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### **ABSTRACT**

In the two decades straddling China's WTO accession, the China Shock, i.e. the rapid trade integration of China in the early 2000's, has had a profound economic impact across U.S. regions. It is now both an internationally litigated issue and the casus belli for a global trade war. Were its consequences unexpected? Did U.S. politicians have imperfect information about the extent of China Shock's repercussions in their district at the time when they voted on China's Normal Trade Relations status? Or did they have accurate expectations, yet placed a relatively low weight on the subconstituencies that ended up being adversely affected? Information sets, expectations, and preferences of politicians are fundamental, but unobserved determinants of their policy choices. We apply a moment inequality approach designed to deliver unbiased estimates under weak informational assumptions on the information sets of members of Congress. This methodology offers a robust way to test hypotheses about the expectations of politicians at the time of their vote. Employing repeated roll call votes in the U.S. House of Representatives on China's Normal Trade Relations status, we formally test what information politicians had at the time of their decision and consistently estimate the weights that constituent interests, ideology, and other factors had in congressional votes. We show how assuming perfect foresight of the shocks biases the role of constituent interests and how standard proxies to modeling politician's expectations bias the estimation. We cannot reject that politicians could predict the initial China Shock in the early 1990's, but not around 2000, when China started entering new sectors, and find a moderate role of constituent interests, compared to ideology. Overall, U.S. legislators appear to have had accurate information on the China Shock, but did not place substantial weight on its adverse consequences.

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# 1 Introduction

The China Shock, the large surge in imports from China that started in the 1990's and that has turned China into one of the U.S. main trading partners, has received broad attention in academia and policy making. Although early research by Autor et al. (2013, 2016) and Pierce and Schott (2016) focused mainly of its employment effects, a large literature has expanded the analysis to health, social, and political outcomes of the shock.<sup>1</sup> While in hindsight China's entry in the U.S. market may seem like a preordained outcome, in a series of roll call votes during the 1990's members of Congress were faced with the choice of allowing China to maintain its Normal Trade Relations (NTR) and ultimately assigning China Permanent NTR status.

In this paper we ask to what degree U.S. politicians were informed about the consequences of the China Shock for their voters and how much the expected impact on their constituents affected their support in favor or against China's NTR status.<sup>2</sup> These two questions are intrinsically related and point to the difficulty of modeling forward-looking expectations and decisions by policy makers in a context where these choices depend on consequences that are not known at the time of the vote. We present a model and an estimation strategy of the decisions and expectations of law makers. In this, we depart from the empirical political economy literature on legislative voting (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997; Heckman and Snyder, 1997; Clinton et al., 2004; Canen et al., 2020) and extend it in a distinct direction, as a formal analysis of law makers' information sets and expectations does not typically figure in standard empirical models of voting.

To consolidate our intuition, consider the following. A naive approach to estimating the importance of constituent interests may be the replacement of the politician's expectations of the China Shock with their realized values. However, assuming that politicians are perfectly informed about future shocks when they are not, necessarily implies a downward bias in the coefficient that measures the preference weight placed on constituent interests within a discrete choice voting model. This is due to an intuitive error-in-variables argument (i.e. the mechanical negative covariance between the expectational error and the realized future value of the shock). Without correction, a small coefficient may be interpreted as low responsiveness of politicians to subconstituents' fortunes, possibly indicating a political accountability problem (Kalt and Zupan, 1984, 1990). In reality, a small coefficient may be as well the result of assuming that politicians are better informed than they truly are. Yet, this rather points to a limited expertise or insufficient

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<sup>1</sup>Among the others, see Greenland and Lopresti (2016), Feler and Senses (2017), Autor et al. (2019), Greenland et al. (2019), Autor et al. (2019) and Autor et al. (2020a).

<sup>2</sup>The role of electoral constituencies and subconstituencies in driving the behavior of members of Congress has played a central role in the analysis of policy support in Washington at least since Fenno (1978); Peltzman (1984). See also Mian et al. (2010, 2014) for more recent applications.

information acquisition of legislators (Krehbiel, 1992). Because these interpretations have distinct policy implications and they call for different remedies, it seems relevant to be able to distinguish between them.

To address the estimation challenge, we link the political economy literature to a separate strand of the international trade literature. The novel moment inequality methodology of Dickstein and Morales (2018), developed in the context of the decision of firms to export to foreign markets, allows us to consistently operate within an expectational environment where what belongs to the information set of the decision maker is only partially observed. That is, this moment inequality approach only requires the econometrician to know a subset of the information available to the politician at the time of his or her vote for consistent estimation of parameters – a much less demanding restriction. This approach turns out to be particularly informative in our context. It allows us to estimate a voting model under general assumptions about the politician’s information set and expectations, and therefore to answer the question of how much politicians cared about the China Shock in the first place.

Naturally, economic consequences on their voters were not the only considerations affecting individual law makers’ support for NTR and our model accommodates these features.<sup>3</sup> It is generally believed that several members of Congress voted to withhold NTR status in order to affect China’s position on human rights, as the series of yearly roll call votes on China’s NTR status between 1990 and 2001 started after the Tiananmen Square events of 1989. We therefore also allow the voting behavior to depend on the ideological position of the legislator and the expected electoral cost of supporting China’s NTR status, taking into consideration the district-specific impact of China’s continued and growing exports to the U.S.. Further, in the utility function, ideology also captures the position of the legislator towards free trade policy, that is the value the politician places on the collective gains from maintaining low import tariffs.

We establish two main results. The first result is a moderate role of constituent interests. An interquartile difference in the value of the the shock decreases the probability of voting in favor of NTR for China by roughly 4 percentage points, while an analogous difference in ideology creates a 15-20 percentage point increase in the probability of supporting NTR for China. In our heterogeneity analysis, we show that constituent interests are more important for Democrats than for Republicans and for politicians that were elected with small vote margins (a margin of responsiveness supported by other studies, see discussion in Mian et al. 2010; Ladewig 2010).

The second main result of our analysis is that politicians possessed a significant amount of

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<sup>3</sup>There is a vast literature discussing pure economic models of voting where electoral constituents (Peltzman, 1984) or subconstituents matter for roll call voting in Congress versus ideology of members of Congress (Kalt and Zupan, 1984, 1990; Levitt, 1996). For a recent review see (Mian et al., 2014).

knowledge about the future China Shock. In some years we cannot reject that they perfectly forecasted the shock that would hit their district in the next five years. More precisely, for all years from 1990 to 2001 we cannot reject that politicians had, at least, enough information to forecast 55 percent of the variation in the China Shock. Perhaps surprisingly, our findings imply that knowledge decreases over the 1990's, a result that is plausible given that China's comparative advantage shifted substantially during the late 1990's and early 2000's. Comparing legislators across parties, we find that Democrats were systematically more informed than Republicans, with the exception of the early 1990's, a period when they are both equally informed. We also present several robustness exercises for our approach, including a comparison of the NTR voting for China to the NTR voting for the case of Vietnam, showing how the moment inequality approach highlights similar patterns in information sets and preferences.

Finally, we employ the estimated model to perform counterfactual exercises in which we give politicians perfect information about the upcoming shocks and calculate the change in voting behavior that would have resulted from the additional information. We find that overall support for China's NTR status would not have changed substantially in the presence of perfect information.

In essence, to the question in the title "Did U.S. politicians expect the China Shock?", our answer is "Yes, but they did not give it substantial weight." Counterfactual simulations in section 6.2, where such weight is increased for all lawmakers in our sample for given baseline information, show that pro-China legislation would have been overturned.

One important premise to the question we are posing is the assumption that the electorate is generally attuned to trade policy positions of their representatives. It would otherwise be unclear why politicians would care about the reaction of voters. While it is implausible to assume that voters have a complete command of specific trade policy measures, a number of papers have documented the impact of the China shock and the recent trade war on electoral outcomes. Autor et al. (2020b) find that districts more affected by the China shock saw an increase in Fox News viewership and elected more conservative Republicans and, to a lesser extent, more liberal Democrats, thus inducing more polarization.<sup>4</sup> Another recent contribution by Che et al. (2020) finds that the 2010's reaction to the China shock is due to the anti-trade turn taken by the Republican party after the appearance of the Tea Party. The same paper finds that, during the 2000's, the areas affected by the China shock voted more in favor of Democrats. Blanchard et al. (2019) also document a significant electoral impact of the trade war on the vote share of Republicans in 2018. Interestingly, the negative effect on GOP vote share coming from retaliatory tariffs imposed by U.S. trading partners is not mirrored by a positive effect due to

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<sup>4</sup>Colantone and Stanig (2018) document a similar result for Western European countries.

the protection offered by import tariffs. In sum, these recent papers offer a clear justification for making constituent interests a major component of the decision to vote on an important trade policy measure, like maintaining and expanding China’s Normal Trade Relations status.<sup>5</sup>

This paper contributes directly to the literature on Congressional voting, in particular on trade policy. An example is Baldwin and Magee (2000), which estimates the importance of constituent interests and campaign contributions from business and labor groups in three trade bill votes in the 1990’s. Relative to Baldwin and Magee (2000), we sharpen the estimation of the role of constituent interests by employing a more precise measure of how constituents were impacted by the policy, but mostly by applying a new econometric methodology to expectations of politicians. A more recent paper by Feigenbaum and Hall (2015) studies the impact of the China Shock on congressional voting on trade bills in general and finds that congressmen in districts more negatively affected are less likely to vote in favor of trade promoting bills, as classified by the Cato Institute, a think-tank in Washington DC. Differently from Feigenbaum and Hall (2015) retrospective view, we take a prospective angle in modeling voting behavior, where law makers are deciding to vote based on the future electoral consequences of their decision. In the broader literature on the political economy of trade policy, Rodrik (1995) offers a more conceptual framework and depicts trade policy as emerging from demand (interest groups, grassroots, etc) and supply (government) factors. This paper’s contribution sheds light on the individual behavior of legislators that constitutes a crucial element of the policy “supply side”.

Beyond the trade policy literature, this paper speaks to the established empirical literature focused on modeling voting in legislatures. The elements of this vast scholarship that are closer to our paper span political economy and political science (Poole and Rosenthal, 1984; Levitt, 1996; Heckman and Snyder, 1997; Poole and Rosenthal, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; Clinton et al., 2004; McCarty et al., 2006; Canen et al., 2020). Modeling prospective behavior of legislators does figure in this strand of research, as it is often postulated that a representative politician acts by “determining her roll-call vote choice based on which legislative options will maximize her future utility” (Ladewig, 2010). Stimson et al. (1995) argue that in congressional voting “elected politicians...sense the mood of the moment, assess its trends, and anticipate its consequences for future elections”. However, expectations and information sets of lawmakers are rarely explicitly modeled as part of the empirical approach. The more complex exercise of assessing whether a politician may not be responding to prospective constituent conditions in her or his vote because of limited information or because of policy preferences appears unexplored. We contribute to this

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<sup>5</sup>A recent paper by Fajgelbaum et al. (2020) points to the importance of constituent interests in the structure of tariffs in the Trade War the US started in 2018. U.S. import tariffs are such that marginal counties (those with a Republican vote share of around 50 percent) receive the highest level of protection.

by showing how this moment inequality approach provides a useful stepping stone in estimating prospective behavior of law makers.

Less directly, our application offers an alternative and complementary view to the empirical literature focused on modeling the expectations of policy makers. This analysis has traditionally found important applications in Macroeconomics (Primiceri, 2006; Sargent et al., 2006), and in this sense, the paper connects to a broader set of questions than congressional voting alone. Our estimates also speak to the modeling of government preferences, a key area of political economy.<sup>6</sup>

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 builds a baseline model of probabilistic voting useful for rationalizing the data. Section 3 lays out the estimation methodology including appropriate model specification tests, while 4 describes the data on roll call votes and the China Shock. Section 5 reports estimation results and the following section presents counterfactual analysis based on our baseline estimates. Section 7 concludes.

## 2 Empirical model

This section presents a simple model of probabilistic voting for members of Congress. Indicate a congressional cycle with  $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$ . Each period a single bill focused on a main policy issue is introduced – in this application the normalization of trade relations with China. As previously discussed, such bills were typically presented to the U.S. legislative branch and voted upon once per congressional cycle, so that  $t$  may equivalently indicate time and bill number.

Let us indicate with  $x_t \in \mathbb{R}$  a policy position favorable to trade normalization, so that a Yes vote will indicate a vote for  $x_t$ . Consequently, one interprets a No vote as a vote against normal trade relations,  $q_t \in \mathbb{R}$ . This notation allows for the two positions to be affected by some nuance over time and neither position is assumed to be exactly constant in time. In the empirical analysis we will simply make sure that a Yes vote will be consistently labeled to the support for the alternative  $x_t$ .

Indicate by  $i = 1, \dots, N$  individual legislators, where  $N$  is large.<sup>7</sup> We will assume that individual  $i$ 's preferences are described by a random utility framework. We also posit a spatial voting environment for the members of Congress. Spatial voting is a successful and informative modeling approach to the description of congressional behavior and it has found substantial support in the literature (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Heckman and Snyder 1997; Clinton et al. 2004; McCarty

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<sup>6</sup>For early applications, see Alesina (1988); Alesina and Tabellini (1990); Drazen and Masson (1994).

<sup>7</sup>What follows can be applied to each chamber independently at the cost of omitting interactions between the two chambers, such as resolutions and conferences.  $N = 435$  for the House and  $N = 100$  for the Senate.

et al. 2006; Bateman et al. 2017).

For simplicity of exposition (relaxed in the empirical application later), the deterministic component of the politician’s utility is assumed to depend on: (i) the distance of the bill from his/her ideological position  $\theta_i$ ; (ii) an electoral motive, summarized by his/her expected future electoral support  $V_{i,t+1}$  (for example, due to the employment consequences of  $i$ ’s voting behavior from the perspective of his/her constituents).

Concerning (i), political ideology  $\theta_i \in \mathbb{R}$  is a unidimensional and fixed characteristic of  $i$ . The assumption of unidimensionality is appropriate in the time period under analysis (see McCarty et al. 2006). The assumption of constant policy preferences has been validated repeatedly in the literature on Congress (Moskowitz et al. 2017 for a discussion). We use the ideological positions  $\theta_i$  from DW-Nominate first dimension scores (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997).<sup>8</sup> This follows a common approach in modeling congressional voting when the explicit estimation of such preference parameters is peripheral to the main empirical analysis like in this case (e.g., Mian et al. 2010, 2014).<sup>9</sup>

Concerning (ii), let us indicate by  $S_{i,t}$  a proxy for the degree of exposure of the local labor market in the district represented by  $i$  at time  $t$  to increasing imports from China (the China Shock as presented in Autor et al. 2016). Assume the potential electoral impact of the China Shock in the district represented by politician  $i$  at time  $t + 1$  is defined by:

$$V_{i,t+1} = h_t(d_t, S_{i,t+1}) + e_{i,t+1},$$

where  $d_t$  is the voting decision made by the politician, and

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}[e_{i,t+1}|d_t, S_{i,t+1}, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] &= 0 \\ h_t(d_t, S_{i,t+1}) &= \gamma_t^0 + \gamma_t^1 S_{i,t+1} \times \mathbf{1}\{d_t = \text{vote for } x_t\} \\ &\quad + \gamma_t^2 S_{i,t+1} \times \mathbf{1}\{d_t = \text{vote for } q_t\} \\ &= \gamma_t^0 + \gamma_t^2 S_{i,t+1} + (\gamma_t^1 - \gamma_t^2) S_{i,t+1} \times \mathbf{1}\{d_t = \text{vote for } x_t\} \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where  $\mathbf{1}\{\cdot\}$  is an indicator function and  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  is the information set of politician  $i$  at  $t$ . Note that the function  $h_t(\cdot)$  introduces both a direct effect of the China Shock on electoral support independently of  $i$ ’s vote and a component that depends on the interpretation by the voters of their representative  $i$ ’s decision. These electoral effects are allowed to vary over time. Note further that we introduce

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<sup>8</sup>For further reference, see [www.voteview.com](http://www.voteview.com)

<sup>9</sup>The reader interested in the estimation of  $\theta_i$  can find a detailed analysis in Canen et al. (2020) and references therein. Due to lack of sample overlap the Canen et al. (2020) estimates cannot be used in our application.



the China Shock directly in the electoral outcome for politician  $i$ , but such effect can be interpreted as the composite of two forces: the impact of the shock on employment outcomes and the impact of employment outcomes on electoral results.<sup>10</sup>

The expected utility for a politician  $i$  of taking decision  $d_t$  given information set  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  is:

$$\begin{aligned} & U(\xi_{i,t}, d_t; \theta_i, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}) \\ = & u(d_t; \theta_i, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}) + \begin{cases} \xi_{i,t,x} & \text{if } d_t = \text{vote for } x_t \\ \xi_{i,t,q} & \text{if } d_t = \text{vote for } q_t \end{cases} \\ = & u(\|d_t - \theta_i\|) + \tilde{\delta} \mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1} | d_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] + \begin{cases} \xi_{i,t,x} & \text{if } d_t = \text{vote for } x_t \\ \xi_{i,t,q} & \text{if } d_t = \text{vote for } q_t \end{cases}, \end{aligned}$$

where  $u(\|\cdot\|)$  indicates an ideological loss that is function of the distance of the policy from the ideal point of  $i$ . The term  $V_{i,t+1}$  indicates the future electoral outcome for the district represented by  $i$ . We assume a quadratic loss function  $u(\cdot)$  and i.i.d. Gaussian term  $\xi_{i,t,d} \sim N(0, \sigma_\xi^2)$ . This implies the useful convolution  $\xi_{i,t} = \xi_{i,t,q} - \xi_{i,t,x} \sim N(0, 2\sigma_\xi^2)$ . A standard identification requirement in discrete choice problems with Gaussian shocks (e.g. in probit) further requires the normalization  $2\sigma_\xi^2 = 1$ , which we impose.

