further, the likelihood that green voters cast a deciding vote is higher in close elections than safe elections. To sum up, those running for competitive seats are uncertain about the likelihood of gaining support from the moderate median voter whose vote may be bought through aggressive campaigns, *and* they also have reasons to worry about negative campaign mobilization from ideologically extremist voters (e.g. environmental issue voters) whose withdrawal of support may negatively affect electoral outcomes. When the level of electoral sensitivity increases as described, legislators have stronger incentives to adopt a complementary strategy that can satisfy diverse constituencies.

In safe districts, legislators are more likely to pursue a specialization strategy, because they do not have a strong incentive to attract campaign donations to secure the support of median voters in general elections. Their electoral security in the general election allows them to vote on trade bills according to their own personal conscience, not needing to pursue pro-trade contributions that would provide the financial resources necessary to gain median voters' support. Instead, they have the leeway to use environmental issues to form a coherent partisan brand by connecting pro-protection and environmental agendas. Electoral security provides them with the latitude to consider a relatively non-salient issue like environmental protection as part of their broader partisan package, because doing so is instrumental to earning loyalty from partisan activists.

Testing the validity of this component of the theory requires a more nuanced approach. My theory suggests that legislators with strong reputations in environmental protection support trade deals with environmental safeguards only when they represent competitive electoral districts. As such, the main task is to test the mediating effect of electoral competition on the relationship between legislators' environmental reputations and their support

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<sup>31</sup>Larcinese 2007; Gawande et al. 2009.

for trade deals with environmental safeguards. I thus estimate a set of statistical models to test the interaction effect.

*Hypothesis 2. Legislators with stronger environmental reputations are more likely to increase their support for NAFTA if they represented competitive districts than if they represented safe districts, once the environmental side agreement is finalized.*

## NAFTA Context

In the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. was still heavily invested in the multilateral form of trade liberalization. However, as the Uruguay Round negotiations stalled, business groups demanded that the government further expand market access through PTAs. In particular, as the opening of the Mexican market was expected to benefit large corporations, big businesses fiercely lobbied Congress to pass NAFTA.<sup>32</sup> Starting in the early 1990s, the U.S. thus began to negotiate PTAs with developing countries whose environmental preferences were not as strong as those of the U.S. Despite the lobbying pressure from business groups, however, the public remained much more reticent in its support for NAFTA.

In this context, President Clinton was sworn into office in January 1993. By this time, the agreement had already been signed by all negotiating parties, in December 1992. As Clinton had made his support for NAFTA clear during his campaign, his administration considered passing NAFTA in Congress to be a top priority. Clinton also pledged to attach labor and environmental safeguards to NAFTA during the campaign. In 1992 Clinton said, “[F]rom the outset of this campaign, I have stated that I will support a free trade agreement with Mexico so long as it provides adequate protection for workers, farmers and the environment

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<sup>32</sup>See Statements from U.S. Business Leaders, May 21, 1993. For example, Edwin L. Artzt, the Chairman and Chief Executive of P&G, said, “Since the opening of the Mexican market in 1986, P&G’s U.S. export of goods and services to Mexico has grown from almost nothing to more than \$100 million, and it should approach \$200 million once NAFTA is well established.” Available in Clinton Presidential Records, 1993. “Office of Speechwriting and Michael Waldman. [NAFTA] To David Gergen From Anne Wexler [Binder].” Available here.

on both sides of the border.”<sup>33</sup>

However, it was not clear at the time whether these issue linkages would be sufficient to pass NAFTA in Congress. In the 1992 general elections, the Democratic Party maintained its majority status in the House and the Senate, with the 103rd Congress comprised of 57 Democratic and 43 Republican Senators, and 258 Democrats, one Independent, and 176 Republicans in the House.

Because the protectionist Democratic Party remained in control of the legislature, forming a pro-NAFTA winning coalition would be extremely difficult even with concessions on labor and environmental issues. In no uncertain terms, the administration had to secure support for NAFTA from Democrats despite the party’s loyalty to labor unions, while also securing support from Republicans despite the President’s partisanship. Furthermore, the Democratic Party had remained loyal to labor groups since the 1970s, despite the rise of pro-trade New Democrats. As such, the division of loyalty in the party made it difficult to rally the Democratic Party as a whole in support of NAFTA. Taken together, the mismatch of political and economic preferences of the pro-NAFTA and anti-NAFTA groups created clear tensions.

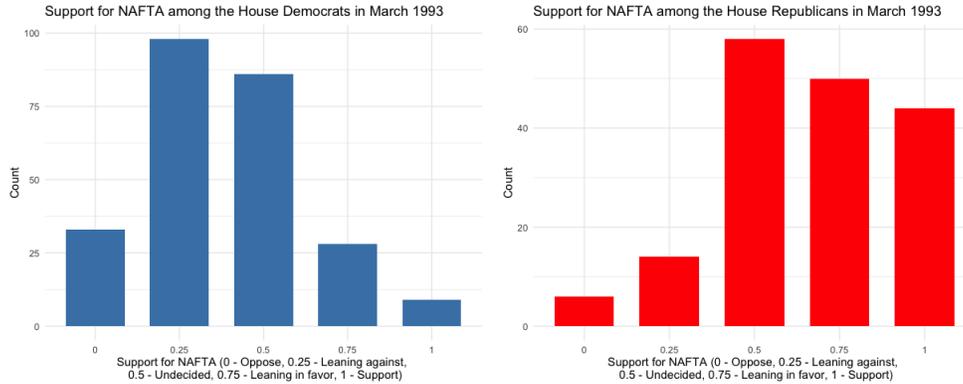
At this point, House Democrats were considered to be the most important veto players. As Figure 1 illustrates, a staggering majority of House Democrats said they were either undecided or leaning against NAFTA in a congressional survey conducted in March of 1993.<sup>34</sup> While Republican House members were more favorable than their Democratic counterparts, a significant portion of them also said they were undecided. As such, President Clinton faced an adversarial legislative landscape in which to pass NAFTA. To secure ratification, he had to develop a creative strategy that would expand the pro-NAFTA legislative coalition and that would be palatable to congressional Democrats, especially House Democrats.

What might the President do? A reader familiar with American politics may consider

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<sup>33</sup>Statement of Gov. Clinton on North American Free Trade Agreement. U.S. Newswire, August 12, 1992. Available here. Accessed November 7, 2018.

<sup>34</sup>See “U.S.A.\*NAFTA Survey.” *Inside U.S. Trade*. April 9, 1993. Volume 11, Issue 15: Special Report.

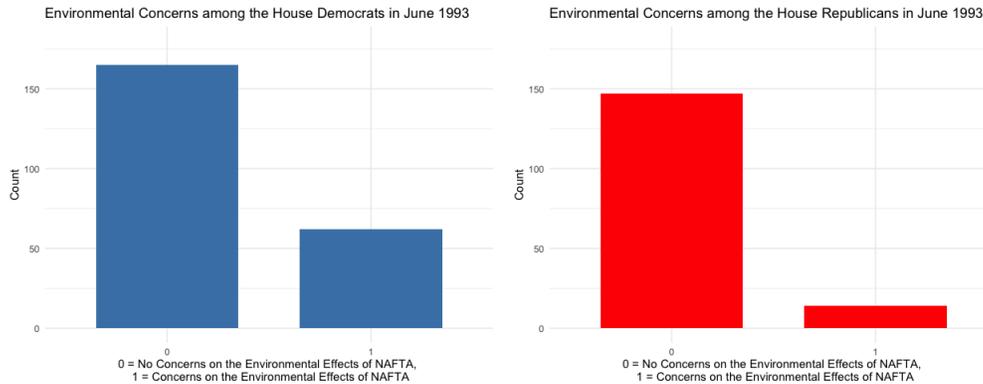


**Figure 1** – House Members’ Positions on NAFTA by Partisan Affiliation in March 1993

pork barrel politics as the most viable strategy for presidents facing contentious bidding, and President Clinton was no exception. The Clinton Administration used various kinds of pork to gain legislative support for NAFTA.<sup>35</sup> However, the Administration knew that pork barrel politics had its limits. At that time, they were also attempting to build a coalition for a health care bill, and offering particularistic concessions for NAFTA would deplete the available resources that would be essential for this and other important policy agendas. To clarify the point, in August 1993, Robert Pastor, the former Director of Latin American Affairs at the National Security Council (NSC), emphasized the limits of buying votes with particularistic favors. He wrote, “If the President wins NAFTA by a sliver in which he has to make concessions for every last vote, he will emerge weakened to deal with health care.”<sup>36</sup> In this context, environmental issues were considered politically appropriate to make NAFTA popular. In the early 1990s, environmental issues were already being discussed in the context

<sup>35</sup>A Washington Post article in the run up to the congressional vote neatly describes the prevalence of pork barrel politics as follows: “Rep. Esteban E. Torres (D-CA) was considered a prize catch in the battle over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). A prominent Hispanic American legislator and a former official with the United Auto Workers, Torres came under intense pressure from supporters and opponents of the pact. When he finally said yes last week, his vote came at a hefty price: a jointly funded, bi-national North American Development Bank to help cushion the impact of the pact on workers and communities. And on the day he announced his support, not one other legislator stood up with him—even though some administration officials had been led to believe as many as eight others might join Torres. “One man, one bank,” sighed one House Democrat.” Cited from Dan Balz, “White House Intensifies NAFTA Push,” Nov 1, 1993. The Washington Post. Available here.

<sup>36</sup>See Pastor, Robert (Chairman of the NAFTA Task Force). “Dear Mr. Daley.” Received by Daley, William. August 29, 1993.



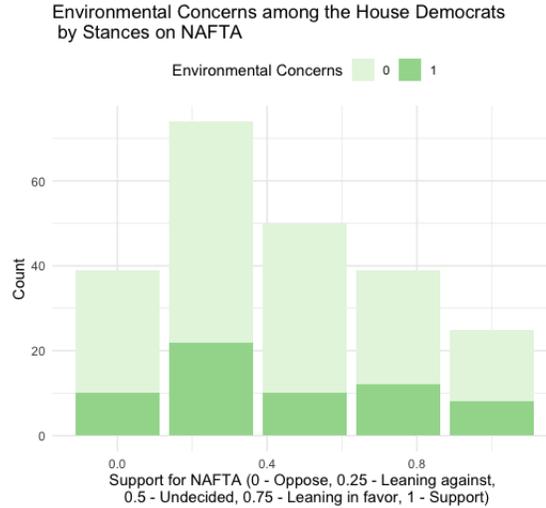
**Figure 2** – Environmental Concerns about NAFTA in the House of Representatives by Partisan Affiliation (June, 1993)

of the NAFTA negotiations before President Clinton came into power. As fast-track authority for GATT was scheduled to expire in June 1990, the Bush Administration submitted a request for an extension of the fast-track authority in March of 1990. Activists with stakes in various issues attempted to infiltrate the iron curtain of the trade policy-making process. According to Audley’s analysis of media coverage on NAFTA between June 1990 and May 1991, 15% of the coverage focused on environmental issues related to NAFTA, while immigration and human rights aspects of NAFTA gained only 4% and 3% of the newspaper coverage.<sup>37</sup> On the legislative level, Ron Wyden (D-OR)’s “Dear colleagues” letter channeled the public attention on environmental issues to the legislative body. In response, the Bush Administration made a verbal commitment to a parallel track for environmental issues.

Further, environmental protection had become a Democratic issue by this time. Specifically, more than a third of House Democrats expressed concerns about the environmental effects of NAFTA by June of 1993. As Figure 2 shows, House Republicans did not consider the environmental impacts of NAFTA to be as serious as the Democrats did. As such, attaching environmental safeguards to NAFTA appeared to be a promising strategy for the administration to appeal to those House Democrats.

Would these self-proclaimed green House Democrats lend support to NAFTA if the agreement included environmental clauses? If the executive were certain that they would, this

<sup>37</sup>Audley 1997.



**Figure 3** – Environmental Concerns among House Democrats by NAFTA Stance (June, 1993)

strategy would be the most cost-effective and promising coalition strategy. Yet, the Clinton Administration had strong reasons to suspect that many of those green Democrats would not support NAFTA even in exchange for an environmental side agreement. As Figure 3 shows, 52% of those self-professed green House Democrats said that they were opposed to or leaning against NAFTA. There was the possibility, then, that these legislators might use environmental issues to justify their protectionist positions. As a result, the executive remained uncertain as to whether the environmental side agreement would pay off and attract adequate support from House Democrats.

## Data

To test the hypotheses, I draw from surveys of members' attitudes on NAFTA. The elite survey was conducted monthly throughout the year of 1993 in the run up to the final votes for the NAFTA Implementation Act in November 1993. The survey was commissioned by the biggest pro-NAFTA business coalition (USA\*NAFTA). The canvassers of the survey visited individual members to conduct face-to-face interviews with the members themselves or their staff.

The primary goal of the survey was to gauge whether individual members supported or opposed NAFTA and why they held that position. As such, the survey contains two sets of important information. First, elite attitudes on NAFTA over time. The survey's estimates rank each member's attitude toward NAFTA on a scale from one to five (5 = "against", 4 = "leaning against", 3 = "undecided", 2 = "leaning in favor", 1 = "favor"). Second, the survey contains information about each member's concerns with regard to NAFTA in its "comments/concerns" section. For example, if a member had concerns about NAFTA's environmental impacts, the comment section records "environmental concerns." Closer to the final vote, major media companies conducted similar surveys. Notably, *the Associated Press* and *CongressDaily* conducted the same survey on legislators' attitudes in October and November.

I investigated three sources for the data: trade journals, presidential records, and media coverage. First, a membership-based trade journal, *Inside U.S. Trade*, featured two surveys of member attitudes on NAFTA conducted in March and September.<sup>38</sup> Because the USA\*NAFTA coalition treated the survey as confidential, they published the results only sparingly. Second, I retrieved survey results dated June 16 through archival research of Clinton Presidential Records. In June, the coalition shared the survey results with the Clinton Administration. Third, I investigated the media coverage of NAFTA. Through this investigation, I recovered two set of media-led surveys of member attitudes on NAFTA. Taken together, I retrieved five waves of congressional survey on NAFTA (See Table 1).<sup>39</sup>

I use the surveys to construct two outcome variables of my interest: linkage claims and linkage support.

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<sup>38</sup>See Cinar and Gulotty N.P. for the September survey.

<sup>39</sup>For a more detailed explanation, see Lee et al. N.P..