We define the variable  $Y_{i,t}$  as an indicator function that is equal to 1 when legislator  $i$  decides to vote Yes on  $x_t$  and 0 when the legislator votes in favor of  $q_t$ :

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{i,t} &= \mathbf{1}\{U(\xi_{i,t}, x_t; \theta_i, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}) > U(\xi_{i,t}, q_t; \theta_i, \mathcal{I}_{i,t})\} \\ &= \mathbf{1}\left\{-\frac{1}{2}((x_t - \theta_i)^2 - (q_t - \theta_i)^2) + \tilde{\delta}(\mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1} | x_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1} | q_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]) \geq \xi_{it}\right\}. \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

We can write the probability of  $Y_{i,t} = 1$  as:

$$\begin{aligned} & Pr(Y_{i,t} = 1 | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}) \\ &= \Phi\left(\begin{array}{c} -\frac{1}{2}((x_t - \theta_i)^2 - (q_t - \theta_i)^2) \\ +\tilde{\delta}(\mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1} | x_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1} | q_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]) \end{array}\right), \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

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<sup>10</sup>When considering the economic effects of trade with China, it may be natural to consider the role of exports, and not only imports. Recent work by Feenstra et al. (2019) shows that the exports-led increase in the demand for labor has almost matched the negative employment effects of the China Shock. An important observation in this regard is that Feenstra et al. (2019) consider U.S. exports not only to China, but to all its trading partners. When considering only China as a destination market, exports and export growth were markedly smaller and did not have as large a positive effect on employment, as initially shown in Autor et al. (2013). Since NTR votes did not have obvious implications for the U.S. worldwide export prospects, we exclude exports from our analysis of voting decisions.

where  $\Phi$  is the standard normal cumulative density function and  $\mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1}|x_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1}|q_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$  is the expected net loss (or net gain) of electoral support due to the China Shock in the constituency represented by politician  $i$  in the future electoral cycle, given the information available to  $i$  at  $t$ . This implies that the probability of voting Yes depends on the expectations of the electoral consequences of voting Yes relative to voting No, which are unobserved by the econometrician. The higher is the expected electoral gain of voting Yes, the higher the likelihood of voting Yes.

It follows from (1) that:

$$\mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1}|x_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \mathbb{E}[V_{i,t+1}|q_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] = (\gamma_t^1 - \gamma_t^2) \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}].$$

Setting  $\delta_t = \tilde{\delta}(\gamma_t^1 - \gamma_t^2)$  and simplifying the relative loss function  $-\frac{1}{2}((x_t - \theta_i)^2 - (q_t - \theta_i)^2)$  as  $a_t\theta_i + b_t$ , where  $a_t = x_t - q_t$  and  $b_t = \frac{1}{2}(q_t^2 - x_t^2)$ , we can further rewrite (2) and (3), respectively, as:

$$Y_{i,t} = \mathbf{1}\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}] \geq \xi_{i,t}\}, \quad (4)$$

$$Pr(Y_{i,t} = 1|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}) = \Phi(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]). \quad (5)$$

A key parameter is  $\delta_t$ , which gauges the weight in the politician's vote choice of his/her expectations about the future China Shock,  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$ . We discuss two distinct approaches to the estimation of this and the other parameters in the next section.

### 3 Expectations and information set of politicians: Estimation

A key contribution of this paper is the analysis of the information set available to politicians to forecast the labor market effects of the China Shock at the time of a roll call vote. There are two fundamentally different approaches, which in turn hinge on the answer to the following question: is the politician's information set  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  known to the econometrician? When the answer is in the affirmative, then estimation can be performed by maximum likelihood or method of moments. When the econometrician knows only a subset of the information available to politicians, then one can adopt a moment inequality estimator. We discuss these two approaches in turn, but we first start with describing the three benchmark information sets that we will consider throughout the paper:

- (i) Minimal Information: the politician knows his own ideological position  $\theta_i$ , but the only information a politician has about the economic impact of the China Shock is the current share of population employed in manufacturing in district  $i$ ,  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$ ;
- (ii) Baseline Information: the politician has access to the minimal information set, plus the current period China Shock  $S_{i,t}$ ;
- (iii) Perfect Foresight: the politician has perfect foresight of the labor market consequences of the China Shock, so that  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}] = S_{i,t+1}$ .

### 3.1 Politician's information set fully known to the econometrician: MLE

When the econometrician knows the content of the politician's information set, then the parameter vector  $\omega_t = \{x_t, q_t, \delta_t\}$  can be estimated by maximum likelihood for each cycle. Based on expression (5) the log-likelihood function takes the form:

$$\begin{aligned} & \ln \mathcal{L} \left( \omega_t \mid \{Y_{i,t}, \theta_i, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}\}_{i=1}^N \right) \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^N Y_{i,t} \ln [\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}])] \\ & \quad + (1 - Y_{i,t}) \ln [1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}])]. \end{aligned} \tag{6}$$

Maximizing (6) requires specifying the information set  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ . In the case of perfect foresight, (6) is maximized after replacing  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$  with  $S_{i,t+1}$ . In the case of minimal information set, the expectation of the China Shock is derived as the predicted value of the following OLS regression:  $S_{i,t+1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \theta_i + \beta_2 ShareMfg_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ .<sup>11</sup> For the baseline information set, we can perform a similar two-step procedure, albeit with an OLS regression that contains a larger set of regressors, reflecting a richer knowledge by the politician.

The key assumption of the maximum likelihood approach is that we, as econometricians, are confident about what enters the politician's information set. When one misspecifies the politician's information set, the parameter estimates  $\omega_t$  will be biased. The direction of the bias cannot be characterized in general, so for our case we resort to Monte Carlo simulations to illustrate the problem in Appendix C. One specific instance lends itself to an intuitive explanation. When the econometrician incorrectly assumes that the politician has perfect foresight, the bias that

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<sup>11</sup>See Manski (1991) and Ahn and Manski (1993).

arises is similar to the case of error in variables in a linear regression setting. The intuition is that  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$  is measured with error when we replace it with  $S_{i,t+1}$  and that error is, by assumption of rational expectations, uncorrelated with  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$ . Similarly to a linear regression setting, this will lead to an attenuation bias in the estimated coefficient  $\delta_t$ . Assume that the true  $\delta_t$  is negative and consider two representatives in districts A and B, who form their expectations based only on a minimal information set, which includes the manufacturing share in the region. Assume that district A and B have similar manufacturing shares, but different industrial composition. Hence, the two representatives predict a similar import shock, but in reality district A is much more severely affected than district B. We, the econometricians, assume that these representatives are instead very well informed about the imminent import increases. Because A and B expect a similar impact, they vote similarly on the bill. The econometrician, however, observing a similar voting behavior between politicians A and B, concludes that  $\delta$  is smaller (in absolute value) and that the politicians place little weight on the import shock. The bias can be large (around 40%) under realistic data configurations, as shown in Appendix C.

### 3.2 Politician’s information set partially known to the econometrician: Moment inequality approach

In the previous section we have shown that the maximum likelihood approach relies on an accurate knowledge by the econometrician of the information set possessed by the politician. The alternative estimation method proposed by Dickstein and Morales (2018), based on moment inequalities, does not require full knowledge of  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ , but rather of a subset of variables  $Z_{i,t} \subseteq \mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ . That is, the politician may know more than  $Z_{i,t}$  in forming his/her forecast, but she knows at least the covariates  $Z_{i,t}$ . Assuming only partial knowledge of  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  comes at the cost of less precise identification. We will not be able to point identify the elements of the parameter vector  $\omega_t$ , but only to set identify them. Whether these sets are sufficiently tight to be informative will be carefully discussed in the results section.

The second important goal of our analysis is to ascertain the extent of the information set of legislators. This, in turn, involves a formal analysis of which subset of variables a politician considers at the time of his/her vote through an application of specification selection tests proposed by Bugni et al. (2015). Being able to reject that certain variables are used in the politician’s forecast allows us to learn about the process of decision making of legislators in this particular setting: what they knew and considered relevant at the time of their vote. In this exercise the voting model and data are kept constant, but the subset of variables assumed part of the information set

is varied.

We will allow politicians to have time varying information sets and we will formally test whether certain groups of legislators have identical information sets or not. For instance, we assess whether members of higher levels of chamber seniority have broader information sets than lower seniority members, or whether members of opposing parties share the same information set. Questions of asymmetry of information sets across party lines are increasingly common in the political economy literature focused on polarization<sup>12</sup> and our application offers a formal approach to this problem for members of Congress.

A final question that the approach allows us to answer is whether, had politicians had a more complete information set, their votes for trade normalization with China would have been different. These counterfactuals are simulated within the same structure of expectations and information we just described.

Throughout, we maintain the assumption of rational expectations on the part of politicians, that is the expectational error  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1} = S_{i,t+1} - \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$  has mean zero,  $\mathbb{E}[\varepsilon_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}] = 0$  and is uncorrelated with  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$ . This means that politicians do not systematically skew their prediction or ignore elements of their information set which would systematically help in forecasting  $S_{i,t+1}$ . We follow Dickstein and Morales (2018) in generating two sets of moment inequalities that identify the possible values that the parameters of interest can take: Odd-based moment inequalities and Revealed Preference moment inequalities.<sup>13</sup> In the following subsection we go through the main steps of the derivation of the inequalities to illustrate the basic intuition.

### 3.2.1 Odds-based moment inequalities

We use the definition in (4) to obtain:

$$\mathbf{1}\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \xi_{i,t} \geq 0\} - Y_{i,t} = 0. \quad (7)$$

This expression depends on the unobserved shock realization  $\xi_{i,t}$  and  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ . Therefore, we take the expectation of (7) conditional on  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  and manipulate the expression to obtain the following equality:

$$\mathbb{E}\left[(1 - Y_{i,t}) \frac{\Phi(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}])}{1 - \Phi(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}])} - Y_{i,t} \middle| \mathcal{I}_{i,t}\right] = 0 \quad (8)$$

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<sup>12</sup>See Alesina et al. (2020).

<sup>13</sup>Specifically, see their Appendix C for additional details.

This equality still depends on the expectation  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$ , which in turn depends on the true information set  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ , an object that we do not observe. However, under the assumption that the expectational error  $S_{i,t+1} - \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$  has mean zero and from the property that  $\frac{\Phi}{1-\Phi}$  is convex, one can replace  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$  with  $S_{i,t+1} - \varepsilon_{i,t+1}$  and apply Jensen's inequality to derive the following inequality:

$$\mathbb{E} \left[ (1 - Y_{i,t}) \frac{\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})}{1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})} - Y_{i,t} \middle| \mathcal{I}_{i,t} \right] \geq 0 \quad (9)$$

Consider now a subset of the information set  $Z_{i,t} \subseteq \mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ . Because  $Z_{i,t}$  is a subset of  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ , the distribution of  $Z_{i,t}$  conditional on  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  is degenerate. This is to say that once  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  is known, then  $Z_{i,t}$  conditional on  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  is deterministic.

Starting from (8) and applying the Law of Iterated Expectations, we can derive the following equality:<sup>14</sup>

$$\mathbb{E} \left[ (1 - Y_{i,t}) \frac{\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}])}{1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}])} - Y_{i,t} \middle| Z_{i,t} \right] = 0$$

which, by the same arguments employed to obtain (9), yields the inequality:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E} [m_l^{ob} | Z_{i,t}] &\geq 0 \\ m_l^{ob} &= (1 - Y_{i,t}) \frac{\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})}{1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})} - Y_{i,t} \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

Notice that (10) is increasing in  $\delta_t$ , so this condition identifies a lower bound for this parameter. We use the subscripts  $l, u$  to indicate the lower bound and upper bound inequalities.

Following a similar logic, one can derive a moment condition that further bounds the parameters of interest  $\omega_t$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E} [m_u^{ob} | Z_{i,t}] &\geq 0 \\ m_u^{ob} &= Y_{i,t} \frac{1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})}{\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})} - (1 - Y_{i,t}) \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

Notice that  $m_u^{ob}$  is decreasing in  $\delta_t$  and therefore moment inequality (11) identifies an upper bound for this parameter.

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<sup>14</sup>Equation (8), which is of the form  $\mathbb{E}[X|\mathcal{I}] = 0$ , can be rewritten as  $\mathbb{E}_z[\mathbb{E}_x[X|Z]|\mathcal{I}] = \int_z \mathbb{E}_x[X|z] f_z(z|\mathcal{I}) dz = 0$ . The last equality follows from the fact that, conditional on  $\mathcal{I}$ ,  $Z$  has a degenerate distribution, i.e.  $f_z(z|\mathcal{I}) = 1$ .

### 3.2.2 Revealed preference moment inequalities

The second set of moment inequalities derives from the revealed preference argument that a politician will vote Yes if and only if the benefit from doing so is positive, hence:

$$Y_{i,t} [a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \xi_{i,t}] \geq 0 \quad (12)$$

Because, again,  $\xi_{i,t}$  is unobserved, we take the expectation of (12), conditional on  $\theta_i$  and  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  and obtain the following inequality:

$$Y_{i,t} [a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]] + \Gamma_{i,t} \geq 0 \quad (13)$$

where  $\Gamma_{i,t} = -\mathbb{E} [Y_{i,t} \xi_{i,t} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] = (1 - Y_{i,t}) \frac{\phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}])}{1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}])}$ , and  $\phi$  is the standard normal probability density function. Once again the expression in inequality (13) contains the unobserved expectation  $\mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]$ . Because  $\frac{\phi}{1 - \Phi}$  is convex, we can apply Jensen's inequality to replace the expectation with  $S_{i,t+1}$ , and then take the expectation conditional on  $Z_{i,t}$ , a subset of  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ . The resulting inequality will be weaker than (13) and is given by:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E} [m_i^{rp} | Z_{i,t}] &\geq 0 \\ m_i^{rp} &= Y_{i,t} [a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1}] + (1 - Y_{i,t}) \frac{\phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})}{1 - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})} \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

Starting from another revealed preference inequality:

$$(1 - Y_{i,t}) [\xi_{i,t} - a_t \theta_i - b_t - \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}]] \geq 0,$$

we can obtain a second revealed-preference moment inequality in a similar manner:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E} [m_u^{rp} | Z_{i,t}] &\geq 0 \\ m_u^{rp} &= -(1 - Y_{i,t}) [a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1}] + Y_{i,t} \frac{\phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})}{\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1})}. \end{aligned} \quad (15)$$

The moment inequalities defined by (10), (11), (14) and (15) are conditional on values of the vectors  $Z_{i,t}$ , which we allow to contain different variables, characterizing different possible information sets possessed by politicians. The following theorem indicates that the true parameter vector  $\omega_t = \{a_t, b_t, \delta_t\}$  is contained in the set of parameters that are in compliance with the odds-based and revealed preference moment inequalities. Hence, the parameters of interest are partially

identified:<sup>15</sup>

**Theorem 1.** (Dickstein and Morales, 2018) *At the true value of the parameter vector  $\omega_t = \{a_t, b_t, \delta_t\}$  the following four moment inequalities are satisfied:*

$$\begin{cases} \mathbb{E} [m_u^{ob} | Z_{i,t}] \geq 0 \\ \mathbb{E} [m_l^{ob} | Z_{i,t}] \geq 0 \\ \mathbb{E} [m_u^{rp} | Z_{i,t}] \geq 0 \\ \mathbb{E} [m_l^{rp} | Z_{i,t}] \geq 0 \end{cases}$$

where  $Z_{i,t}$  is the set of variables known by politician  $i$  at time  $t$ .

### 3.3 Estimation implementation

In this section we lay out the steps to construct confidence sets for the parameters of interest  $\{a_t, b_t, \delta_t\}$ . Conditional moments (10), (11), (14) and (15) cannot be directly employed for empirical applications because conditioning on each possible value of  $Z_{i,t}$  is computationally unfeasible. The standard solution in the moment inequality literature, which we adopt, is to transform conditional into unconditional moment inequalities, which can be directly employed in estimation.<sup>16</sup> This is not innocuous in that information is lost in transitioning from conditional inequalities to a relatively smaller set of unconditional inequalities. As a result, the parameters that satisfy conditional moment inequalities may be a small subset of those that satisfy the unconditional moments. Whether these larger confidence sets remain sufficiently informative is again an issue to be reckoned with once we discuss our results.

We collect the four moment inequalities (10), (11), (14) and (15) and we adopt the unconditional moment inequalities:

$$\mathbb{E} \left[ \begin{matrix} \left( \begin{matrix} m_l^{ob} \\ m_u^{ob} \\ m_l^{rp} \\ m_u^{rp} \end{matrix} \right) \times g(Z_{i,t}) \end{matrix} \right] \geq 0 \tag{16}$$

where the instrument function  $g(Z_{i,t})$  is specified, e.g., for the baseline case of  $Z_{i,t} = \{\theta_i, ShareMfg_{i,t}, S_{i,t}\}$ ,

<sup>15</sup>See Appendix C in Dickstein and Morales (2018) for the proof of this result.