**Table 1** – Congressional Surveys on NAFTA in 1993

Survey date	Canvasser	Coverage	Information coverage
March 11, 1993	USA*NAFTA Coalition	House	Attitudes (1-5 scale)
June 16, 1993	USA*NAFTA Coalition	House, Senate	Attitudes (1-5 scale), Comments on NAFTA
September 20, 1993	USA*NAFTA Coalition	House, Senate	Attitudes (1-5 scale), Comments on NAFTA
October 22, 1993	CongressDaily	House	Attitudes (1-5 scale)
November 15, 1993	The Associated Press	House	Attitudes (1-5 scale)

## Empirics

### Hypothesis 1: Reputations and Linkage Politics

Are legislators more likely to condition their support for trade deals on environmental protection if they have stronger reputations in the domestic environmental community? Or, is environmental linkage a function of party politics and protection in disguise? To test the relationship between legislators’ policy reputations and their engagement in linkage politics, I estimate a set of logistic regression models with various controls.

The outcome variable of interest captures whether legislators conditioned their support for NAFTA on the agreement’s environmental impact in the run up to the final votes in Congress. Drawing from the comments/concerns of the June 16 survey, I code 1 for the MCs who expressed concerns about NAFTA’s environmental impacts, and 0 for the MCs who did not. As such, this variable directly captures legislators’ revealed preferences for environmental safeguards. I call this variable *Linkage claims*.

I hypothesized that only those legislators with strong reputations for dedication to environmental protection among activists can manage to condition their support for NAFTA on environmental issues. In order to measure the legislators’ environmental reputations, I use the annual scorecard indicators by the League of Conservation Voters.<sup>40</sup> The scores are based on a scale that ranges from 0 to 1, and are “calculated by dividing the number of pro-

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<sup>40</sup>See the League of Conservation Voters website: [scorecard.lcv.org](http://scorecard.lcv.org).

environment votes cast by the total number of votes scored.” The League selects which votes to include in the indicators based on “the consensus of experts from about 20 respected environmental and conservation organizations.” The indicator usually includes environmental issues such as energy, global warming, public health, public lands and wildlife conservation, and spending for environmental programs. I use the legislators’ lifetime scores, rather than the annual scores, because the cumulative data better capture their genuine commitment to, and hence reputations regarding, environmental protection.

I also include individual legislators’ partisan affiliations as a control variable (*Party*). Policy debates in this time period show that the environmental and labor side agreements were designed to placate House Democrats. The party hypothesis makes more sense when it comes to the labor side agreement, because labor groups have been loyal to the Democratic Party since the 1970s.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, environmental groups oftentimes allied with the Democratic Party, and yet environmental groups in this time period were less invested in the Democratic coalition than were labor groups. Therefore, it is unclear whether this hypothesis will be validated in the empirical test. That said, if the hypothesis is valid, we should find that congressional Democrats were more likely to condition their support for NAFTA on environmental protection than were their Republican peers.

I include *Education* as a covariate to capture the effects of constituents’ education level on linkage claims. This variable represents the proportion of individuals over the age of 25 who have earned at least a bachelor’s degree, as a share of the population.<sup>42</sup> Researchers argue that environmental quality is a post-materialist good which educated groups are socialized to indulge in once their basic material needs are met.<sup>43</sup> As such, highly educated individuals are more likely to have stronger preferences for environmental protection. At the same time, these individuals are likely to support trade liberalization because highly skilled individuals tend to gain from trade expansion in a skill-abundant economy like the U.S. As a result,

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<sup>41</sup>Karol 2009.

<sup>42</sup>Data source: the Census.

<sup>43</sup>Inglehart 1995; Abramson and Inglehart 1994.

**Table 2** – The Expected Signs of the Coefficients

Variables	Expected signs
Reputation	+
Democrats	+
Education	+
Labor PAC	+

MCs representing more highly educated constituents are likely to support trade liberalization and environmental protection at the same time. If individual preferences for trade and environmental protection are shaped by socialization through education, MCs representing this group of individuals should be most likely to emerge as aggressive advocates of issue linkage.<sup>44</sup>

Legislators representing pro-protection groups may strategically adopt environmental protection to justify their stance on NAFTA and to broaden their anti-NAFTA coalition. Existing research finds that such protectionist economic incentives play an important role in justifying non-trade social clauses.<sup>45</sup> In order to control for this possibility, I include information on the campaign contributions that each legislator gained from labor groups in the most recent election, as of 1993 (*Labor PAC*).<sup>46</sup> The expectation is that legislators highly dependent on labor lobbies may be more likely to adopt environmental concerns as another reason to oppose NAFTA, not necessarily because they care about environmental issues but to use the issue to broaden anti-NAFTA sentiment in their districts. If this alternative hypothesis is valid, I should find that the coefficient on this variable is positively associated with legislators' tendency to mention environmental protection as a major source of their concerns about NAFTA.

- *Results*

The results from the logistic regression models are reported in Table 3. First, I run a model that includes only MCs' environmental policy reputations, which is the main explana-

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<sup>44</sup>Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006; Ehrlich 2010.

<sup>45</sup>Fischer and Serra 2000; Bhagwati 1995.

<sup>46</sup>This is drawn from the database on "Influence & Lobbying" on [OpenSecret.org](http://OpenSecret.org).

tory variable. As expected, MCs with strong reputations among environmental activists are more likely to condition their support for NAFTA on environmental protection. Substantively, the model predicts that an MC whose rating from the environmental community is at the lowest level is expected to condition his NAFTA support on environmental protection by 4%.<sup>47</sup> The predicted probability for those with the highest rating increases to 44%. The coefficient on this variable is highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). The positive and highly significant coefficient shows that legislative preferences for environmental linkages are a function of their ability to convince green groups of the environmental benefit that the linkage can deliver. Those who cannot convince green groups due to their weak environmental reputations do not expend effort demanding environmental linkages, because they cannot claim credit for the linkage from green groups.

Can the strong effect of *Reputation* on *Linkage* survive the inclusion of other potential explanatory variables?

One alternative account entertained in policy circles was a partisanship hypothesis. That is, Democrats demanded environmental linkages to a greater extent than Republicans did, because environmental protection is a Democratic issue. To test the partisanship hypothesis, I add *Democrats* in the second model as a control variable. The sign of the coefficient on *Reputation* is still positive and statistically significant. However, I do not find strong evidence to support the partisanship hypothesis. Holding the *Reputation* variable at its mean value, congressional Democrats are predicted to list environmental effects as part of their concerns about NAFTA at a rate of 17.4%, while Republicans are predicted to do so at a rate of 14.5%. The magnitude of the coefficient is not as substantial as *Reputation*. Furthermore, the coefficient on *Democrats* is not statistically significant at conventional confidence levels.

In Model 3, I add *Education* to test whether MCs representing highly educated constituents are more likely to demand environmental linkage due to those voters' stronger

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<sup>47</sup>For instance, Senator Dirk Kempthorne from Idaho had the lowest rating of 0.01, and he did not list environmental protection as a concern about NAFTA. Senator Kempthorne listed "sugar" and "fair trade" as his major concerns about NAFTA.

environmental preferences. *Reputation* remains positive and highly significant. As for *Education*, I do not find strong evidence that MCs representing highly educated constituents are more likely to demand the linkage. The results add nuance to the conventional wisdom that politicians promote environmental issues to placate highly educated voters with pro-environmental preferences. The weak significance of the *Education* variable might suggest that voters' raw preferences for environmental protection do not explain politicians' decisions to link issues. Instead, MCs condition their support for trade on environmental protection, only when authoritative outside watchdogs can vouch for their credibility.<sup>48</sup>

**Table 3** – Relationship between Policy Reputations and Demands for Environmental Linkages before the Finalization of the Environmental Side Agreement (June, 1993)

	Linkage Claims				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
REPUTATION	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)
DEMOCRAT		0.21 (0.41)	0.41 (0.45)	0.41 (0.47)	-0.04 (0.68)
EDUCATION			2.07 (1.77)	2.07 (1.77)	2.19 (1.78)
LABOR DONATION				-0.0001 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
CONSERVATISM (DW-NOM1)					-0.94 (1.05)
CONSTANT	-3.22*** (0.38)	-3.24*** (0.39)	-3.61*** (0.50)	-3.61*** (0.60)	-3.14*** (0.79)
<i>Observations</i>	387	387	387	387	387
<i>Log likelihood</i>	-171.19	-171.06	-170.38	-170.38	-169.98
<i>Akaike information criterion</i>	346.38	348.11	348.76	350.76	351.95
<i>Notes:</i>	***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1				

I then include *Labor PAC* to test whether environmental linkage claims are a protectionist strategy in disguise. In this model, the positive association between MCs' environmental reputations and demands for linkage still remain highly significant. By contrast, I do not find affirmative evidence that labor contributions positively affect demands for environmental linkages. Model 4 shows little evidence supporting the labor protection hypothesis: the negative sign on the *Labor PAC* coefficient indicates that pro-labor MCs are less likely to claim they are concerned about the environment, and the coefficient is not statistically sig-

<sup>48</sup>The Pearson correlation estimate of *Reputation* and *Education* is 0.11 ( $p < 0.02$ ).

nificant across the models.

To test if environmental linkage claims are a manifestation of progressive ideology, Model 5 represents a fully saturated model with the inclusion of *Conservative ideology*.<sup>49</sup> The results show that MCs' issue-specific reputations better explain their linkage behavior than their ideological predispositions.

The results from the model imply two related takeaway points: *Legislators demand environmental linkages only when they have the reputational capital to convince constituents who care about the environment, and they do not find environmental protection to be a useful tool to rally partisan voters or pro-protection groups for trade liberalization.* Throughout the tests, I find that neither legislators' party affiliations and nor their associations with labor PACs explain their engagement in linkage politics. Substantively, the results indicate that legislators do not use environmental issues to protect labor groups or to prove their loyalty to the Democratic Party. By contrast, environmental policy reputations prove to be an important factor explaining legislative support for environmental linkage. The *Reputation* variable is positively correlated with *Linkage* and remains consistently significant throughout the tests. Taken together, the results enhance our understanding of who finds issue linkage useful. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that privileges partisanship and protectionist motivation, my results reveal that legislators invoke environmental issue linkages sparingly and only when they have the ability to convince green groups and green voters.<sup>50</sup>

## **Hypothesis 2. Reputations, Electoral Competition and Post-linkage Position on NAFTA**

We now know that pro-environmental legislators demanded linkages, while pro-labor and Democratic legislators (all else equal) did not. Yet, demanding such a linkage does not always lead to supporting the linkage. We thus do not yet know whether pro-environmental

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<sup>49</sup>I use DW-nominate scores that capture MCs' economic ideology. Available at <https://voteview.com/about/>.

<sup>50</sup>I conduct the same set of analyses based on the survey conducted in September, 1993. See Appendix.

legislators lend support for trade deals when environmental safeguards are attached.

To the question “does issue linkage work?”, I hypothesized the following: as the executive formally attaches an environmental issue to a trade agreement, pro-environmental legislators in competitive districts are more likely to support the linkage than are similar legislators in safe districts. After the finalization of the linkage, those in competitive districts are strongly incentivized to support the linkage and to take a pro-trade position to attract pro-trade campaign contributions without losing support from environmental groups. The linkage does not incentivize pro-environmental legislators in safe districts to support the package deal, because they do not have the incentive to pursue pro-trade money. If this expectation is valid, I should find that pro-environmental legislators in competitive districts are more likely to have changed their positions in support of NAFTA in the September survey (one week after the finalization of the environmental agreement) after having opposed it in June (before the side agreement), compared to those in safe districts.

*The Outcome Variable: Linkage Effects*

To test the linkage effect, I study whether certain MCs became more positive about NAFTA immediately after the conclusion of the environmental side agreement. To construct an outcome variable that captures the effect, I use MCs’ attitudes on NAFTA at two time points: the June 16 (pre-linkage) and September 20 (post-linkage) surveys. To measure MCs’ change in their attitudes on NAFTA in this time period, I re-construct the measure such that a larger number indicates stronger support for NAFTA. I then subtract the June estimates from the September estimates to measure the degree to which individual MCs increased their support for NAFTA from June 16 to September 20.

Why June 16 and September 20? On May 21, the NAFTA parties circulated the first draft text of the environmental and labor side agreements.<sup>51</sup> The Composite Draft of the environmental agreement shows that the parties had divergent preferences on enforcement: the U.S. proposed that the dispute settlement mechanism in the NAFTA agreement should be

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<sup>51</sup>See Special Report on NAFTA, *Inside U.S. Trade*, June 11, 1993. S.6-S.7.

used to resolve environmental disputes (e.g. trade sanctions as an enforcement tool), whereas Canada and Mexico were opposed to it.<sup>52</sup> As such, the June 16 survey captures MCs' baseline attitudes on NAFTA at which point they assumed that the environmental side agreement would lack any meaningful enforcement mechanism. On September 13, the NAFTA parties signed the environmental side agreement with enforcement provisions preferred by the U.S. The final agreement allows for monetary fines and suspension of trade benefits as enforcement tools. As such, the September 20 survey captures MCs' updated attitudes on NAFTA as the Clinton Administration delivered a stronger environmental agreement than they had expected on June 16.

*The Interaction of Environmental Reputation and Electoral Competition*

The main focus of the current analysis is whether the interaction of environmental reputation and competition has a positive effect on legislative support for NAFTA. As such, I draw from the reputation score that I constructed based on the annual scorecard indicators by the League of Conservation Voters, and interact it with another variable that captures electoral competition in each district.<sup>53</sup> I call this variable *Competition*. *Competition* is a binary variable that measures the competitiveness of the most recent election in which the member of Congress ran. For the House of Representatives, the most recent election was held in 1992. I code congressional districts as competitive if the winning candidate gained less than 60% of the total vote.

Some studies may expect environmental reputations (*Reputation*) to be, on average, negatively correlated with an increase in support for NAFTA; One strand of the existing literature on issue linkage argues that issue linkage does not boost support for a policy because stakeholders of the attached issue are expected to demand stronger linkages (Moravcsik 1998). If this argument is applicable to the case of NAFTA, I should find that legislators

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<sup>52</sup>For instance, the U.S. proposed that the environmental Ministerial Body should install a similar implementation scheme as the NAFTA dispute settlement, which would allow for economic sanctions. However, Mexico and Canada were opposed to the idea.