<sup>16</sup>Starting from a moment inequality of the form  $E[m|Z] \geq 0$ , let us consider an instrument function  $g(Z) > 0$ . Multiplying the two yields  $g(Z) E[m|Z] \geq 0$  which implies  $E[g(Z) m] \geq 0$  whenever  $g(Z)$  is  $Z$ -measurable.



as follows:

$$g(Z_{i,t}) = \begin{cases} \mathbf{1}\{\theta_i > \text{med}(\theta_i)\} \times (|\theta_i - \text{med}(\theta_i)|)^a \\ \mathbf{1}\{\theta_i \leq \text{med}(\theta_i)\} \times (|\theta_i - \text{med}(\theta_i)|)^a \\ \mathbf{1}\{\text{ShareMfg}_{it} > \text{med}(\text{ShareMfg}_{it})\} \times (|\text{ShareMfg}_{it} - \text{med}(\text{ShareMfg}_{it})|)^a \\ \mathbf{1}\{\text{ShareMfg}_{it} \leq \text{med}(\text{ShareMfg}_{it})\} \times (|\text{ShareMfg}_{it} - \text{med}(\text{ShareMfg}_{it})|)^a \\ \mathbf{1}\{S_{it} > \text{med}(S_{it})\} \times (|S_{it} - \text{med}(S_{it})|)^a \\ \mathbf{1}\{S_{it} \leq \text{med}(S_{it})\} \times (|S_{it} - \text{med}(S_{it})|)^a \end{cases}$$

for  $a \in \{0, 1\}$ . Take for example the case of  $a = 0$ . Intuitively, instead of conditioning on all the possible values of  $S_{i,t}$  this approach calculates the moment inequalities separately for values of  $S_{i,t}$  above and below the median. For the baseline information case, we have  $6 \times 2 \times 4 = 48$  moment inequalities, which we use to construct confidence sets, as explained in section 5. The choice of the instrument functions does not appear to drive our results and we probed it in several robustness checks. For instance, our results are robust to only limiting the analysis to the subset of  $g(Z_{i,t})$  under  $a = 0$ , cutting the number of moment inequalities that we use in half.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.4 Further robustness of the methodology

A relevant issue pertinent to our application is whether politicians are uncertain about the impact of future import shock on future electoral support, and need to form expectations about it, as well as the China Shock. This is an issue related to the uncertainty specific to the component  $(\gamma_t^1 - \gamma_t^2)$  in the model, to which we need to explore sensitivity in the construction of our estimator. In Appendix B we clarify under which conditions we can allow this uncertainty and we reinterpret the coefficients estimates in light of this modification.

## 4 Institutional background and data

The background for the series of roll call votes that we employ in this paper is the extension of Normal Trade Relations to the People's Republic of China, after their suspension in 1951. NTR status was restored in 1980 under Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 and was dependent on the presence of a bilateral trade agreement to be renewed every three years and on compliance with

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<sup>17</sup>For a complete discussion see Andrews and Shi (2013).

the Jackson-Vanik amendment on freedom of emigration, required for Non-Market Economies.<sup>18</sup> China’s NTR status would be renewed automatically every year upon the President recommendation unless Congress disapproved by enacting a joint resolution. It is widely recognized that these resolutions were spurred by humanitarian and foreign policy considerations following the Tiananmen Square events of 1989 (Pregelj, 1998). Congress sought to provide incentives, through withholding of NTR status, to the Chinese government to address issues of human rights. In this effort, it clashed with the executive branch, a fact reflected in the several episodes in which the resolutions to disapprove NTR passed in the House, but died in the Senate or were overturned by a Presidential veto. In light of these considerations, it should be clear that we do not view the threat to local economic interests as the only driver of the legislators’ roll call votes, and ideological considerations in the utility function of legislators account for this.

## 4.1 Roll call votes

The sample for our estimation includes individual legislator roll call votes for 12 House Joint Resolutions that took place every year from 1990 to 2001, as listed in Table 1. Three of these Joint Resolutions to disapprove NTR extension were passed by the House in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992, but not voted on or struck down in the Senate.<sup>19</sup>

The website [voteview.com](http://voteview.com) provides the roll call votes, together with the ICPSR code for each legislator, the congressional district, the Party, and the first two dimensions of the DW-Nominate score, a multidimensional scaling application developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1997) and the first dimension of which is our proxy for  $\theta_i$ .<sup>20</sup> Instead of “Yea” and “Nay”, we indicate all votes as Pro and Against China (NTR) for ease of interpretation (a “Yea” vote in favor of disapproving China’s NTR is a vote against China).

Figure 1 shows that support for NTR is not purely along party lines and changes over time. Democrats are relatively more supportive of NTR in the middle of the sample period, while Republicans become increasingly supportive of NTR over time. There is substantial switching of positions within individual legislators as well. Figures 2 and 3 show, by party, how many legislators switch position or maintain their vote relative to the previous year. On average, every year 15 percent (17 percent) of Republican (Democratic) legislators change their position relative

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<sup>18</sup>See CRS Report for Congress Pregelj (2001) for further details.

<sup>19</sup>Two House Resolutions, HR2212 and HR5318, in the 102nd Congress during the same period passed both in the House and the Senate and were vetoed by President G.H.W. Bush.

<sup>20</sup>[voteview.com](http://voteview.com) represents one of the most comprehensive and popular sources of measures of ideological positions in American politics and is a standard reference in the political economy literature on Congress. See the Introduction for references.

to the previous year. In sum, there is sufficient heterogeneity in positions across parties and within legislators over time to justify that the changes in the electoral effects of the vote could play a role beyond constant preferences and ideology of legislators.

We also include in the data the voting outcomes of the bill HR 4444 in 2000 which would grant China permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) conditional on China’s accession to the WTO. The results are stable regardless of the inclusion or exclusion of this bill.

Note that the period 1990-1992 covers the final years of the George H.W. Bush administration. The period 1993-1996 coincides with the first Bill Clinton administration and the the period 1997-2001 covers the second Clinton administration and the first year of the George W. Bush presidency. Given the important role played by the executive branch in the legislative evolution of China’s NTR status, this subdivision of the sample period is explored in our analysis, by allowing for different parameters and expectations during each administration.

## 4.2 The China Shock

The exposure to the China Shock at the district level is generated from the import shocks in different local labor markets nested within the district. We start with constructing the import shocks at the level of commuting zones (CZs), which are clusters of adjoining counties characterized by strong commuting ties and have been conceptualized as local labor markets in the literature (Autor et al., 2013; Acemoglu et al., 2016). The shocks from different CZs are then aggregated to congressional districts (CDs).

### 4.2.1 Exposure to import shock at the commuting zone level

Future supply shocks from China faced by the commuting zone  $j$  is constructed according to:

$$S_{j,t+1} = \sum_k \frac{L_{jk,t}}{L_{j,t}} \frac{\Delta M_{k,t+1}^{oth}}{Y_{k,t} + M_{k,t} - X_{k,t}}. \quad (17)$$

In this expression,  $\Delta M_{k,t+1}^{oth}$  is the change in import of good  $k$  from China by eight other (non-U.S.) high-income countries over 5 years in the future.<sup>21</sup> It reflects the rising supply capacity of China due to its economic reforms, and is arguably exogenous to the U.S. product-demand shocks from the perspectives of the U.S. local economies (Autor et al., 2013; Acemoglu et al., 2016; Autor

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<sup>21</sup>The eight other high-income countries are Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, and Switzerland.

et al., 2020b). The future import growth is then normalized by the contemporaneous absorption (U.S. industry output plus net imports,  $Y_{k,t} + M_{k,t} - X_{k,t}$ ) at the industry level.  $L_{jk,t}/L_{j,t}$  denotes the share of industry  $k$  in CZ  $j$ 's total employment in period  $t$ .

The Bartik-style measure (17) summarizes the exposure of CZ  $j$  to China's future supply shocks from the standpoint of  $t$ . Having a perfect foresight of (17) not only requires the information on contemporaneous employment composition of the local labor market and domestic absorption of different industries, but also knowledge on supply shocks from China 5 years in the future. In our analysis, the future shocks correspond to the import supply growth over the period 1990-1995, 1991-1996, ..., 2001-2006, which overlaps with China's post-WTO-accession period when the U.S. witnessed the most intense increase in import competition from China.

While the congressional representatives may not have full knowledge of future import shocks as in (17), they may use the information of the past shocks to form expectations. For the years 1993-2001, we construct import shock in the past 5 years analogously as follows:

$$S_{j,t} = \sum_k \frac{L_{ik,t-5}}{L_{i,t-5}} \frac{\Delta M_{k,t}^{oth}}{Y_{k,t-5} + M_{k,t-5} - X_{k,t-5}}, \quad (18)$$

where  $\Delta M_{k,t}^{oth}$  denotes the change in import of good  $k$  from China by eight other (non-U.S.) high-income countries over the past 5 years.<sup>22</sup>

The baseline measures (17) and (18) follow the specification in Acemoglu et al. (2016) and Autor et al. (2020b), and can be derived from workhorse trade models with a gravity structure. However, differently from the literature focusing the the impacts of contemporaneous trade shocks on local economies, our study aims at evaluating the extent to which politicians foresaw the future import shock from China in (17), and whether they acted on the relevant information when setting China-specific trade policies.

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<sup>22</sup>Due to data constraints, for years 1990-1992, we use the 2-year-lagged variables to construct the past shocks. To be specific, for  $t = 1990, 1991, 1992$

$$S_{i,t} = \sum_k \frac{L_{ik,t-2}}{L_{i,t-2}} \frac{\Delta M_{k,t}^{oth}}{Y_{k,t-2} + M_{k,t-2} - X_{k,t-2}},$$

where  $\Delta M_{kt}^{oth}$  denotes the change in import of good  $k$  from China by eight other (non-US) high-income countries over the past 2 years. As is discussed below, we use the data from County Business Patterns (CBP) to construct employment shares. For 1990-1992, calculating  $L_{ik,t-5}/L_{i,t-5}$  requires the 1985-1987 CBP data with industries classified based on 1977 SIC codes. For the purpose of analysis, the data needs to be mapped to the 1987 SIC codes. However, the crosswalk from 1977 SIC to 1987 SIC involves many splits of industries. As a result, the concordance leads to a structural break in the employment measures for some localities over 1987-1988. For the concern of systematic measurement errors, we don't use the CBP data prior to 1988 for the main analysis.

### 4.2.2 Trade, employment and output data

This subsection describes the data sources that we employ to construct the commuting-zone-level measures (17) and (18).

Data on bilateral trade flows over the period 1988-2006 for the 4-digit Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) industries are obtained from UN Comtrade Database. We concord these data to four-digit Standard Industry Classification (SIC) industries.<sup>23</sup> Following Autor et al. (2013) and Acemoglu et al. (2016), we aggregate together a few four-digit industries to ensure compatibility with the additional data on employment discussed below. Our final data set contains 397 manufacturing industries. We complement the trade data by the output data obtained from the NBER-CES data. All import, export and output amounts are inflated to 2007 US dollars using the Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) deflator.

Information on industry employment structure by CZs over 1988-2001 is derived from the County Business Patterns (CBP) data published by the US Census Bureau. The CBP tracks employment, firm size distribution, and payroll by county and industry annually. To protect confidentiality, employment for county-industry cells is sometimes reported as an interval instead of exact count. We use the fixed-point imputation algorithm developed by Autor et al. (2013) to derive employment for each county-industry cell. The county-level data is then aggregated to commuting zones using the concordances provided by Autor et al. (2013).<sup>24</sup>

### 4.2.3 Exposure to import shocks at the congressional district level

Following Autor et al. (2020b), we map economic outcomes in CZs to CDs as follows. We start with the geographic relationships between counties and congressional districts provided by the Missouri Census Data Center (MCDC).<sup>25</sup> Counties are sometimes split across different CDs, and the MCDC concordance provides information on the distribution of the county population in each CD. We then ascribe to each county-by-congressional district cell the CZ-level import shock that

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<sup>23</sup>The crosswalk that cross-matches the four-digit SITC (Rev.2) industries and the four-digit SIC (1987 version) is constructed as follows. (1) We first map the four-digit SITC industries to the corresponding six-digit Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) products based on the concordance provided by UN WITS ([https://wits.worldbank.org/product\\_concordance.html](https://wits.worldbank.org/product_concordance.html)). (2) We then apply the crosswalk from Autor et al. (2013), which assigns 6-digit HS products to 4-digit SIC industries. (3) Lastly, the four-digit SITC codes are cross-matched with the four-digit SIC codes based on their relations with the six-digit HS codes.

<sup>24</sup>Industry classifications in CBP changed periodically — over 1988-1997, employment is classified using the SIC (1987 version) codes, while employment thereafter is expressed according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Using the crosswalk in Autor et al. (2013), we correspond the post-1997 data to the four-digit SIC industries.

<sup>25</sup><http://mcdc.missouri.edu/applications/geocorr1990.html>

corresponds to the county, and weight each cell by its share of population in the district. Lastly, we aggregate the weighted shocks across cells to the CD level. By construction, if a district spans multiple CZs, its exposure to China’s rising import competition is the population-share-weighted average of the import shocks in these CZs. Since congressional districts have more or less equal population size, they have roughly the same weight in our analysis. In the empirical analysis, we denote the future and past import shocks at the CD level by  $S_{i,t+1}$  and  $S_{i,t}$ , respectively.

During the sample period 1990-2001, the boundaries of county-by-congressional district cells experienced a major change in 1993 but remained stable afterwards. Therefore, for 1990-1992, we map the CZ-level import shocks to congressional districts as defined for the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress. For 1993-2001, the mapping is based on the configuration of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress. This treatment does not affect the consistency of our baseline analysis, because as is discussed below, we conduct the estimation by periods based on presidential administrations, and none of the subsamples spans over 1992-1993.

Figure 4 shows the cross-district averages of past and future import shocks. The import shocks are always positive throughout the sample period, but the future shocks move less in tandem with the past shocks in the later years. For the moment inequality estimation discussed below, we detrend the import shocks. The corresponding distributions reported in Table 2 reveal a substantial heterogeneity in exposures across districts. For the periods 1997-2001, 1993-1996, and 1990-1992, the interquartile ranges of future shock are 0.154, 0.078, and 0.143, respectively.

## 5 Results from congressional voting on trade relations with China

### 5.1 Estimation results

This section reports our main results. To benchmark our approach to more standard methods using incorrect proxies for the information set of politicians, we start by reviewing estimates of a voting model using a maximum likelihood approach.

Table 3 shows that results substantially vary depending on the informational assumptions made. An important parameter of interest is the weight placed by politicians on their affected subconstituencies  $\delta_t$ . A reasonable prior for this parameter would be a negative utility weight,  $\delta_t < 0$ , placed on electoral groups adversely affected by the China Shock in the politician’s congressional district (*ceteris paribus*, the politician wishes to minimize these adverse effects). While occasionally

the parameter estimates for  $\delta$  are negative and sometimes of magnitude similar to those obtained using the moment inequality approach, often the coefficients are economically insignificant and not statistically different from zero. For example, for the period 1997-2001 the estimate for  $\delta$  is 0.018, which is small in absolute value relative to consistent estimates obtained with the moment inequality method. The risk of attenuation from misspecification of the information set of politicians is therefore evident in the MLE case. To further consolidate the intuition we also offer Monte Carlo evidence of the problem in Appendix C.

We now proceed to the results of estimating of equation (5) using the three information sets  $Z_{i,t}$ : Minimal; Baseline; and Perfect Foresight. The 95% confidence sets that we report are built through a grid search implementing the Generalized Moment Selection (GMS) method in Andrews and Soares (2010) as detailed in Dickstein and Morales (2018). For each value of  $\omega_t$  we build a modified method of moments (MMM) statistic, which tends to be large when, on average, the moment inequalities are *not* satisfied at that value of the parameters. This is formally tested by constructing the asymptotic distribution of the MMM statistic and rejecting  $\omega_t$  when the MMM statistic is above the critical value corresponding to the 95th percentile of that distribution. Incidentally, empty confidence sets instead have to be interpreted as highly significant rejection (p-value < 0.05) of the corresponding information set. The steps to construct the 95% confidence sets are detailed in Appendix D.

Table 5 reports estimation results splitting the NTR votes by presidential administration and for the full sample 1990-2001. The first period 1990-1992 covers the George H.W. Bush administration, the second period 1993-1996 coincides with the first Clinton administration, and the third period 1997-2001 covers the second Clinton administration.<sup>26</sup> Focusing on sub-periods allows for heterogeneity in information and flexibility of the parameters with respect to the behavior of executive branch/agenda setting – a more robust approach that we prefer. Table 5 presents estimates for the parameters  $a_t$ ,  $b_t$  and  $\delta_t$ . We will mostly discuss results for the importance of constituency interests  $\delta$ , but we will gauge its magnitude in relation to the role of ideology parameter  $a$ .

Consider the 1997-2001 results first. Panel A reports estimation results under the assumption that the politicians’ information set includes at least the manufacturing share in their district and their own ideology. Under this assumption we report a confidence set  $[-2.062, -0.137]$ , so that all values in the confidence set are negative, as we would expect if politicians are more likely to vote against China’s NTR status if they expect their constituency to be exposed to a larger shock. The confidence set is quite similar under the assumption of baseline information, which includes also

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<sup>26</sup>As a robustness check, we drop the year 2001, which overlaps with George W. Bush’s first year in office during which the final vote took place but was remnants of the previous administration’s efforts (Pregelj, 2001). The results remain similar.

the current shock  $S_{i,t}$ ,  $[-1.670, -0.020]$ . Non-empty confidence sets include negative values for  $\delta$ , do not include zero, and are tight enough to be informative.