<sup>53</sup>Dallas L. Dendy, Jr. Donald K. Anderson, "Statistics of the Presidential and Congressional Election." 1992, 1990, 1988, 1986. U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE. Election statistics available here.

with stronger environmental reputations withdraw support for NAFTA as they are disappointed about the weakness of the side agreement. However, another body of studies argues that issue linkage boosts support from those stakeholders (and legislators with close ties with those stakeholders) because the linkage creates a new opportunity to mainstream their policy agenda (Hafner-Burton 2011). As such, the relationship needs to be empirically tested.

*Electoral competition* is expected to be positively associated with linkage effects. Studies suggest that electoral competition makes politicians care about non-salient issues such as women's rights and the environment.<sup>54</sup> Members in competitive districts, then, have stronger incentives to change their positions on trade when environmental linkages are negotiated, even if they do not particularly care about the environment.

The interaction of *Reputation* and *Competition* is expected to show a positive sign. My theoretical expectation is that legislators with environmental reputations tend to increase their support for trade deals in return for environmental linkages if they are facing competitive elections.

#### *Control variables*

A series of other important developments also took place from June to September of 1993. For instance, labor groups fiercely lobbied to oppose NAFTA. As a counter, President Clinton finalized the labor side agreement along with the environmental accord. The summer recess also gave legislators better ideas about what their constituents wanted. To control for these changes that arose between June and September of 1993 and that may have affected the outcome of interest, I include the same set of control variables that I used in the previous analysis. Those variables are *Education*, *Democrat*, and *Labor PAC*.

All else equal, Congressional Democrats should be more likely to change their positions in opposition to NAFTA after the finalization of the environmental side agreement than Republicans. If parties exercise discipline on trade and individual legislators care about scoring loyalty points with their parties, I expect that Democrats will take protectionist turns more

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<sup>54</sup>Bouton et al. N.P.; List and Sturm 2006.

easily than Republicans. However, President Clinton, a Democrat, made NAFTA a key part of his policy platform. As such, Democrats in Congress must have been conflicted between loyalty to the president (pro-trade) and the party (protectionist). To sum up, I do not expect this relationship to be strong.

Typically, *Education* is expected to be positively correlated with support for trade liberalization. That said, it is not clear whether *Education* plays an equally important role in explaining the “change” in legislative support for trade deals. Because voter make-up is a relatively static factor, legislators representing highly educated districts may have already taken their constituents’ trade preferences into account in June. If this were the case, the relationship between *Education* and an increase in support for NAFTA is expected to be positive yet weak at best.

I include labor donations to control for the effect of the labor side agreement that was negotiated in the same time period and labor lobbies. I expect to find *Labor PAC* to be negatively associated with *linkage effect*. Labor groups competed with pro-trade lobbies to win legislative support for their side. For MCs highly dependent on labor contributions, labor’s support was the most important consideration in their decisions on NAFTA. In general, I expect this variable to be negatively correlated with the outcome variable, because labor groups strategically changed their contribution plans closer to the NAFTA vote. However, if the labor side accord negotiated by the Clinton Administration convinced some pro-labor legislators to support NAFTA despite labor’s lobbying efforts, the correlation may not be as strong as expected.

Table 4 summarizes the expected signs of the coefficients on the explanatory and control variables.

- *Results: Does Electoral Competition Increase Pro-environmental House Members’ Support for Trade Deals with an Environmental Side Agreement?*

I estimate OLS regression models in which *Reputation* is interacted with *Competition*. If the theoretical expectation is valid, I expect to find that the interaction term is positively

**Table 4** – The Expected Signs of the Coefficients on Change in Support for NAFTA

Variables	Expected signs
Reputation	+ or –
Democrats	–
Education	+
Labor PAC	–
Competition	+
Reputation:Competition	+

associated with support for NAFTA.

The results are striking. The results from Model 1 (reported in Table 5) indicate that MCs with stronger environmental reputation, all else equal, decreased their support for NAFTA from June to September despite the conclusion of a stronger environmental side agreement. Although the significance of the coefficient on *Reputation* weakens as *Democrat* is included, the negative sign of the coefficient suggests that the environmental issue linkage did not dramatically increase support for the trade agreement from pro-environmental MCs.

The results from Model 2-4 provide evidence in support of my theory. Model 2 is an interaction model where I interact *Reputation* and *Electoral Competition*. The sign of the interaction term is positive in line with the general theory, and statistically significant.

The results from Model 2 are visualized in Figure 4. Substantively, the results indicate that a MC with the best environmental voting record running in a safe district is expected to decrease her support for NAFTA by 15.3 percentage points in September from her baseline support in June. A very similar MC with the worst environmental voting record in a safe district is estimated to decrease her support by only 2.6 percentage points in September. According to the results, if MCs in safe districts are strongly committed to environmental issues, we can expect to see a significant drop in their support for trade deals even if environmental safeguards are attached.

In competitive districts, the opposite is true. As the positive and significant coefficient on the interaction term indicates, a legislator with the best environmental voting record is

expected to decrease her support for NAFTA by only 5.9 percentage points compared to her position in June. Further, the expected support from pro-environmental MCs in competitive districts, -5.9 percentage points, is slightly higher than -6.3 percentage points, the estimated support score of a legislator with the lowest environmental reputation score in competitive districts. The estimated support score for a pro-environmental MC in a competitive district is 9.4 percentage points higher than the expected support from the most environmentally conscious legislator in a safe district. The results are robust to the inclusion of a set of control variables such as partisanship, ideology, labor lobbies, and education.

To contextualize the results, the general sentiment about NAFTA in the Congress became significantly negative in early September of 1993. The Clinton Administration needed 217 votes to pass the NAFTA Implementation bill in the House. In August, approximately thirty MCs were either undecided or negative about NAFTA.<sup>55</sup> However, another undisclosed survey conducted on September 10, three days before the signing of the environmental side agreement, records that fifty one MCs were undecided or negative about NAFTA. In this adverse environment, pro-environmental MCs in competitive districts stood their ground.

- *Final Votes: How Long Does It Last?*

Based on the analysis of the elite survey data, we have some evidence to support the theoretical claim that electoral competition increases green legislators' support for trade deals with environmental safeguards only in the House. In the Senate, legislators' demands for linkage were positively associated with their support for trade deals with environmental provisions. But, these results do not capture their final decisions. Did the influence of electoral pressure and policy reputations get translated into final votes in Congress? The NAFTA Implementation Act (H.R. 3450) was passed in the House on November 17, 1993, approximately two months after the September survey. I thus test whether the moderating effect of electoral competition is still borne out in the final votes in the House.

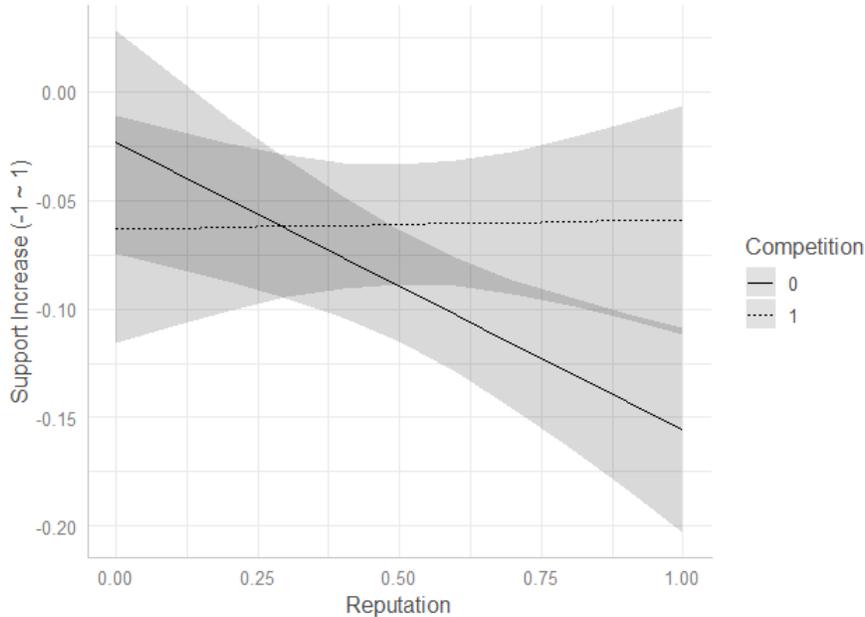
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<sup>55</sup>*Inside U.S. Trade*, a trade journal, records that the Clinton Administration was thirty votes short as of August 1, and thirty-one votes short as of August 27, 1993. See Special Report in *Inside U.S. Trade*, October 1, 1993.

**Table 5** – Relationship between Legislator Characteristics and Increases in Support for NAFTA after the Finalization of the Environmental Side Agreement (OLS Regressions)

	Linkage Effect			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
REPUTATION	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.12** (0.06)	-0.12* (0.07)
COMPETITION	0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)
DEMOCRAT			-0.01 (0.03)	
CONSERVATISM				0.01 (0.05)
LABORPAC			-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
EDUCATION			0.09 (0.13)	0.09 (0.13)
REPUTATION:COMPETITION		0.14** (0.06)	0.14** (0.06)	0.14** (0.06)
CONSTANT	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)
<i>Observations</i>	387	387	387	387
<i>R-squared</i>	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03
<i>Adjusted R-squared</i>	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
<i>Residual standard error</i>	0.19 (df = 384)	0.19 (df = 383)	0.19 (df = 380)	0.19 (df = 380)
<i>F statistic</i>	3.74** (df = 2; 384)	4.11*** (df = 3; 383)	2.22** (df = 6; 380)	2.21** (df = 6; 380)

Notes: \*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1



**Figure 4** – Marginal Effects of Environmental Reputation on Support Increases by Electoral Conditions

In this case, I use logistic regression models to estimate legislators' final votes. It is appropriate to use logistic models in this case because the outcome variable is binary. More importantly, my goal is to estimate individual MCs' tendency to change their positions on NAFTA given their baseline attitudes in the pre-linkage period. Therefore, I include the estimates of individual MCs' positions collected in June of 1993 in order to capture the extent to which they changed their positions in the final vote count in November compared to their proclaimed positions in June. If the theoretical expectation is valid, I expect to find MCs with strong environmental reputations to be more supportive of NAFTA with the environmental side agreement if they are facing competitive elections.

The results reported in Table 6 provide evidence in support of the theory. In Model 4, the interaction term between environmental reputations and electoral competition is positive and highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>56</sup> As the results from Model 5 and 6 show, the hypothesized relationship survives the inclusion of control variables.<sup>57</sup>

The results from Model 4 are visualized in Figure 5. Overall, the hypothesized relationship holds up: MCs' environmental reputations and legislative support for NAFTA are positively associated only for those in competitive electoral districts, not those representing safe districts. Specifically, the predicted probability of supporting the NAFTA Implementation Act increases from 38.92% to 65.12% as an electorally pressured MC's environmental reputation increases from the lowest level to the highest level. This suggests that MCs under fire in their home districts are more willing to use environmental issue linkages to convince even a small number of environmental voters, if they have the reputational capital to convince them. By keeping support from environmental groups, these MCs can pursue other types of electoral resources provided by pro-trade groups without having to worry about a broader backlash from environmental-labor coalitions.

By contrast, MCs in safe electoral districts behave in exactly the opposite manner. For

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<sup>56</sup>In this baseline model, I include labor lobbies as a control variable, because the conclusion of the labor side agreement was another important change that might have swayed pro-labor MCs.

<sup>57</sup>Although I believe that MCs' positions in June are a function of their partisanship, voter education, and ideology, I include these variables as controls in the additional tests.

these MCs, their environmental reputations are negatively associated with their support for NAFTA in the final vote. Substantively, the predicted probability of supporting the NAFTA Act decreases from 74.20% to 43.72% as an electorally safe MC's environmental reputation score increases from the lowest level to the highest level. This is in line with the theoretical expectation regarding legislative behavior in safe districts. Because these legislators are certain about getting support from median and moderate voters, they do not have strong incentives to pursue fungible electoral resources such as pro-trade campaign contributions. These legislators are more interested in sending signals to primary voters with more activist ideologies and in earning partisan loyalty. If they are respected by the environmental community, they can use that reputation as a steppingstone to gaining support from mobilized primary voters by forming broader left-leaning Democratic coalitions that include environmental, labor, and human rights activists.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the natural choice for these legislators is to oppose NAFTA to send credible signals to the hybrid anti-trade coalition.<sup>59</sup>

In sum, the most important finding of the article is that pro-environmental MCs respond differently to environmental safeguards because their electoral strategies are different. Compared to pro-environmental MCs in safe districts, pro-environmental members in competitive districts were 21.4 percentage points more likely to support for NAFTA with the environmental side agreement. In safe districts, they have the leeway to use environmental issues to form a coherent partisan brand by connecting pro-protection and environmental agendas. Electoral security provides them with the latitude to consider a relatively non-salient issue like environmental protection as part of their broader partisan package, because doing so is instrumental to earning loyalty from partisan activists. For these legislators, environmental, trade, and security issues are all connected through the partisan logic that will further their

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<sup>58</sup>See Appendix for supporting evidence.

<sup>59</sup>It is worth mentioning the Republican corollary to the theoretical framework. They may want to appeal to right-wing activist voters by forming broader coalitions of free traders, security hawks, and pro-life activists. They may thus tend to support trade liberalization to appeal to the hybrid pro-trade coalition that would be instrumental in cultivating their partisan loyalty. This expectation is borne out in the passage of the China Permanent Normal Trade Relations Act in 2000. Republican legislators attempted to attach security provisions on nuclear proliferation, a prohibition on abortion, and promotion of American business values, among other measures.

political careers. As such, environmental issue linkages alone may not be enough to buy support from these legislators. By contrast, pro-environmental legislators in competitive districts are pressured to frame environmental issues differently to secure their immediate survival. Their primary goal is to secure support from median and moderate voters. As such, they are willing to frame environmental issues as a stand-alone issue detached from other partisan issues and to advocate for the usefulness of environmental clauses in trade agreements, because doing so helps them gain campaign contributions from pro-trade groups and increase their media exposure to median voters.