The magnitude of the parameter  $\delta$  can be illustrated as follows. Considering two districts in 1997-2001, the probability of voting in favor of China’s NTR status decreases by between 0.072 and 0.007 when the value of the expected China shock goes from its 25th percentile to its 75th percentile.<sup>27</sup> These numbers are 0.073 and 0.006 for 1993-1996, and 0.078 and 0.004 for 1990-1992. This is a moderate effect, especially considering the role of ideology. If we perform the analogous exercise, we find that an interquartile range shift in ideology calculated at the mean expected China shock value produces an increase in the probability of voting in favor of China of between 0.137 and 0.208 in 1997-2001 and between 0.190 and 0.359 in 1990-1992.<sup>28</sup> In sum, these comparisons allow us to conclude that the effect of ideology is much larger than the effect of constituent interests. These results line up with common findings in the congressional voting literature for most bills (as early as Kalt and Zupan (1984) and for a recent discussion see Poole and Rosenthal (2017)).

We will discuss differences in the parameters estimates between subsets of legislators after introducing specification tests that allow us to gauge the information possessed by politicians.

## 5.2 Testing for different information sets

A fundamental first step in the analysis of politicians’ decisions is to assess the exact extent of their information sets at the moment of the vote. A valid statistical approach to this form of specification test is presented in Bugni et al. (2015). The test proposed by Bugni et al. (2015) allows us to reject the null hypothesis that there exists a value of  $\omega_t$  within the parameter space that can rationalize the set of moment inequalities presented in section 3.3. Specifically, consider two alternative information sets  $Z_{i,t}^1$  and  $Z_{i,t}^2$ . Intuitively, suppose there is no value of the parameter vector for which the set of moment inequalities hold given  $Z_{i,t}^1$ , yet there are values of  $\omega_t$  within the parameter space that can rationalize the set of moment inequalities given  $Z_{i,t}^2$ . Then one infers that  $Z_{i,t}^1 \not\subseteq \mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  and cannot reject  $Z_{i,t}^2 \subseteq \mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ . The rejection of the null in this framework may also indicate misspecification of the original model of decision, so simple rejection of  $Z_{i,t}^1$  cannot exclude misspecification per se. What is crucial in this application is that the failure to reject  $Z_{i,t}^2$  eliminates this second interpretation of the test. Misspecification of the original model would affect the analysis under both  $Z_{i,t}^1$  and  $Z_{i,t}^2$ , as the decision model is unchanged and only the information

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<sup>27</sup>In particular, we calculate these percentage points as the minimum and maximum of  $\Phi(b + \delta \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^B]^{75th}) - \Phi(b + \delta \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^B]^{25th})$  evaluated at the mean  $\theta^i = 0$  and  $\omega_t \in \Omega_t^{95\%}$ , where  $\Omega_t^{95\%}$  is the 95 percent confidence set of the underlying parameters.

<sup>28</sup>For the period 1993-1996 we obtain a confidence set that contains zero.



set varies across tests, and model misspecification would imply rejection in both instances.

Appendix D reports the full details for the construction of the BP, RC and RS specification test statistics following Bugni et al. (2015) and the corresponding p-values. Generally speaking, the test BP is less powerful than RC and RS, and rejection of the null hypothesis in any of these tests indicates a rejection of the hypothesis that specific information belongs to the information set of the members of Congress.

We report results for all three tests in Table 5. Columns 4, 5, and 6 report the p-values for BP, RC and RS respectively. For the full sample and for two of the three presidential administration periods we reject that politicians have perfect foresight, with p-values of 0.01-0.015 depending on the test. For all periods we cannot reject that the politicians had at least the baseline information set. While it is not obvious whether the baseline information set represents an optimal amount of knowledge, we believe Table 4 is informative. It shows that the manufacturing employment share and past import shock have significant explanatory power in predicting future shocks. The R-squared is generally around 55 percent and is lower in the later period, suggesting that the variance of the expectational errors have increased over time and close to the end of the sample.

Our results point to information used by politicians worsening over time and their capacity of forecasting the China Shock in the following five years deteriorating. Why would legislators be better informed in the earlier part of the period? We hypothesize that this is due to the more predictable nature of the shocks in the early 1990's, when China was specialized in relatively less complex and more labor intensive products. In Figure 5 we report the autocorrelation of the China Shock at the industry level and it is clear that in the earlier years the shock was more predictable from year to year as the autocorrelation was above 0.3. In the second half of the 1990's the autocorrelation progressively drops to zero, a fact that could justify why politicians were less than perfectly informed as the 2000's approached.

## **5.3 Heterogeneity across groups of politicians**

### **5.3.1 Party**

The estimates and tests presented so far were performed in the universe of the members of Congress during the 1990-2001 period under an assumption of common information sets. It is plausible to hypothesize that politicians from different parties, and with different electoral prospects, might have had varying degrees of knowledge and different expectations.

In this section we analyze three dimensions of heterogeneity: political party, tenure in office

(i.e., experience), and margin of victory in the most recent election. For all tests we report the results for the baseline information set. To anticipate our findings, the picture that will emerge from this heterogeneity analysis is that Democrats at the time of NTR votes were both more informed and more sensitive to constituent interests than Republicans, and that legislators in tighter electoral races placed a heavier weight on the China Shock.

In Table 6 we find that Democrats are more informed than Republicans, as we cannot reject that Democrats had at least the baseline information set in all time periods, but we can reject at standard levels of significance that Republicans know the baseline information in all periods, but 1990-1992. When we obtain non-empty parameter estimates, we find that Democrats display higher (in absolute value) sensitivity to the China Shock. Republicans' confidence set for  $\delta$  straddles zero, while the entire confidence set for the Democratic members of the House is comprised of negative values. This is in line with Democratic legislators historical alignment with workers' interests and placing more weight on the affected subconstituencies (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997).

To further establish the relevance of this dimension of heterogeneity, we also considered behavior of politicians beyond voting, particularly congressional speech (number of speeches related to the "China and trade" issue or the "China and labor" issue delivered). We can see that the non-voting data aligns with preference and information patterns that we reported. We only focus on two corroborating findings here and present a full analysis in Appendix A.2. First, as the China Shock over 2001-2006 is realized, representatives from districts in the top tercile of the exposure to import shock from China raise the related trade and labor issues more often in their speeches, but such response is stronger for Democrats than Republicans. Second, consistently with their higher information and preference weights, Democrats start taking actions earlier. Specifically, for Democrats the congressional speech on China starts surging during the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1999-2000, while for Republicans, the effect picks up in the 108<sup>th</sup>, 2001-2002.

### 5.3.2 Vote margins and tenure

In Table 7 we also explore whether politicians with above-median victory margins in the previous election display differences in the sensitivity to constituent interests. The literature has found higher sensitivity for legislators in tighter races (Mian et al., 2010). We indeed find that, across different periods, legislators in tighter races display confidence sets for  $\delta$  that are entirely composed of negative values, whereas confidence sets for politicians in safe races often cover both positive and negative values, consistent with lower preference weights. It does not appear to be the case, however, that politicians in tight races were differentially informed relative to politicians elected by larger margins. While it is not an objective of this section to identify whether the heightened sensitivity to the China Shock was due to state dependent preferences of politicians, changing with

electoral conditions, or due to selection (although this should also reflect in different information sets), the analysis does display a potential for our approach to pick up differential elements of the behavior and knowledge of sub-groups of politicians.

Finally, we explore the role of experience. In Table 8 we divide the sample in two according to whether House members tenure is above or below the median. One may imagine that politicians that are very experienced have better access to various sources of information. We do not find support for this conjecture, as confidence sets for  $\delta$  of junior legislators appear not systematically different from those of senior ones.

## 5.4 Validation: NTR votes for Vietnam

As validation of our model and methodology, we briefly compare the results for the analysis of the NTR votes for China to a set of similar, but distinct NTR votes for the case of Vietnam. The goal here is to establish comparability in the responses of politicians across sets of votes. We view this as way of supporting external validity of our findings.

The analysis covers the votes on Vietnam’s Jackson-Vanik Waiver (i.e., whether to extend Vietnam’s NTR status) that existed over the period 1998 to 2002. This period is particular interesting, during which there were rich dynamics between China and the U.S.. Based on a report by the Congressional Research Services, disapproval resolutions were not introduced in 2003, 2004, or 2005 (i.e. there is no voting data over 2003-05). In 2006, the House passed legislation to grant Vietnam permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status as part of a more comprehensive trade bill. Vietnam accessed the WTO in 2007.<sup>29</sup>

In Table 9 the coefficient  $\delta$  appears larger in magnitude than the China Shock case. Specifically, the baseline confidence set is  $[-74.075, -6.700]$ . However, this is because, as expected, the magnitude of the import shock from Vietnam is several orders smaller than that from China. The standard deviation of future import shock from Vietnam is 0.006, while that from China in the same period is 0.129. Adjusted for this scaling, the economic significance of constituency interests appears small for the Vietnam case as well, consistent with our findings of a low constituent weight for China NTR.

Concerning information sets, Table 9 confirms that members of Congress were informed about the impact of Vietnamese imports to some extent, as they were for China.<sup>30</sup> We cannot reject

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<sup>29</sup>See Appendix A for additional details on the data. Due to the congressional redistricting in 2002, for the analysis in this section, we only include the bills over 1998-2001. The past and future import supply shocks from Vietnam are constructed analogous to the China Shock in section 4.2.

<sup>30</sup>The the manufacturing employment share and past import shock also have significant explanatory power in

at standard significance levels the baseline information set, however, we reject that politicians have perfect foresight. Overall, across the sets of NTR votes for Vietnam and China, no salient differences both in terms of economic magnitude of constituent weights and information sets appear to emerge.

## 5.5 Role of special interests

Special interests' contributions<sup>31</sup> are often listed within the set of potential drivers of congressional voting, but not without substantial uncertainty about the economic magnitude of their effect. There is evidence of a prominent role of special interest giving in certain votes (e.g. the EESA of 2008, see Mian et al., 2010), but no consensus in the political economy literature on its role for the bulk of all congressional activity (Stratmann, 2005). In the case of China's NTR, we find no clear evidence that special interests, both in terms of campaign contributions from business organizations (corporations and business associations) or from labor unions, played a crucial role in driving congressional votes, beyond ideology and constituent interests in our main specification. We base this assessment on three main sets of empirical evidence which we report below.

First, as an extra dimension of heterogeneity, we separated politicians into two groups, depending on whether the campaign contributions from business interests are above or below the median in the sample. The degree of heterogeneity found in Table 10 is minimal, with marginally tighter confidence sets on constituent weights for politicians with contributions above the median. This may suggest that money in politics may target politicians with some type of characteristics, but ultimately the confidence sets do not point to substantial differences.

Second, we augmented our specification with campaign contributions. It has to be noted that adding elements to the vector of parameters within the moment inequality approach is extremely costly, due to the grid search process necessary for inference and hypothesis testing. Further, contributions could be endogenous to NTR votes, and hence it may be difficult to interpret the additional parameters. Table A.1 in Appendix report the results. Due to the computational burden, we consider the following specifications, each with four parameters to estimate and information sets to assess: (a) Baseline specification + campaign contributions from business organizations (Panel A); (b) Baseline specification + campaign contributions from labor unions (Panel B); (c)

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predicting future shocks for the case of Vietnam. The R-squared is generally around 53 percent.

<sup>31</sup>The data on campaign donations employed in the analysis of special interests are obtained from [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org), based on official Political Action Committee disclosure forms from the U.S. Federal Election Commission. [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org) is a website run by the Center for Responsive Politics, one of the main nonpartisan organizations in Washington DC, dedicated to electoral transparency and to the collection of information related to campaign spending and lobbying disclosures.

Baseline specification + the second principal component of contributions from business organizations and labor unions<sup>32</sup> (Panel C). Our main results appear robust to this inclusion and its additional explanatory power is limited.

Third, we explore the congressional committees closer to the policy decision and likely the most important targets for special interests. In particular, we exclude the politicians working in influential committees (including the committee on Appropriations, Commerce, and the committee on Ways and Means), who may be more influenced by money in politics. As is reported in Table A.2 in Appendix A, our results remain robust to this approach.

## 6 Counterfactuals

In this section we employ the estimated parameters of the model to perform two counterfactuals that answer the following questions: (i) Would giving full information to legislators have changed the results of the NTR roll call votes? (ii) Would the results of the NTR votes have changed if legislators placed a larger weight on the labor market consequences of the China Shock?

### 6.1 The case of legislators informed about the China Shock

After establishing that, for most of the time period in our sample, politicians had less than perfect knowledge of the labor market consequences of China’s export expansion, a natural question we can ask is whether providing more accurate information to politicians would have changed their vote, and the overall passage of certain bills. The answer, for the case of China NTR votes, is not substantially.

As the construction of the counterfactual is not trivial and not commonplace in the literature, we provide some details. Conditional on a particular value of the parameter vector  $\omega_t = \{a_t, b_t, \delta_t\}$ , and information set  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ , the decision of voting in favor of China is given by:

$$Y_{i,t}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \xi_{i,t}) = \{a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \xi_{i,t} \geq 0\}.$$

Integrating  $Y_{i,t}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \xi_{i,t})$  over  $\xi_{i,t}$  generates the probability that politician  $i$  casts a pro-China

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<sup>32</sup>Note that for the first principal component, the loadings on contributions from business and labor are both positive. Hence, the first component may just capture the fact that both interest groups are trying to curry favor from more influential representatives. For the second principal component, the loading on money from business is positive and the loading on money from labor is negative. So, it may be a summary statistics for the special interests in favor of a normal trade relationship with China.

vote in period  $t$ . In particular,

$$\int_{\xi_{i,t}} Y_{i,t}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \xi_{i,t}) \phi(\xi_{i,t}) d\xi_{i,t} = \int_{\xi_{i,t}} \mathbf{1} \{a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \xi_{i,t} \geq 0\} \phi(\xi_{i,t}) d\xi_{i,t}.$$

Denote  $\mathcal{N}_t$  be the set of politicians in period  $t$ , the share of votes in favor of China is then given by:

$$\Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \mathcal{N}_t) = \frac{1}{N_t} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{N}_t} \int_{\xi_{i,t}} Y_{i,t}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \xi_{i,t}) \phi(\xi_{i,t}) d\xi_{i,t}.$$

The corresponding 95 percent confidence set of the number of politicians vote in favor of China is:

$$\left[ \min_{\omega_t \in \Omega_t^{95\%}} \{\Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \mathcal{N}_t)\}, \max_{\omega_t \in \Omega_t^{95\%}} \{\Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \mathcal{N}_t)\} \right],$$

where  $\Omega_t^{95\%}$  is the 95 percent confidence set for the underlying parameters.

We simulate  $\Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}, \mathcal{N}_t)$  under the case of baseline information  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b$  and the case of perfect foresight  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p$ . The change in share of votes (in percentage) in favor of China when we provide politicians with full information is:

$$\left[ \min_{\omega_t \in \Omega_t^{95\%}} \{\Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p, \mathcal{N}_t) - \Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b, \mathcal{N}_t)\} \times 100, \max_{\omega_t \in \Omega_t^{95\%}} \{\Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p, \mathcal{N}_t) - \Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b, \mathcal{N}_t)\} \times 100 \right].$$

Before we delve into the specific results, it is worth pointing out that the effect of information provision on NTR votes is ambiguous, and depends on (i) the underlying distribution of the expectational errors  $G(\varepsilon_{i,t+1})$ , (ii) the weight on constituent interests that is governed by  $\delta_t$ , and (iii) the policy position relative to individual ideology  $a_t \theta_i + b_t$ . To see this, given the assumption of normal distribution and with a large sample, the change of vote share in favor of NTR with China can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned} & \Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p, \mathcal{N}_t) - \Pi^+(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b, \mathcal{N}_t) \\ &= \frac{1}{N_t} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{N}_t} [\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t S_{i,t+1}) - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b])] \\ &= \int_{\varepsilon_{i,t+1}} [\Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b] + \delta_t \varepsilon_{i,t+1}) - \Phi(a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b])] dG(\varepsilon_{i,t+1}) \end{aligned} \quad (19)$$

Regarding (i), our assumption of rational expectations dictate that  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$  has a mean zero conditional on  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b$ . Moreover, as is shown in Figure 6, the expectation errors are more or less symmet-

rically distributed in different sample periods. In Figure 7, we illustrate the roles of (ii) and (iii) given a symmetric distribution of  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ . Point A represents the probability of casting a pro-China vote for legislators who are endowed with  $\theta_i$  and have an expectation  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b]$ . Note that in this scenario, the general policy position is in favor of China, and point A is located in the concave segment of  $\Phi(\cdot)$ . (This scenario is likely the case during 1993-1996 when the vote share in favor of China was above 70 percent on average.) When these politicians are supplied with complete information, they are facing import shocks  $S_{i,t+1}$  that are dispersed around  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b]$  in a mean-preserving way. As is represented by point B, the share of pro-China vote will be lower in the counterfactual due to the concavity of  $\Phi(\cdot)$  at this segment. The magnitude of the counterfactual change hinges on the dispersion of  $\delta_t\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ , which in turn depends on  $\delta_t$  and the variation of  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ . In section 5, we show that the effect of constituent interests reflected by the estimate of  $\delta$  is moderate, and that the covariates in the baseline information set have significant explanatory power in predicting future shock especially in the earlier period (i.e., the variation of expectational errors is also moderate). These findings indicate that the effect of improving information could be small. Points C and D in Figure 7 depict the case in which general policy position is against China, and point C is located in the convex segment of  $\Phi(\cdot)$ . (This is related to the scenario in 1990-1992 when the vote share in favor of China was around 40 percent on average.) Under this case, had the politicians been provided with complete information on  $S_{i,t+1}$ , the pro-China vote share would have increased. The magnitude of the counterfactual change again depends on  $\delta_t$  and the variance of  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ .