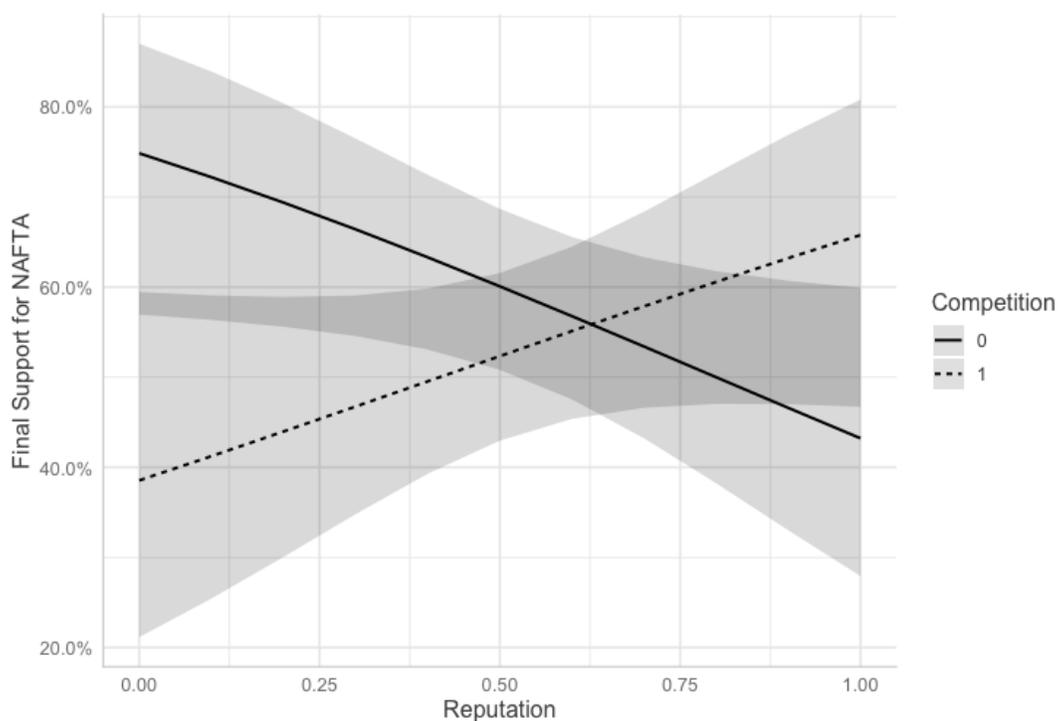
**Table 6** – Relationship between MC Characteristics and Support for NAFTA in the Final Roll Call Votes

	Final Support					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
JUNE	4.71*** (0.45)	4.54*** (0.47)	4.56*** (0.48)	4.78*** (0.50)	4.58*** (0.51)	4.51*** (0.51)
REPUTATION		-0.34 (0.51)	-0.33 (0.51)	-1.36** (0.66)	-1.20 (0.82)	-0.66 (0.99)
COMPETITION			-0.19 (0.27)	-1.56*** (0.58)	-1.58*** (0.59)	-1.54*** (0.59)
REPUTATION:COMPETITION				2.48*** (0.94)	2.46*** (0.94)	2.33** (0.95)
LABORPAC		-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.08* (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.05)
DEMOCRAT					-0.31 (0.45)	
EDUCATION					2.32 (1.96)	2.17 (1.94)
CONSERVATISM						0.90 (0.75)
CONSTANT	-2.44*** (0.28)	-1.63*** (0.50)	-1.55*** (0.52)	-0.90 (0.58)	-1.23* (0.64)	-1.66** (0.71)
<i>Observations</i>	388	387	387	387	387	387
<i>Log likelihood</i>	-183.12	-179.62	-179.36	-175.76	-174.41	-173.94
<i>Akaike information criterion</i>	370.24	367.23	368.73	363.52	364.83	363.87

*Notes:* \*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

## Conclusions

The environmental safeguards attached to NAFTA represented an unprecedented political experiment to overcome the legislative uncertainty surrounding the ratification of the trade deal. At the time, the consensus in the Clinton Administration was that the environmental



**Figure 5** – Predicted Probabilities of Supporting NAFTA

side agreement would be essential to attract support from House Democrats who cared about environmental issues. But, did the side accord work as planned? Despite the important economic and environmental consequences of NAFTA, there have been no rigorous tests of the claim that the issue linkage successfully boosted support for the trade agreement.

Studies on issue linkage rarely delve into the question of why some pro-environmental legislators change their positions due to environmental linkages while other pro-environmental legislators do not. This is an important and unfortunate omission, because most issue linkages ranging from human rights to security, expand coalitions by dividing and conquering existing issue stakeholders. When a new issue is attached, some support the linkage and others resist. Because there are almost always both proponents and opponents of an issue linkage, it is important to answer the question, “who flips?”

In this light, this article contributes to our understanding of how issue linkage expands policy coalitions. The most important finding of the article is that electoral competition

plays a key role in pro-environmental legislators' decisions to flip: pro-environmental House members in competitive districts were found to be approximately 20 percentage points more likely to increase their support for NAFTA after the side agreement was attached, compared to pro-environmental legislators in safe districts.

Additionally, this article's findings demystify the conventional wisdom entertained among policymakers without empirical scrutiny. Specifically, it is commonplace to see arguments that environmental safeguards can placate import-competing industries and labor unions. Yet, I do not find evidence to support the protection in disguise hypothesis. The statistical findings indicate that pro-labor legislators rarely condition their support for NAFTA on environmental protection disingenuously. Losers of trade liberalization may find it hard to believe that the environmental side accords would protect their businesses. Instead, the analysis of the elite survey data shows that legislators make value claims on trade liberalization only when they can credibly convince green groups to support the linkage using their pre-existing reputational capital.

Of course, electoral competition does not explain the effects of issue linkage in all types of legislatures. The electoral theory of issue linkage does a better job explaining the trends of support in the House of Representatives than in the Senate. In the Senate, where elected officials face larger electoral constituencies and long electoral cycles, the evidence does not suggest that electoral incentives moderate the effect of issue linkage. Instead, Senators were typically more likely to increase their support as the executive attached the environmental side accord, regardless of the electoral environment or their policy reputations.

This may serve as a first step toward understanding the effects of electoral institutions on issue linkage strategies in developed democracies. If the findings are generalizable, environmental clauses may boost support for trade agreements more dramatically in legislatures with larger constituencies and longer and/or staggered electoral cycles, regardless of legislators' policy reputations or electoral incentives. Because the electoral institutions in these legislatures are deliberately designed to supply "stability and experience", members of those

legislatures are strongly incentivized to support safeguard provisions that enhance environmental welfare with public implications, still maintaining the electoral leeway to support those provisions even if they do not expect to use the linkage to their immediate electoral advantage. We might thus expect that the positive effect of value-based issue linkages would be stronger if the European Parliament, which has larger constituencies, were the only legislature to get involved in a ratification process.<sup>60</sup> If regional and national parliaments with geographically constrained constituencies were to play a role along with the European Parliament in a ratification procedure, the effect of environmental linkages would likely be moderated by electoral competition.<sup>61</sup>

This article's findings show rather convincingly that the channel through which issue linkage delivers legislative support is complicated by electoral incentives. The findings may have readily applicable policy implications for pro-trade political leaders. If they are facing a legislature in which a large number of incumbents operate in competitive electoral environments, attaching a value-based issue may boost support from those legislators who care about the attached issue. Further, the findings suggest that pro-trade leaders would be ill-advised to expect that environmental linkages would help them to earn support from the economic losers of free trade.

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<sup>60</sup>The flip side of this argument is that the absence of issue linkage may decrease the chance of ratification in this type of legislatures. I find that this de-linkage strategy decreased support for the streamlined trade deal with the U.S. in the European Parliament. See Lee, Boram. "Does Attaching Environmental Issues to Trade Agreements Boost Support for Trade Liberalisation?" *Bruegel*. April 24, 2019. Available here.