We also simulate the number of politicians who vote for China in the baseline, but switch vote in the counterfactual according to

$$\begin{aligned}
& N^{+-}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b \rightarrow \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p, \mathcal{N}_t) \\
&= \int_{\xi_{i,t}} Y_{i,t}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b, \xi_{i,t})(1 - Y_{i,t}(\omega_t, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p, \xi_{i,t}))\phi(\xi_{i,t})d\xi_{i,t} \\
&= \int_{\xi_{i,t}} \mathbf{1}\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b] - \xi_{i,t} \geq 0\} \mathbf{1}\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p] - \xi_{i,t} < 0\} \phi(\xi_{i,t})d\xi_{i,t}.
\end{aligned}$$

Analogously, we can derive the number of politicians in the other categories: vote in favor of China in both the baseline and the counterfactual, vote against China in the baseline and switch in the counterfactual, and vote against China in both scenarios. The share of politicians for each of the cases, and the corresponding confidence sets are defined accordingly.

Table 11 shows the results of this counterfactual exercise. There are only a few small changes in the voting patterns across politicians who now possess full information, a result of the fact

that they already possess a substantial amount of information to begin with and that the weight on constituent interests is moderate. Moreover, the vote share in favor of China’s NTR status appears unaffected.<sup>33</sup>

## 6.2 Counterfactual: Heightened constituent interests

Another counterfactual that we explore here involves increasing the legislator’s weight placed on his or her local constituents. Specifically, we apply the lower bounds of  $\delta_t$  corresponding to the confidence sets of two groups of politicians (i) Democrats and (ii) politicians with below median victory margins in the previous election to all politicians, and then simulate the NTR votes. As is demonstrated in section 5.3, both these groups place high weight on the subconstituencies affected by the China Shock. By setting  $\delta_t$  at the highest possible (absolute) values, we assess whether this margin of preferences may have played an important role in driving legislative outcomes for given expectations of the legislators.

Table 12 reports the confidence sets of the simulated vote shares. For all the simulations, we assume that politicians have access to the baseline information set and make voting decisions based on  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b]$ . In Panel A, we simulate the shares of pro-China votes based on the baseline estimates reported in Table 5. The predicted vote shares in favor of China align with the actual shares.

In Panel B, we apply the largest possible weight that Democrats place on the expected China shock to all politicians. The counterfactual weight in 1997-2001 (respectively, 1993-1996 and 1990-1992) is nearly three times (respectively, two times and three times) larger than the lower bound of the estimates of  $\delta_t$ . The simulated vote share is in the range of [15.711, 30.443] in 1997-2001, indicating that bills in favor of NTR with China would have not passed in this counterfactual scenario during this period. The only caveat is that the confidence set of the counterfactual vote share still straddles 50 percent for the period 1993-1996.

Panel C applies to all legislators the largest possible weight placed by the politicians facing high electoral pressure (i.e., winning margins below median). In this counterfactual, the passage of the bills in favor of NTR with China would have been overturned in 1993-1996, but not in 1997-2001.

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<sup>33</sup>Also note that in aggregate the counterfactual change in pro-China vote share in 1993-1996 is negative, while that in 1990-1992 is positive, which is consistent with the scenarios depicted in Figure 7.



## 7 Conclusion

China's permanent NTR status in the U.S. and its accession to the WTO possibly represent one of the most salient critical junctures in international trade (and certainly in trade policy decisions) of the last fifty years. This paper investigates whether U.S. politicians had imperfect information about the extent of China Shock's repercussions in their home district at the time when they repeatedly voted on China's Normal Trade Relations status between 1990 and 2001.

To isolate the role of preferences versus information of members of Congress, we present a voting model and an application of a method of moment inequality approach designed to estimate expectations in decision making and to formally test for the content of information sets of legislators. We find that U.S. legislators had imperfect but fairly accurate expectations, yet placed a relatively low weight on the constituencies that ended up being adversely affected by the China Shock.

The approach discussed in this paper may be a general and informative avenue for the study of policy decisions made by politicians and to understand their expectations. Being able to resolve across preference and information margins is a valuable step forward for political economy and political science scholars interested in both questions of political accountability and learning in policy making. Future research should implement and extend our application outside the consequential questions of trade policy that we address in this paper, including labor, housing, healthcare, and fiscal policy.

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Figure 1: Roll call votes Pro China by Party

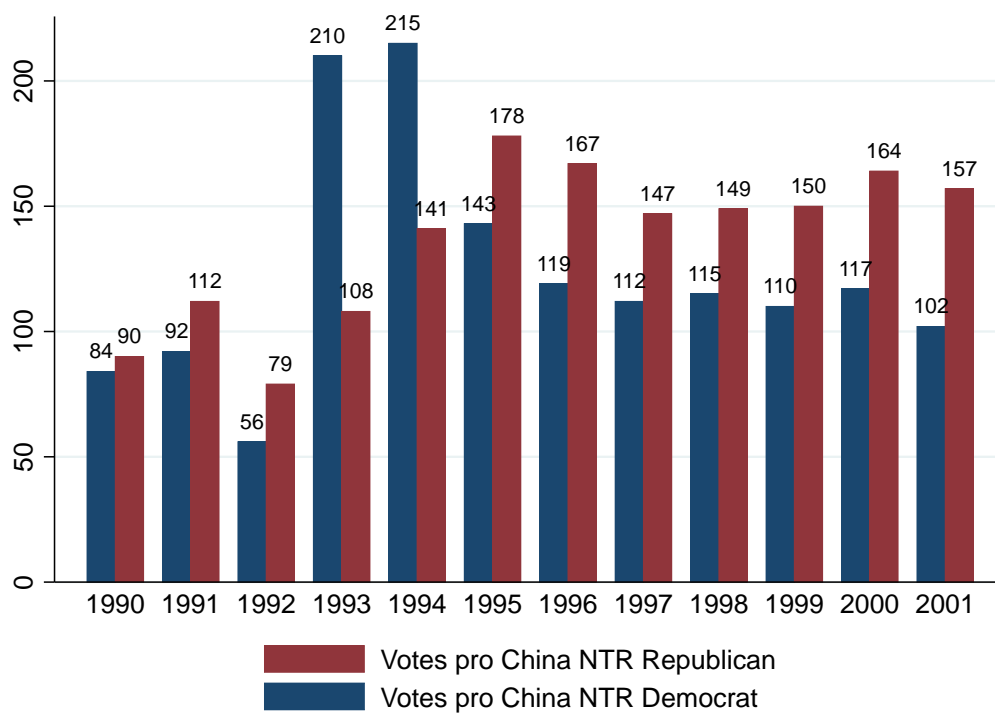


Figure 2: Roll call vote switching - Democrats

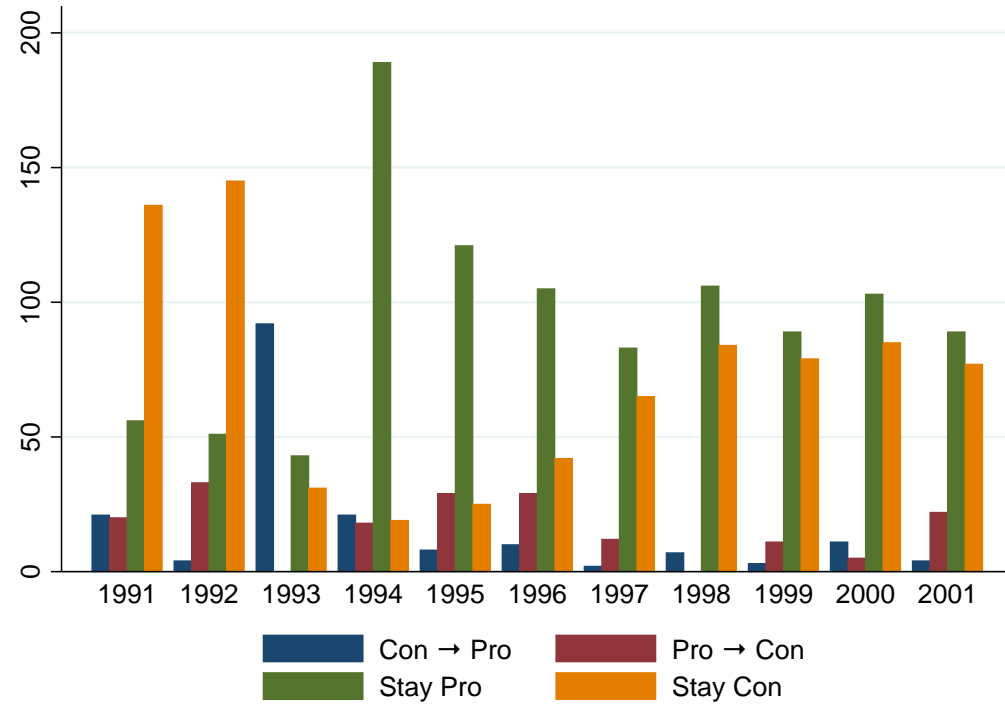


Figure 3: Roll call vote switching - Republicans

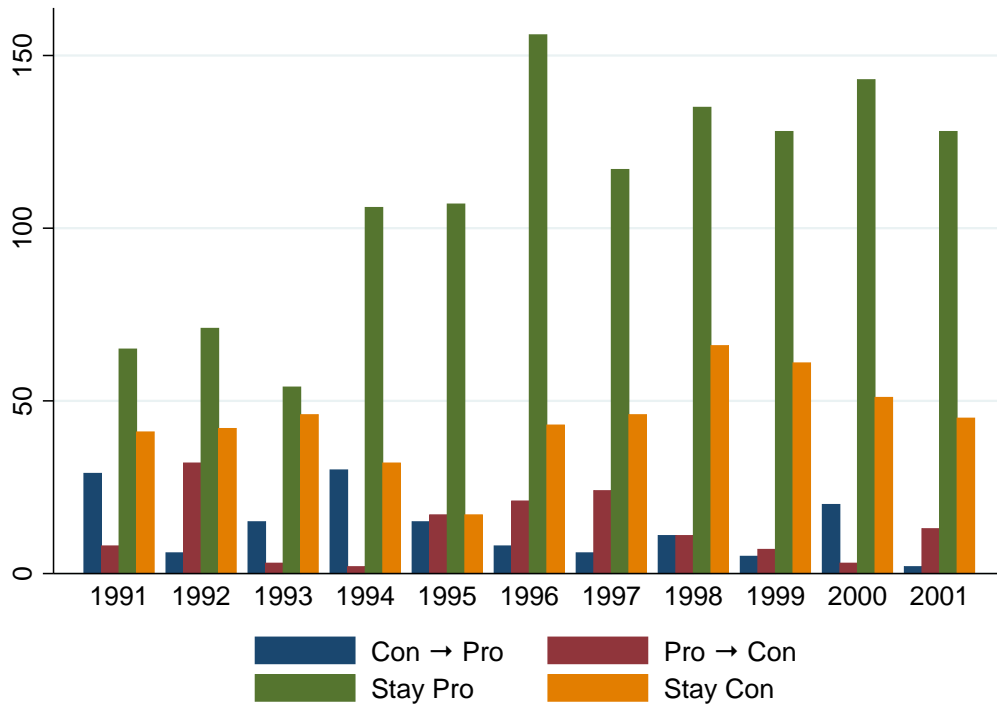
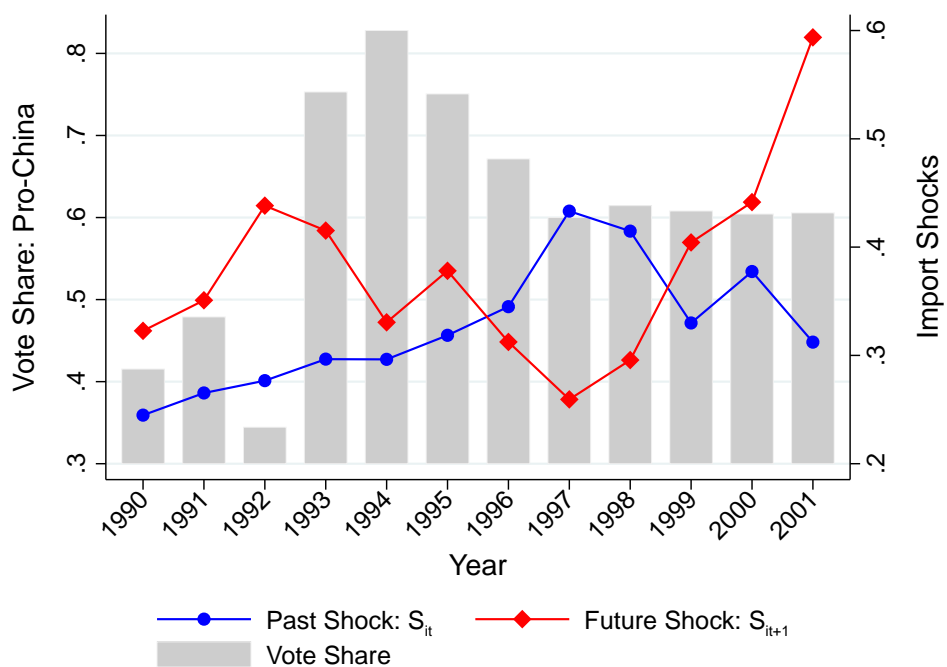


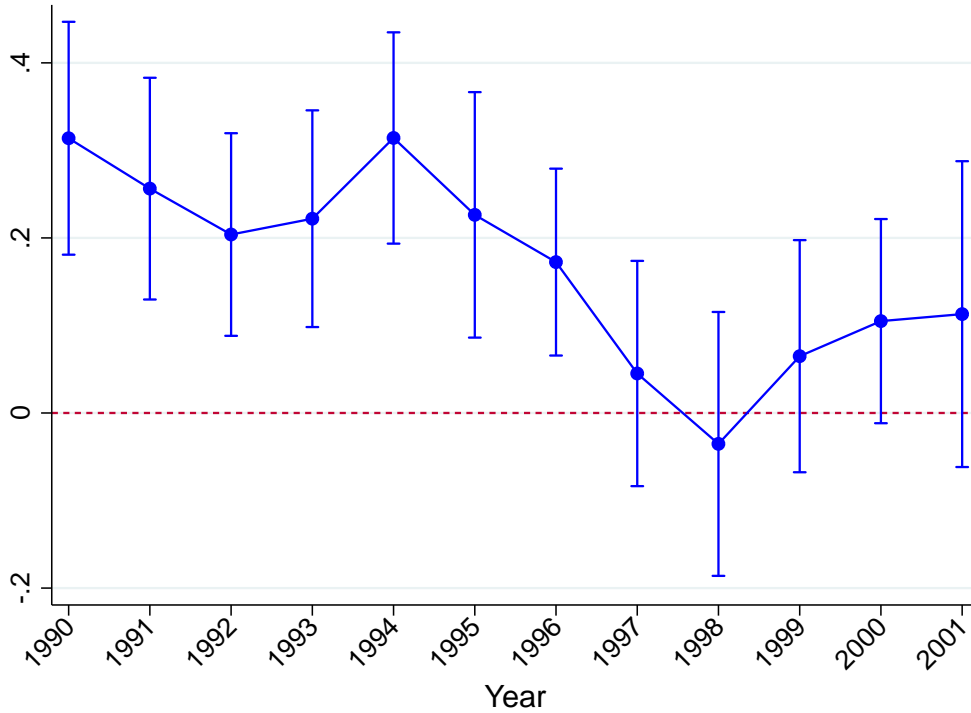
Figure 4: Import Shocks from China and Pro-China NTR Vote Share



*Notes:* The bar chart shows the share of votes in favor of renewing China's NTR status for the bills introduced in House over 1990 to 2001. The data in 2000 also includes the bill HR 4444 which granted China permanent normal trade relations. The dot blue line represents the average of past import shock across congressional districts, and the diamond red line shows the average of the future import shock. In order to put the data on a comparable five-year scale, past import shocks over 1990-1992 are multiplied with the factor 5/2.



Figure 5: The China Shock over Time

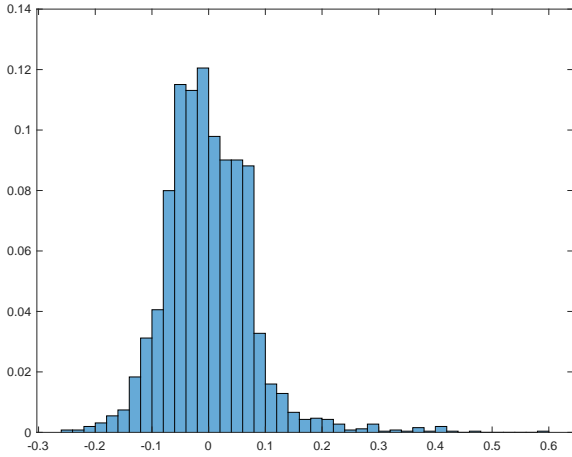


Notes: We explore the autocorrelation of import supply shock from China at the 4-digit SIC level by estimating the following equation:

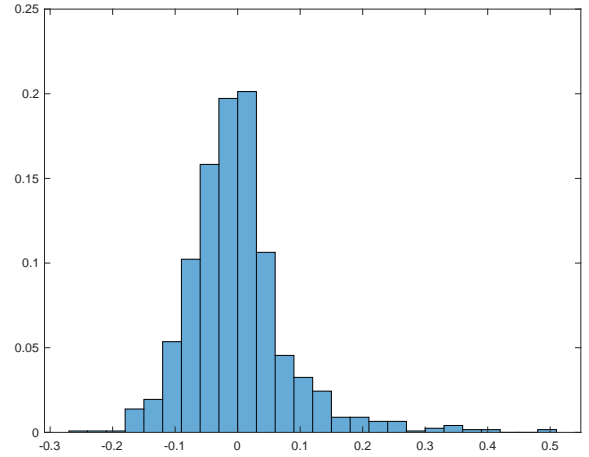
$$\Delta \ln M_{k,t,t+5}^{oth} = \alpha_t \Delta \ln M_{k,t-5,t}^{oth} + D_t + \varepsilon_{kt}$$

where  $\Delta \ln M_{k,t-5,t}^{oth}$  (respectively,  $\Delta \ln M_{k,t,t+5}^{oth}$ ) measures the change in log import from China by eight developed countries (Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, and Switzerland) over the period  $t - 5$  to  $t$  (respectively,  $t$  to  $t + 5$ ).  $D_t$  is the year fixed effects, and  $\alpha_t$  captures the autocorrelation of import supply shock from China in different periods. Standard errors are clustered at the 4-digit SIC level. We use the Davis-Haltiwanger-Schuh approximation of the log growth rate, i.e.,  $\Delta \ln M_{k,t-5,t}^{oth} \approx 2 \left( \frac{M_{k,t}^{oth} - M_{k,t-5}^{oth}}{M_{k,t}^{oth} + M_{k,t-5}^{oth}} \right)$  and  $\Delta \ln M_{k,t,t+5}^{oth} \approx 2 \left( \frac{M_{k,t+5}^{oth} - M_{k,t}^{oth}}{M_{k,t+5}^{oth} + M_{k,t}^{oth}} \right)$ , to avoid dropping observations where imports are zero. The point estimates of  $\alpha_t$  and their 95% confidence intervals are reported in the figure.

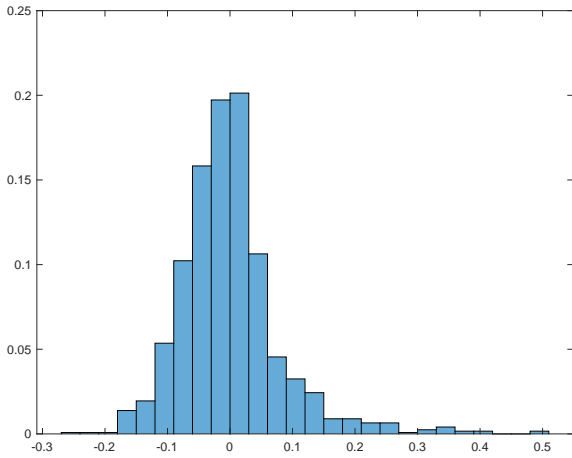
Figure 6: Distribution of Expectational Errors



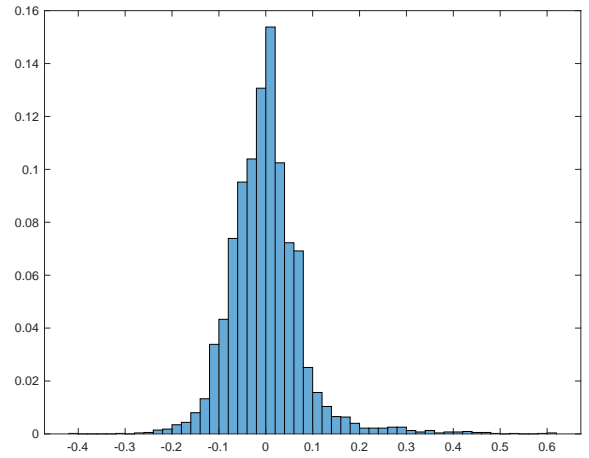
A. 1997-2001



B. 1993-1996



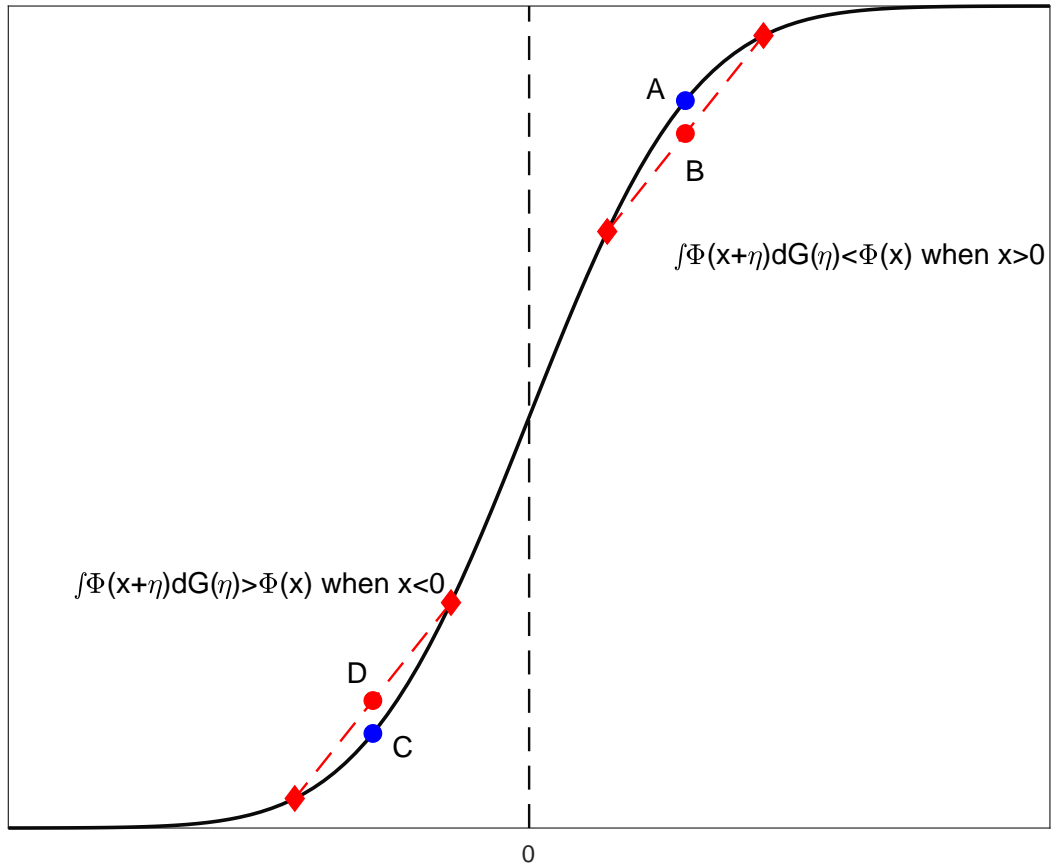
C. 1990-1992



D. 1990-2001

Notes: The figure plots the distribution of expectaional errors based on the Baseline information set, i.e.,  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1} = S_{i,t+1} - \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b]$ . Specifically, the expectational errors are the residuals from the OLS regression:  $S_{i,t+1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \theta_i + \beta_2 \text{ShareMfg}_{i,t} + \beta_3 S_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ .

Figure 7: An Illustrative Example: Effects of Improving Information



*Notes:* The figure presents an illustrative example on how the provision of information on the China shock changes the pro-China vote share. The black solid curve represent the standard normal cumulative density function. In this figure  $x$  corresponds to the component  $a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b]$  and  $\eta$  corresponds to the component  $\delta_t\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$  in equation (19). In this example, the distribution of  $\eta$  has a mean zero and is symmetric. The spread represented by the red dashed lines is determined by the variation of  $\eta$ .

Table 1: Roll Call Votes

Year	Congress	President	House	Bill number	NTR (PNTR)		Additional action
					approved in House	approved in Senate	
<i>Annual Renewal of NTR with China:</i>							
1990	101	G.H.W. Bush	D	HJRES647	No	No	No action in Senate
1991	102	G.H.W. Bush	D	HJRES263	No	No	No action in Senate
1992	102	G.H.W. Bush	D	HJRES502	No	No	Did not pass in Senate
1993	103	Clinton	D	HJRES208	Yes	Yes	
1994	103	Clinton	D	HJRES373	Yes	Yes	
1995	104	Clinton	R	HJRES96	Yes	Yes	
1996	104	Clinton	R	HJRES182	Yes	Yes	
1997	105	Clinton	R	HJRES79	Yes	Yes	
1998	105	Clinton	R	HJRES121	Yes	Yes	
1999	106	Clinton	R	HJRES57	Yes	Yes	
2000	106	Clinton	R	HJRES103	Yes	Yes	
2001	107	G.W. Bush	R	HJRES50	Yes	Yes	
<i>Granting PNTR to China:</i>							
2000	106	Clinton	R	HR4444		Yes	

Table 2: Summary Statistics of Detrended Import Shocks at the Congressional District Level

	1990-2001		1997-2001		1993-1996		1990-1992	
	$S_{i,t+1}$	$S_{i,t}$	$S_{i,t+1}$	$S_{i,t}$	$S_{i,t+1}$	$S_{i,t}$	$S_{i,t+1}$	$S_{i,t}$
std	0.128	0.128	0.122	0.075	0.070	0.153	0.153	0.141
p5	-0.172	-0.175	-0.171	-0.106	-0.095	-0.186	-0.189	-0.187
p25	-0.077	-0.075	-0.084	-0.048	-0.043	-0.098	-0.093	-0.093
p50	-0.017	-0.016	-0.010	-0.009	-0.009	-0.020	-0.022	-0.022
p75	0.051	0.046	0.070	0.035	0.035	0.050	0.050	0.049
p95	0.239	0.231	0.214	0.144	0.139	0.316	0.293	0.272

*Notes:* In order to put the data on a comparable five-year scale, past import shocks over 1990-1992 are multiplied with the factor 5/2.

Table 3: MLE Estimates Based on Different Information Sets

	$\hat{a}$ (se.)	$\hat{b}$ (se.)	$\hat{\delta}$ (se.)
<b>Panel A: 1997-2001</b>			
Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	0.650 (0.063)	0.262 (0.025)	-0.810 (0.314)
Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	0.643 (0.062)	0.263 (0.025)	-0.786 (0.279)
Perfect foresight	0.619 (0.062)	0.263 (0.025)	-0.018 (0.211)
<b>Panel B: 1993-1996</b>			
Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	-0.046 (0.084)	0.678 (0.033)	-0.440 (0.611)
Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	-0.043 (0.084)	0.679 (0.033)	-1.116 (0.549)
Perfect foresight	-0.051 (0.083)	0.678 (0.033)	-0.517 (0.452)
<b>Panel C: 1990-1992</b>			
Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	1.019 (0.104)	-0.179 (0.037)	0.065 (0.351)
Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	1.000 (0.105)	-0.181 (0.037)	-0.981 (0.288)
Perfect foresight	1.013 (0.104)	-0.180 (0.037)	-0.669 (0.244)
<b>Panel D: 1990-2001</b>			
Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	0.532 (0.044)	0.280 (0.017)	-0.453 (0.222)
Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$	0.534 (0.044)	0.280 (0.017)	-0.856 (0.198)
Perfect foresight	0.523 (0.044)	0.280 (0.017)	-0.333 (0.147)

*Notes:* This table reports the MLE estimates based on equation (6). For the case of minimal information, we replace the term  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|Z_{i,t}]$  by the predicted value of the OLS regression:  $S_{i,t+1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\theta_i + \beta_2ShareMfg_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ . For the case of baseline information, the term is replaced by the predicted value of the OLS regression:  $S_{i,t+1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\theta_i + \beta_2ShareMfg_{i,t} + \beta_3S_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t+1}$ . For the case of perfect foresight, the term is replaced by  $S_{i,t+1}$ . Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.

Table 4: Relevance of Manufacturing Employment Share and Past Import Shock in Explaining Future Import Shocks

Sample Period:	1990-2001	1997-2001	1993-1996	1990-1992
Dependent Variable: $S_{i,t+1}$	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$S_{i,t}$	0.256*** (0.011)	0.735*** (0.041)	0.214*** (0.013)	0.636*** (0.032)
$ShareMfg_{i,t}$	0.753*** (0.020)	0.683*** (0.036)	0.455*** (0.020)	0.695*** (0.045)
Observations	5,573	2,572	1,713	1,288
$R^2$	0.555	0.586	0.673	0.684

*Notes:* In order to put the data on a comparable five-year scale, past import shocks over 1990-1992 are multiplied with the factor 5/2. Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

Table 5: Parameter Confidence Sets and Specification Test p-values

Period	CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
1997-2001	<b>Panel A:</b> Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[0.465, 0.765]	[0.165, 0.275]	[-2.062, -0.137]	0.520	0.520	0.520	2546
	<b>Panel B:</b> Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[0.450, 0.795]	[0.190, 0.280]	[-1.670, -0.020]	0.360	0.360	0.360	2546
	<b>Panel C:</b> Perfect foresight $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1} S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i], \theta_i\}$						
	–	–	–	0.010	0.010	0.010	2546
1993-1996	<b>Panel A:</b> Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[-0.280, 0.100]	[0.583, 0.703]	[-2.375, 0.887]	0.330	0.330	0.330	1698
	<b>Panel B:</b> Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[-0.325, 0.130]	[0.598, 0.740]	[-3.125, -0.125]	0.395	0.395	0.395	1698
	<b>Panel C:</b> Perfect foresight $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1} S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i], \theta_i\}$						
	–	–	–	0.010	0.010	0.010	1698
1990-1992	<b>Panel A:</b> Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[0.800, 1.550]	[-0.325, -0.125]	[-1.125, 2.125]	0.955	0.955	0.955	1232
	<b>Panel B:</b> Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[1.025, 1.438]	[-0.275, -0.150]	[-1.300, 0.000]	0.165	0.145	0.145	1232
	<b>Panel C:</b> Perfect foresight $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1} S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i], \theta_i\}$						
	[1.000, 1.550]	[-0.200, -0.200]	[-1.400, 0.025]	0.235	0.225	0.225	1232
1990-2001	<b>Panel A:</b> Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[0.465, 0.615]	[0.210, 0.270]	[-1.188, -0.137]	0.185	0.185	0.185	5494
	<b>Panel B:</b> Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
	[0.515, 0.620]	[0.240, 0.270]	[-1.275, -0.825]	0.085	0.070	0.070	5494
	<b>Panel C:</b> Perfect foresight $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1} S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i], \theta_i\}$						
	–	–	–	0.010	0.010	0.010	5494

Notes: For the case of perfect foresight, we assume that in addition to  $S_{i,t}$ ,  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$  and  $\theta_i$ , politicians also possess information that is orthogonal to these covariates, i.e.  $S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1}|S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i]$ .



Table 6: Parameter Confidence Sets and Specification Test p-values: Heterogeneity by Party

Period	Group	CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
1997-2001	Democrats	[2.400, 4.425]	[0.850, 1.650]	[-4.740, -0.330]	0.410	0.410	0.410	1229
	Republicans	—	—	—	0.025	0.025	0.025	1326
1993-1996	Democrats	[1.000, 3.250]	[1.050, 2.000]	[-5.800, 0.200]	0.500	0.500	0.500	888
	Republicans	—	—	—	0.020	0.020	0.020	806
1990-1992	Democrats	[1.875, 4.375]	[0.050, 0.850]	[-3.700, -0.400]	0.415	0.410	0.410	745
	Republicans	[-1.300, 1.400]	[-0.300, 0.650]	[-1.450, 1.850]	0.310	0.310	0.310	485
1990-2001	Democrats	[1.500, 3.075]	[0.600, 1.200]	[-3.140, -0.667]	0.805	0.795	0.795	2862
	Republicans	—	—	—	0.010	0.010	0.010	2617

Notes: The estimation in this table is based on the Baseline information  $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$ .

Table 7: Parameter Confidence Sets and Specification Test p-values: Heterogeneity by Win Margin

Period	Group	CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
1997-2001	Win margin > median	[0.825, 1.050]	[0.075, 0.275]	[-1.985, 0.935]	0.685	0.685	0.685	1182
	Win margin < median	[0.150, 0.375]	[0.250, 0.375]	[-1.905, -0.173]	0.175	0.175	0.175	1184
1993-1996	Win margin > median	[-0.250, 0.250]	[0.475, 0.700]	[-3.000, 2.750]	0.525	0.520	0.520	799
	Win margin < median	[-1.000, 0.250]	[0.650, 0.950]	[-8.550, -0.225]	0.950	0.950	0.950	800
1990-1992	Win margin > median	[0.825, 2.100]	[-0.450, -0.100]	[-2.950, 2.650]	0.755	0.755	0.755	568
	Win margin < median	[0.450, 1.700]	[-0.300, -0.050]	[-4.375, -0.750]	0.495	0.485	0.485	569
1990-2001	Win margin > median	[0.600, 0.600]	[0.150, 0.200]	[-0.555, 0.240]	0.115	0.115	0.115	2551
	Win margin < median	[0.150, 0.375]	[0.300, 0.400]	[-2.495, -0.882]	0.435	0.435	0.435	2551

Notes: The estimation in this table is based on the Baseline information  $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$ .