<sup>61</sup>In the passage of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the E.U., the Belgian regional parliament of Wallonia vetoed the deal despite numerous social clauses attached to the deal. The French-speaking and largely socialist region voted down the agreement based on its weak consumer, environmental, and labor standards in 2016. The Walloon Parliament happens to be the only regional parliament with geographically apportioned constituencies (arrondissements), not an at-large province-based constituency. Presumably due to the difficulty of passing trade deals in those parliaments, the European Commission has recently pursued a de-linkage strategy, precisely because the passage of trade agreements with social clauses (mixed agreements) requires the consent from national and regional parliaments.

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## Appendices

*-How Robust Are the Results?* How robust are the results? Did legislators behave differently after the side agreement was finalized? If their goal was to gain support from green groups, they must continue to signal their interest in the environmental side agreement. If they removed environmental issues as part of their concerns after the signing of the side deal, there would be reason to suspect that the strong explanatory power of environmental reputations is limited to the pre-side agreement period. To test this, I conduct the same set of analyses on the data drawn from the September wave of the legislative survey. If legislators recalibrated their positions on environmental linkage after the signing of the side agreement, these tests will pick up the differences.

The coefficients are reported in Table 7. Among others, two points are noteworthy. First, legislators’ environmental reputations remain positively associated with their demands for environmental linkages. That is, MCs with strong environmental reputations continue to signal their interest in the environmental effects of NAFTA even after the finalization of the side agreement. This evidence supports my argument that pro-environmental legislators support the linkage to gain credit from green groups: for them to gain credit from green groups, they must keep harping on environmental issues until after the trade agreement is ratified. The strong results in the September data corroborate this reasoning. Second, in line with the previous analysis, I do not find evidence in support of the protectionist hypothesis. One may argue that congressional Democrats and pro-labor legislators may have formed last-minute coalitions with radical environmental groups and demanded environmental linkages after the signing of the side agreement. I do not find any evidence to support this counter-argument. The coefficients on *Democrat* are again positive yet statistically non-significant. The same is true of pro-labor MCs. The coefficients on *Labor PAC* are consistently not significant across the tested models.

**Table 7** – Relationship between Policy Reputations and Demands for Environmental Linkages before the Finalization of the Environmental Side Agreement (September, 1993)

	Environmental Linkage Claims in U.S. Congress (Sep, 1993)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
REPUTATION	3.58*** (0.56)	3.35*** (0.67)	2.79*** (0.71)	2.72*** (0.72)	2.33*** (0.84)
DEMOCRAT		0.24 (0.40)	0.59 (0.44)	0.52 (0.45)	0.07 (0.66)
EDUCATION			3.67** (1.67)	3.66** (1.67)	3.80** (1.68)
LABORPAC				0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
CONSERVATISM					-0.90 (0.99)
CONSTANT	-3.66*** (0.41)	-3.70*** (0.42)	-4.35*** (0.52)	-4.57*** (0.65)	-4.13*** (0.80)
<i>Observations</i>	433	433	433	433	433
<i>Log likelihood</i>	-181.88	-181.69	-179.24	-179.05	-178.63
<i>Akaike information criterion</i>	367.76	369.39	366.48	368.09	369.26

Notes:

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

*Does primary competition explain linkage effects?* Alternatively, one may argue that environmental issue linkage boosts support from MCs in districts where Democratic primaries are competitive. To test this, I subset my data set into pro-environmental House Democrats (whose environmental ratings are higher than the House average score of 0.52). I regress the linkage effect variable (measured by their change in attitudes on NAFTA from June to September) on the number of Democratic primary candidates in each district (variable: DEM PRIMARY CANDIDATES). The primary data is drawn from Pettigrew et al. (2014). If environmental issue linkage boosts pro-trade support from Democratic MCs facing competitive Democratic primaries, I should find a positive relationship between these two variables. However, the results indicate otherwise. As the results in Table 8 indicate, I find significant and negative associations between the number of Democratic primary candidates and MCs' support for NAFTA after the finalization of the side agreement.

Substantively, these additional tests show that ideology-heavy electoral competition (e.g. competitive Democratic primaries) may activate perverse incentives on the part of legislators. Partially in line with Moravcsik's argument on issue linkage, pro-environmental MCs facing ideology-heavy electoral competition may demand stronger issue linkage in order to further prove their commitment to the issue at hand. My main results on electoral competition in general elections show that environmental issue linkage boosts support from MCs under pressure to portray themselves as moderate.

- *How Competitive Should Future Elections Be?* I consider electoral pressure to be relatively high, if a MC's previous vote share did not exceeded 60%. I conduct additional tests by lowering the threshold of electoral competition to 51%. As the results in Table 9

**Table 8** – Relationship between Primary Competition and Increases in Support for NAFTA after the Finalization of the Environmental Side Agreement Among Pro-environmental House Democrats (OLS Regressions)

	Linkage Effect		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
DEM PRIMARY CANDIDATES	−0.02** (0.01)	−0.02** (0.01)	−0.02** (0.01)
EDUCATION		0.06 (0.20)	0.07 (0.20)
CONSERVATISM (DW-NOM1)			0.13 (0.11)
CONSTANT	−0.05** (0.02)	−0.07 (0.05)	−0.02 (0.06)
<i>Observations</i>	183	183	183
<i>R-squared</i>	0.03	0.03	0.04
<i>Adjusted R-squared</i>	0.03	0.02	0.02
<i>Residual standard error</i>	0.21 (df = 181)	0.21 (df = 180)	0.21 (df = 179)
<i>F statistic</i>	5.82** (df = 1; 181)	2.94* (df = 2; 180)	2.44* (df = 3; 179)

*Notes:* \*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1

show, the signs of the baseline variables and the interaction term are consistent with the general theory throughout the models. Overall, the coefficients are statistically significant except for the 51% threshold.

**Table 9** – Relationship between MC Characteristics and Increases in Support for NAFTA at Different Levels of Electoral Competition (OLS Regressions)

	Linkage Effect by Vote Share					
	(<58%)	(<57%)	(<56%)	(<55%)	(<52%)	(<51%)
REPUTATION	−0.13*** (0.04)	−0.12*** (0.04)	−0.12*** (0.04)	−0.11*** (0.04)	−0.09** (0.04)	−0.08** (0.04)
COMPETITION	−0.06 (0.04)	−0.07* (0.04)	−0.08* (0.04)	−0.07* (0.04)	−0.11** (0.05)	−0.09 (0.05)
REPUTATION:COMPETITION	0.17*** (0.06)	0.17*** (0.07)	0.19*** (0.07)	0.16** (0.07)	0.16** (0.08)	0.09 (0.09)
LABORPAC	−0.001 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.003)	−0.001 (0.003)	−0.001 (0.003)
CONSTANT	−0.01 (0.03)	−0.01 (0.03)	−0.01 (0.03)	−0.01 (0.03)	−0.01 (0.03)	−0.03 (0.03)
<i>Observations</i>	387	387	387	387	387	387
<i>R-squared</i>	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.02
<i>Adjusted R-squared</i>	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
<i>Residual standard error</i> (df = 382)	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19
<i>F statistic</i> (df = 4; 382)	3.56***	3.36**	3.62***	2.53**	2.47**	2.01*

*Notes:* \*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1