Table 8: Parameter Confidence Sets and Specification Test p-values: Heterogeneity by Tenure

Period	Group	CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
1997-2001	Tenure > median	[0.825, 1.050]	[0.175, 0.225]	[-0.707, 0.388]	0.085	0.085	0.085	1372
	Tenure < median	[0.375, 0.600]	[0.250, 0.375]	[-2.535, -0.960]	0.170	0.170	0.170	1176
1993-1996	Tenure > median	[-0.250, 0.250]	[0.550, 0.700]	[-3.400, 1.325]	0.460	0.460	0.460	863
	Tenure < median	[-0.500, 0.250]	[0.650, 0.900]	[-5.800, 0.200]	0.605	0.600	0.600	821
1990-1992	Tenure > median	[0.825, 2.325]	[-0.150, 0.150]	[-5.475, 0.125]	0.900	0.900	0.900	572
	Tenure < median	[0.950, 1.750]	[-0.450, -0.300]	[-1.625, 0.875]	0.250	0.215	0.215	634
1990-2001	Tenure > median	[0.825, 0.825]	[0.225, 0.250]	[-1.420, -0.775]	0.095	0.095	0.095	2488
	Tenure < median	[0.375, 0.375]	[0.275, 0.325]	[-1.420, -0.452]	0.120	0.120	0.120	2950

Notes: The estimation in this table is based on the Baseline information  $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$ .

Table 9: Parameter Confidence Sets and Specification Test p-values:  
 Votes on NTR with Vietnam (1998-2001)

CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
<b>Panel A:</b> Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
[-1.250, -0.462]	[0.532, 0.890]	[-85.000, -23.250]	0.990	0.990	0.990	1595
<b>Panel B:</b> Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}^V, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$						
[-1.250, -0.613]	[0.630, 0.792]	[-74.075, -6.700]	0.435	0.435	0.435	1595
<b>Panel C:</b> Perfect Foresight $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}^V, ShareMfg_{it}, S_{i,t+1}^V - E[S_{i,t+1}^V   S_{i,t}^V, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i], \theta_i\}$						
–	–	–	0.010	0.010	0.010	1595

*Notes:* For the case of perfect foresight, we assume that in addition to  $S_{i,t}$ ,  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$  and  $\theta_i$ , politicians also possess information that is orthogonal to these covariates, i.e.  $S_{i,t+1}^V - E[S_{i,t+1}^V | S_{i,t}^V, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i]$ .

Table 10: Parameter Confidence Sets and Specification Test p-values: Heterogeneity by Campaign Contributions from Business

Period	Group	CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
1997-2001	Money > median	[-0.300, 0.375]	[0.500, 0.725]	[-2.693, -0.645]	0.280	0.280	0.280	1273
	Money < median	[0.600, 1.050]	[-0.050, 0.100]	[-1.985, 0.388]	0.320	0.310	0.310	1273
1993-1996	Money > median	[-1.000, 0.250]	[0.750, 1.050]	[-6.825, -0.525]	0.680	0.670	0.670	844
	Money < median	[-0.250, 0.500]	[0.475, 0.700]	[-3.500, 2.000]	0.545	0.545	0.545	844
1990-1992	Money > median	[0.150, 1.100]	[-0.150, 0.000]	[-2.000, 0.250]	0.335	0.335	0.335	613
	Money < median	[1.100, 3.500]	[-0.400, 0.250]	[-7.325, 0.775]	0.825	0.825	0.825	616
1990-2001	Money > median	[0.600, 0.375]	[0.400, 0.475]	[-2.065, -1.097]	0.135	0.135	0.135	2730
	Money < median	[0.600, 0.825]	[0.100, 0.225]	[-1.850, -0.130]	0.215	0.205	0.205	2733

Notes: The estimation in this table is based on the Baseline information  $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$ .

Table 11: Effects of Improving Information

	1997-2001	1993-1996	1990-1992
(1) Change in share of votes pro-CHN (%)	[-0.030, 0.012]	[-0.161, -0.000]	[-0.008, 0.064]
(2) Share of always pro-CHN (%)	[55.956, 61.668]	[70.382, 76.967]	[36.634, 42.352]
(3) Share of pro-CHN to against-CHN (%)	[0.078, 1.694]	[0.054, 1.610]	[0.000, 1.265]
(4) Share of Against-CHN to pro-CHN (%)	[0.078, 1.694]	[0.054, 1.485]	[0.000, 1.317]
(5) Share of Always against-CHN (%)	[36.720, 42.187]	[21.997, 27.645]	[56.264, 62.309]

Table 12: Effects of Heightening Constituent Interests

	1997-2001	1993-1996	1990-1992
<b>Panel A: Baseline</b>			
(1) Value of $\delta$	[-1.670, -0.020]	[-3.125, -0.125]	[-1.300, 0.000]
(2) Share of votes pro-CHN (%)	[57.663, 61.760]	[71.999, 77.034]	[37.682, 42.427]
<b>Panel B: Lower bound of CS for Democrats</b>			
(3) Value of $\delta$	-4.740	-5.800	-3.700
(4) Share of votes pro-CHN (%)	[15.711, 30.443]	[38.005, 61.502]	[11.983, 23.131]
<b>Panel C: Lower bound of CS for Win Margin &lt; median</b>			
(5) Value of $\delta$	-1.905	-8.550	-4.375
(6) Share of votes pro-CHN (%)	[37.992, 58.049]	[24.606, 45.485]	[9.682, 19.424]

Notes: The simulation in this table is based on the Baseline information  $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$ .

# A Data appendix and additional results

## A.1 Other data

**Roll call votes on NTR with Vietnam.** We collect data on voting outcomes of bills related to the renewal of Vietnam’s Jackson-Vanik Waiver (i.e., whether to extend Vietnam’s NTR status) that existed over the period 1998 to 2002. Due to the congressional redistricting in 2002, we only include the bills over 1998-2001. These bills are HJRES120, HJRES58, HJRES99 and HJRES55. The share of votes in favor of NTR with Vietnam are 61.47%, 69.63%, 78.54% and 78.12% in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001, respectively.

**Import shock from Vietnam.** Analogous to the China shock, we construct the future import supply shocks from Vietnam at the CZ level according to

$$S_{j,t+1}^V = \sum_k \frac{L_{jk,t}}{L_{j,t}} \frac{\Delta M_{k,t+1}^{oth,V}}{Y_{k,t} + M_{k,t} - X_{k,t}},$$

where  $\Delta M_{k,t+1}^{oth,V}$  is the change in import of good  $k$  from Vietnam by eight other (non-U.S.) high-income countries over 5 years in the future. The past import shock from Vietnam is

$$S_{j,t}^V = \sum_k \frac{L_{ik,t-5}}{L_{i,t-5}} \frac{\Delta M_{k,t}^{oth,V}}{Y_{k,t-5} + M_{k,t-5} - X_{k,t-5}},$$

where  $\Delta M_{k,t}^{oth,V}$  denotes the change in import of good  $k$  from Vietnam by eight other (non-U.S.) high-income countries over the past 5 years. We aggregate the CZ-level measures to congressional districts using the same procedure in section 4.2. The CD-level measures are denoted by  $S_{i,t+1}^V$  and  $S_{i,t}^V$ . The magnitude of the import shock from Vietnam is several orders smaller than that from China. The standard deviation of  $S_{i,t+1}^V$  over 1998-2001 is 0.0057. As with China, local manufacturing share and past import shock have a large predicting power for future shock. Regressing (de-trended)  $S_{i,t+1}^V$  on (de-trended)  $S_{i,t}^V$  and  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$  yields a R-squared of 0.528.

## A.2 Evidence from congressional speech

The data on congressional speech is obtained from (Gentzkow et al., 2019). For each congressional district×year cell, we count the number of speeches that refer “China” together with a mention of trade issues or a mention of labor issues.<sup>34</sup> The number of relevant speeches is related to import

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<sup>34</sup>We identify the issues that each speech cover by keywords. The keywords for trade issues include trade, export/exports and import/imports. The keywords for labor issues include labor, employment, unemployment, and job/jobs.

shocks from China according to:

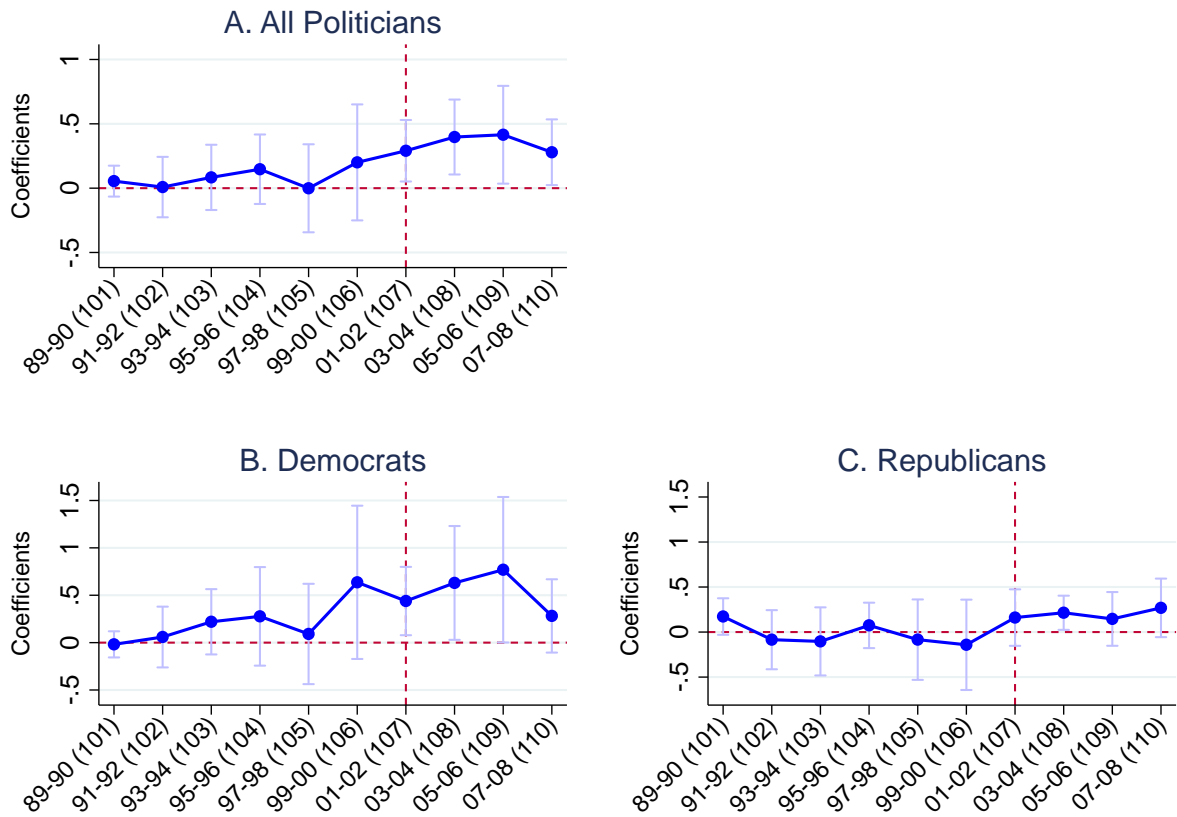
$$y_{it} = \sum_c \beta_c \mathbf{1}(t \in c) HighExposure_i + \gamma X_{it} + D_t + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (20)$$

where  $y_{it}$  is the number of speeches related to the “China and trade” issue or the “China and labor” issue delivered by the representative of  $i$  in year  $t$ . Congressional districts are classified into groups based on their exposure to the increase in China’s import penetration over the period 2001-2006.  $HighExposure_i$  is an indicator variable equaling to 1 if  $i$  belongs to the top tercile of the exposure to import shock from China. We allow its effect to vary across different congressional sessions, and the differential effects are captured by coefficients  $\beta_c$ .  $X_i$  represents the total number of speeches delivered by the representative in district  $i$  and year  $t$ , and  $D_t$  denotes the year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the congressional district level.

Panel A of Figure A.1 reports the estimates of  $\beta_c$  and the corresponding 90% confidence intervals. The estimated coefficients become positively significant from the 107th congress (2001-02) and on, when the China Shock over 2001 to 2006 gradually revealed itself. In contrast, the estimates are smaller in magnitude and statistically insignificant over the earlier period 1989-1998. In panels B and C, we estimate equation (20) for Democrats and Republicans separately. For the purpose of comparison, y-axes in these two panels share the same scale. Two results emerge. First, after the China Shock is realized, the representatives from the high-exposure districts raise the related trade and labor issues more often in their speeches, but such response is stronger for Democrats than Republicans. Second, it appears that Democrats started taking actions before the China shock is realized. Specifically, for Democrats the estimated  $\beta_c$  surged in 1999-2000 (i.e., the 106th congress), while for Republicans, the effect started picking up in 2001-2002. These patterns are consistent with the findings in section 5 that (i) Democrats are more informed than Republicans about the China shock before it was fully realized, and (ii) Democratic legislators place more weights on the subconstituencies that would be adversely impacted by the future import penetration from China.



Figure A.1: Number of Speeches with Mentions of China & Labor or China & Trade Issues



Notes: This figure plots the estimated coefficients  $\beta_c$  in equation (20). Error bands show 90% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered at the congressional district level. The vertical red dashed line indicates the time of China's accession to the WTO.

Table A.1: Parameter Estimates and Content of Information Sets  
(Extended Model: Including Campaign Contributions from Interest Groups)

Period	CS of $a$ (Ideology)	CS of $b$ (Constant)	CS of $\delta$ (Import Shock)	CS of $\chi$ (Money)	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
<b>Panel A: Including Campaign Contributions from Business</b>								
1997-2001	[-0.340, 0.940]	[0.267, 0.500]	[-5.000, -0.200]	[0.133, 0.333]	0.825	0.820	0.820	2546
1993-1996	[-1.200, 0.000]	[0.627, 0.840]	[-8.267, 1.067]	[0.033, 0.333]	0.730	0.660	0.660	1688
1990-1992	[0.833, 1.433]	[-0.233, -0.133]	[-1.400, 0.000]	[0.000, 0.100]	0.110	0.100	0.100	1229
<b>Panel B: Including Campaign Contributions from Labor</b>								
1997-2001	[-0.700, 0.740]	[0.167, 0.267]	[-1.933, -0.067]	[-0.200, 0.000]	0.145	0.145	0.145	2546
1993-1996	[-3.667, 0.000]	[0.307, 0.893]	[-14.733, 1.733]	[-0.600, 0.000]	0.750	0.690	0.690	1688
1990-1992	[-4.000, 5.000]	[-0.587, 0.207]	[-7.000, 5.000]	[-0.780, 0.660]	0.455	0.455	0.455	1229
<b>Panel C: Including the 2nd Principal Component of Campaign Contributions from Business and Labor</b>								
1997-2001	[-2.913, -0.273]	[0.100, 0.600]	[-8.133, 4.000]	[0.667, 2.167]	0.915	0.900	0.900	2546
1993-1996	[-4.667, -0.667]	[0.440, 1.040]	[-16.000, 6.000]	[0.467, 2.567]	0.605	0.605	0.605	1688
1990-1992	[-4.500, 0.300]	[-0.500, 0.000]	[-6.000, -0.400]	[0.700, 3.033]	0.765	0.765	0.765	1229

Notes: The estimation in this table is based on the assumption that the information set possessed by politicians contains  $S_{i,t}$ ,  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$ ,  $\theta_i$ , and the campaign contributions from the corresponding interest groups during the congressional cycle.

Table A.2: Excluding Politicians Working in the Committee on Commerce, and the Committee on Ways and Means

Period	CS of $a$	CS of $b$	CS of $\delta$	p-value BP	p-value RC	p-value RS	Num obs.
<b>Panel A:</b> Minimal information $Z_{i,t} = \{ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$							
1997-2001	[0.399, 0.740]	[0.060, 0.240]	[-2.487, -0.575]	0.700	0.700	0.700	2012
1993-1996	[-0.140, 0.100]	[0.475, 0.573]	[-2.712, -1.050]	0.090	0.090	0.090	1361
1990-1992	[0.600, 1.650]	[-0.500, 0.000]	[-1.825, 5.000]	0.990	0.990	0.990	1001
1990-2001	[0.420, 0.585]	[0.115, 0.180]	[-1.363, -0.575]	0.135	0.135	0.135	4374
<b>Panel B:</b> Baseline information $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i\}$							
1997-2001	[0.600, 0.825]	[0.125, 0.250]	[-2.378, -0.173]	0.660	0.660	0.660	2012
1993-1996	[-0.250, 0.000]	[0.600, 0.700]	[-2.975, -0.175]	0.210	0.210	0.210	1361
1990-1992	[1.000, 1.500]	[-0.350, -0.200]	[-1.375, 0.000]	0.205	0.190	0.190	1001
1990-2001	[0.600, 0.600]	[0.200, 0.225]	[-1.420, -0.775]	0.120	0.120	0.120	4374
<b>Panel C:</b> Perfect foresight $Z_{i,t} = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1} S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i]\}$							
1997-2001	—	—	—	0.010	0.010	0.010	2012
1993-1996	—	—	—	0.010	0.010	0.010	1361
1990-1992	[1.150, 1.500]	[-0.338, -0.238]	[-1.300, -0.300]	0.100	0.090	0.090	1001
1990-2001	—	—	—	0.010	0.010	0.010	4374

*Notes:* For the case of perfect foresight, we assume that in addition to  $S_{i,t}$ ,  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$  and  $\theta_i$ , politicians also possess information that is orthogonal to these covariates, i.e.  $S_{i,t+1} - E[S_{i,t+1}|S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}, \theta_i]$ .

## B Role of expectations about electoral sensitivity ( $\gamma$ )

Our baseline model assumes that politicians have full knowledge of the electoral consequences of the China Shock that are dependent on the NTR voting decisions. In this appendix, we relax this assumption. Denote  $\gamma_t = \gamma_t^1 - \gamma_t^2$  as the electoral sensitivity to the China Shock. Suppose politicians form expectation on both  $\gamma_t$  and  $S_{i,t+1}$ . Then the voting decision is determined by

$$Y_{i,t} = \mathbf{1}\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \tilde{\delta}\mathbb{E}[\gamma_t S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}] - \xi_{i,t} > 0\}.$$

The corresponding odds-based moment equality analogous to (8) is given by

$$\mathbb{E}\left[(1 - Y_{i,t})\frac{\Phi\left(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \tilde{\delta}\mathbb{E}[\gamma_t S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]\right)}{1 - \Phi\left(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \tilde{\delta}\mathbb{E}[\gamma_t S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]\right)} - Y_{i,t}\middle|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}\right] = 0. \quad (\text{B.1})$$

Here we make two assumptions: (i)  $\gamma_t$  and  $S_{i,t+1}$  are uncorrelated conditional on  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ , and (ii) the distribution of  $\gamma_t$  conditional on  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}$  is equal to its distribution conditional on an information set common to all politicians at time  $t$ ,  $\mathcal{I}_t$ . Under these assumptions we can rewrite (B.1) as:

$$\mathbb{E}\left[(1 - Y_{i,t})\frac{\Phi\left(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \tilde{\delta}\mathbb{E}[\gamma_t|\mathcal{I}_t]\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]\right)}{1 - \Phi\left(a_t\theta_i + b_t + \tilde{\delta}\mathbb{E}[\gamma_t|\mathcal{I}_t]\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}]\right)} - Y_{i,t}\middle|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}\right] = 0$$

It is straightforward to redefine the coefficient  $\delta_t = \tilde{\delta}\mathbb{E}[\gamma_t|\mathcal{I}_t]$  and reinterpret all the results we report under this slightly different definition. We believe assumptions (i) and (ii) are not implausible because the sensitivity of voting to economic shocks is a common parameter that does not depend on the individual politician's characteristics. We see  $\gamma_t$  as a parameter that politicians estimate from voter surveys on the importance of certain issues in an election.<sup>35</sup> The independence of the China Shock from this parameter  $\gamma_t$  is also reasonable once we consider that this is a common parameter that does not depend on specific constituencies.

## C Monte Carlo simulation: MLE bias

In this Appendix, we adopt Monte Carlo simulations to illustrate the bias that emerges when estimating  $\omega_t$  by maximum likelihood in equation (6). We adopt a time horizon of 5 years to define a future import shock, so that  $S_{i,t+1}$  corresponds to the increase in import penetration in the next 5 years. The true information set throughout the exercise is what we have defined as

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<sup>35</sup>See Jones and Baumgartner (2005).

baseline information set  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b = \{S_{i,t}, ShareMfg_{i,t}\}$ . More specifically,  $S_{i,t+1}$  is simulated according to the following linear model:

$$S_{i,t+1} = \underbrace{\beta_0 + \beta_1 S_{i,t} + \beta_2 ShareMfg_{i,t} + \beta_3 \theta_i}_{\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b]} + \varepsilon_{i,t+1},$$

where  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$  is the expectational error. To simulate  $S_{i,t+1}$ , we set  $\beta_0 = 0$ ,  $\beta_1 = 0.721$ ,  $\beta_2 = 0.184$ ,  $\beta_3 = 0$ . Expectational errors  $\varepsilon_{i,t+1}$  are drawn from the normal distribution with mean 0 and standard deviation of  $\sigma_\varepsilon = 0.525$ .<sup>36</sup> We take  $S_{i,t}$ ,  $ShareMfg_{i,t}$  and  $\theta_i$  from the real data over 1998-2001. Then, the voting decision is simulated according to  $Y_{i,t} = \mathbf{1}\{a\theta_i + b + \delta \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b] - \xi_{i,t} > 0\}$ . We set  $a = 0.5$  and  $b = 0.3$  and present two sets of results based on  $\delta = -1.3$  and  $\delta = 0$ .

We will evaluate the bias that arises when an econometrician mistakenly assumes that politicians have minimal information  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m$  or perfect foresight  $\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^p$ . For the case of minimal information set, we estimate  $\omega_t$  by maximizing the following log-likelihood:

$$\begin{aligned} \ln \mathcal{L} \left( \omega_t | \{Y_{i,t}, \theta_i, \mathcal{I}_{i,t}\}_{i=1}^N \right) & \quad (C.1) \\ = \sum_{i=1}^N Y_{i,t} \ln [\Phi (a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m])] & \\ + (1 - Y_{i,t}) \ln [1 - \Phi (a_t \theta_i + b_t + \delta_t \mathbb{E} [S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m])] & \end{aligned}$$

where the expectation is estimated as:

$$S_{i,t+1} = \underbrace{\mu_0 + \mu_1 ShareMfg_{i,t} + \mu_2 \theta_i}_{\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1} | \mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m]} + u_{i,t+1}$$

For the case of perfect foresight the log-likelihood is maximized after replacing the expected future shocks with  $S_{i,t+1}$ .

Table C.1 reports the mean and the standard deviation of MLE estimates for 500 simulated datasets. First, the simulations clearly indicate that when the model is correctly specified, the average parameter estimates are very close to the true parameters. Second, when we assume the politician has perfect foresight, i.e. more information than she actually does, there is a clear attenuation bias. The average  $\hat{\delta}$  is -0.813 (the true  $\delta$  is -1.3). We discussed the intuition for this attenuation bias as related to classical measurement error in the main text. A more nuanced case is the one in which the politician is assumed to have a Minimal information set, i.e. the

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<sup>36</sup>The parameters  $\beta$ 's are estimated based on the actual data over 1998-2001.  $\sigma_\varepsilon$  is set based on the empirical distribution of the regression residuals.

econometrician assumes that the politician knows strictly less than what she actually knows. In our simulations we find again an attenuation bias, as the average  $\hat{\delta}$  is -1.060. While it is not easy to determine, in general, the direction of the bias, it is instructive to discuss the specific result. In our example the true voting decision is taken base on the baseline information set, as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{i,t} &= 1\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b] - \xi_{i,t} \geq 0\} \\ &= 1\{a_t\theta_i + b_t + \delta_t\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m] + \delta_t\{\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b] - \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m]\} - \xi_{i,t} \geq 0\}, \end{aligned}$$

where  $\rho_{it} = \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^b] - \mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m]$  is the specification error, i.e. the difference between what the econometrician assumes and what the politician actually knows. For the simulation exercises in Appendix D.5 of Dickstein and Morales (2018) the correlation between the specification error and the assumed expectation, here  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m]$ , is by construction zero. Hence, their estimates based on  $I_{i,t}^m$  display very minor biases. In our case,  $\rho_{it}$  and  $\mathbb{E}[S_{i,t+1}|\mathcal{I}_{i,t}^m]$  happen to be negatively correlated, which results in the attenuation bias. Finally, we consider the special case in which  $\delta = 0$ . Clearly, if the China shocks truly do not matter for voting decisions, MLE biases are negligible.

Table C.1: Maximum Likelihood - Monte Carlo Simulation

	Assumed Information Set	Avg $\hat{a}$ (std.)	Avg $\hat{b}$ (std.)	Avg $\hat{\delta}$ (std.)
$a = 0.5, b = 0.3, \delta = -1.3$	(1) Minimal Information	0.449 (0.066)	0.303 (0.027)	-1.060 (0.047)
	(2) Baseline Information (correct)	0.498 (0.079)	0.319 (0.034)	-1.306 (0.058)
	(3) Perfect Foresight	0.421 (0.090)	0.304 (0.040)	-0.813 (0.190)
$a = 0.5, b = 0.3, \delta = 0$	(4) Minimal Information	0.499 (0.073)	0.300 (0.029)	-0.001 (0.046)
	(5) Baseline Information (correct)	0.499 (0.072)	0.300 (0.029)	-0.000 (0.036)
	(6) Perfect Foresight	0.500 (0.072)	0.300 (0.029)	-0.002 (0.041)

## D Estimation of confidence sets and specification tests

### D.1 Confidence sets for parameters

The modified method of moment test statistics is:

$$Q(\omega_p) = \sum_{k=1}^K \left( \min\left\{ \frac{\bar{m}_k(\omega_p)}{\hat{\sigma}_k(\omega_p)}, 0 \right\} \right)^2 \quad (\text{D.1})$$

where  $\omega_p$  is a point in the space  $\Omega_g$ , and  $K$  is the number of moments.  $\bar{m}_k(\omega_p) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_i \sum_t m_k(S_{i,t+1}, \theta_i, \omega_p)$  is the mean value of the moment  $k$  evaluated at  $\omega_p$ , and  $\hat{\sigma}_k(\omega_p)$  is the corresponding standard error.

When  $Q(\omega_p) = 0$ , it indicates that all the moment listed in (16) are satisfied at  $\omega_p$ , and hence  $\omega_p$  could be included in the identified set. If  $Q(\omega_p) > 0$ , it indicates that some sample moment inequalities are violated when evaluated at  $\omega_p$ . This may result from two independent cases: (i) some population moment inequalities are indeed violated at  $\omega_p$ ; and (ii) some sample moment inequalities are violated because of sampling variation (Ho and Pakes, 2014).

To account for the sampling variation, we adopt the Generalized Moment Selection (GMS) test in Andrews and Soares (2010) which simulates the asymptotic distribution of  $Q(\omega_p)$  under the null hypothesis  $H_o : \omega^* = \omega_p$ . Here,  $\omega^*$  denotes the true parameter vector. More specifically, the simulation is based on  $R$  draws from the multivariate normal distribution  $N(0_K, I_K)$ , where  $I_K$  is the identity matrix of dimension  $K$ . Each draw  $\zeta_r$  yields the following statistics:

$$Q_r^{AA}(\omega_p) = \sum_{k=1}^K \left( \left( \min\{\hat{\Lambda}^{\frac{1}{2}}(\omega_p)\zeta_r\}_k, 0\} \right)^2 \times \mathbf{1}\left\{\sqrt{n}\frac{\bar{m}_k(\omega_p)}{\hat{\sigma}_k(\omega_p)} \leq \sqrt{\ln n}\right\} \right) \quad (\text{D.2})$$

where  $\hat{\Lambda}(\cdot)$  is the estimate of the variance-covariance matrix of  $\frac{\bar{m}_k(\omega_p)}{\hat{\sigma}_k(\omega_p)}$ .  $[\hat{\Lambda}^{\frac{1}{2}}(\omega_p)\zeta_r]_k$  is the  $k$ th element of the vector  $\hat{\Lambda}^{\frac{1}{2}}(\omega_p)\zeta_r$ , and it is the simulated counterpart of  $\frac{\bar{m}_k(\omega_p)}{\hat{\sigma}_k(\omega_p)}$  in equation (D.1).<sup>37</sup> Pooling all  $Q_r^{AA}(\omega_p)$  together renders the simulated distribution denoted by  $Q^{AA}(\omega_p)$ .

Let  $\hat{c}^{AA}(\omega_p, 1 - \alpha)$  denote the  $(1 - \alpha)$ -quantile of  $Q^{AA}(\omega_p)$ .  $\omega_p$  is included in the  $(1 - \alpha)\%$  confidence set (CS) if  $Q(\omega_p) \leq \hat{c}^{AA}(\omega_p, 1 - \alpha)$ . By repeating the procedure for each point  $\omega_p$  in the grid space  $\Omega_p$ , we derive the  $(1 - \alpha)\%$  CS denoted by  $\hat{\Omega}^{1-\alpha}$ .<sup>38</sup> In the main text, we set  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and report the 95% confidence sets.

## D.2 BP, RC, and RS test statistics and corresponding p-values

This appendix details the statistical tests of whether covariates in  $Z_{i,t}$  are contained in the information set possessed by politicians when they vote on the NTR with China. Intuitively, when the original voting model is correctly specified, but the information set is misspecified by researchers, i.e.  $Z_{i,t} \not\subseteq \mathcal{I}_{i,t}$ , some moment inequalities will be violated and the confidence set is likely to be empty. In the following, we discuss the BP, RS and RS tests based on Bugni et al. (2015).

<sup>37</sup>The component  $\mathbf{1}\left\{\sqrt{n}\frac{\bar{m}_k(\omega_p)}{\hat{\sigma}_k(\omega_p)} \leq \sqrt{\ln n}\right\}$  is the generalized moment selection function which selects the moment that are almost binding.

<sup>38</sup>We conduct the grid search within a predefined grid space  $\Omega_g$ . If some of the points in  $\hat{\Omega}^{1-\alpha}$  are at the boundary of  $\Omega_g$ , we expand the limits of the grid space and repeat the procedure described above. For our baseline model, we fill the 3-dimensional space with 64,000 equidistant grids. For the augmented model in section 5.5, we fill the 4-dimensional space with 160,000 equidistant grids.

### D.2.1 P-value of the Test BP

The test statistics for the Test BP is defined as (D.1). For a given value of  $\lambda$ , we infer whether  $\forall \omega_p \in \Omega_g, Q(\omega_p) > \hat{c}^{AA}(\omega_p, 1 - \lambda)$ . If so, we lower  $\lambda$  by a small amount, and repeat the procedure until reaching the value  $\lambda^{BP}$  such that  $\exists \omega_p \in \Omega_g$  such that  $Q(\omega_p) \leq \hat{c}^{AA}(\omega_p, 1 - \lambda^{BP})$ .  $\lambda^{BP}$  is then the p-value for the test BP.<sup>39</sup> As pointed out by Bugni et al. (2015), this test is too conservative. Therefore, we turn to the test RC and the test RS proposed by the authors as follows.

### D.2.2 P-value of the Test RC

To conduct the test RC, we first calculate the minimum of test statistics (D.1) across all  $\omega_p \in \Omega_g$ . Denote the minimum by  $T = \min_{\omega \in \Omega_g} Q(\omega_p)$ , and  $\Omega_g^* = \arg \min_{\Omega_p} (Q(\omega_p))$ .<sup>40</sup> The p-value of the test RC is constructed as follows. For a given value of  $\lambda$ , we compute  $\hat{c}^{RC}(1 - \lambda) = \min_{\omega_p \in \Omega_g^*} \hat{c}^{AA}(\omega_p, 1 - \lambda)$ . If  $T > \hat{c}^{RC}(1 - \lambda)$ , we lower  $\lambda$  by a small amount, and repeat the procedure until reaching the value  $\lambda^{RC}$  such that  $T \leq \hat{c}^{RC}(1 - \lambda^{RC})$ . Then,  $\lambda^{RC}$  is the corresponding p-value.

### D.2.3 P-value of the Test RS

Similar to the test RC, to conduct the test RS, we first compute  $T$  and derive  $\Omega_g^*$  as defined above. Then, we use the  $R$  draws from the multivariate normal distribution  $N(0_K, I_K)$ . For each draw  $\zeta_r$ , we compute  $Q_r^{AA}(\omega_p)$  for each  $\omega_p \in \Omega_g^*$  according to equation (D.2), and derive the corresponding minimum  $T_r = \min_{\omega_p \in \Omega_g^*} Q_r^{AA}(\omega_p)$ . The p-value of the test RS is constructed as follows. For a given value of  $\lambda$ , we find the  $(1 - \lambda)$ -quantile of  $T_r$ , denoted by  $\hat{c}^{RS}(1 - \lambda)$ . If  $T > \hat{c}^{RS}(1 - \lambda)$ , we lower  $\lambda$  by a small amount, and repeat the procedure until reaching the value  $\lambda^{RS}$  such that  $T \leq \hat{c}^{RS}(1 - \lambda^{RS})$ . Then,  $\lambda^{RS}$  is the corresponding p-value.

Note that the test RC and the test RS are different in the following way. For the test RC, to derive the critical value  $\hat{c}^{RC}(1 - \lambda)$ , we first compute the  $(1 - \lambda)$ -quantile for each asymptotic distributions  $Q^{AA}$  evaluated at each  $\omega_p \in \Omega_g^*$ , and then take the minimum across these quantiles. For the RS test, to derive the critical value  $\hat{c}^{RS}(1 - \lambda)$ , we first compute the minimum of  $Q_r^{AA}(\omega_p)$  across  $\omega_p \in \Omega_g^*$ , and then derive the  $(1 - \lambda)$ -quantile of these minimums. When  $\Omega_g^*$  contains only one point,  $\hat{c}^{RC}(1 - \lambda) = \hat{c}^{RS}(1 - \lambda)$ , and the p-values from the two tests are the same. When  $\Omega_g^*$

<sup>39</sup>In practice, we start the algorithm with  $\lambda = 0.99$  and reduce it by 0.005 at a time. We stop when  $\lambda$  reaches 0.01. Hence, p-value=0.01 (respectively, 0.99) in our tables indicates that the p-value is less than or equal to 0.01 (respectively, greater than or equal to 0.99).

<sup>40</sup>As discussed in Ho and Pakes (2014) (pg. 3868),  $\Omega_g^*$  could be a set of values all of which make (D.1) zero (i.e., all the moments are satisfied), or it could be a point, indicating that no value of  $\omega$  satisfies all the moment conditions. The latter case could be a result of sampling error, which is accounted for by the GMS approach proposed by Andrews and Soares (2010). In our case,  $\Omega_g^*$  contains only one point as the case in Ho and Pakes (2014).



contains multiple points,  $\hat{c}^{RC}(1 - \lambda) \geq \hat{c}^{RS}(1 - \lambda)$ , and the p-value of the test RS will be no larger than that of the test RC.