

Economic Interests and Threat Assessment in the U.S. Congress, 1890–1914

Abstract

Why do some domestic actors see the international environment as a threatening place populated by untrustworthy powers, when others find opportunities for peaceful cooperation in the same conditions? Because these actors confront the same international environment, the reasons for their divergent evaluations must rest on differences in their own beliefs and interests. In this paper, we consider the impact of societal interests in trade and trade protection on elite assessments of the international environment. We examine evaluations of the international environment in speeches given in the U.S. Congress during naval appropriations debates between 1890 and 1914. The manufacturing sector's interest in trade protection led political leaders who represented manufacturing regions to offer more negative assessments of the international environment, while those representing export-oriented agricultural areas of the country gave more positive evaluations. These effects were roughly comparable to those associated with party, as well as individual-level characteristics, such as having served as a military officer.

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To decline to fortify [the Panama Canal], in my opinion, opens broad the way of peace and preserves friendly relations with all other powers. To fortify means we are looking for war; and, looking for it, we will sooner or later find it.

--Representative William Richardson (D-AL)

As much with the nation as with a man, the first law in nature, and therefore its first duty, is self-preservation. The law of self-preservation dictates that this Nation shall fortify the canal and control it when questions of national defense arise.

--Representative Richmond Pearson Hobson (D-AL)

On February 25, 1911, the House of Representatives spent much of its floor session debating a measure to construct seacoast batteries at the entrances to the Panama Canal, which was then nearing completion.¹ Some, such as Representative Richardson, quoted above, argued that fortifying the Canal would be unnecessary and provocative. They preferred an international agreement to respect the neutrality of the Canal instead. They also pointed out that the 1901 Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, in which the British government conceded the American right to control an isthmian canal, provided the canal remain neutral and open to the ships of all powers in both peace and war. Other members, such as Representative Hobson, scoffed at the idea of a neutralization agreement. As Hobson put it, "[m]ust we depend for the security of our vital interests upon the fickle pledges of other nations?" They showed little concern about treaty obligations, arguing that the United States should seize whatever military advantages the Canal might provide in time of war. Though the House ultimately accepted the fortification provision by a vote of 123-81, the debate revealed sharp differences over the perceived nature of the international environment, the value of international agreements, and the need to forcefully assert American interests in international affairs.

¹ Both quotes are from the House Naval Appropriations Debate, *The Congressional Record*, Vol. 46., 61st Cong., 2d sess., 1911, p. 3449.

The politics of foreign policy frequently involve conflicting views of the international system. Some hold that it is a threatening place, populated by predatory powers that cannot be trusted to keep their commitments. Others view the same international conditions in a more optimistic light, seeing opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. What accounts for these different assessments? Because all observers confront the same international environment, the conditions themselves cannot provide a complete answer. Individual psychological or ideational processes also tell only part of the story. A range of other considerations also influence policymakers' threat assessments, including prior policy commitments that have to be justified in terms of international threats, their cooperative arrangements with other elites, and the interests of their constituents.

In this article, we will examine the last of these considerations: constituent economic interests. We argue that their constituents' interest in trade protection affects whether political leaders find mainly threats or opportunities for peaceful cooperation in the international environment. We will apply this line of argument to the politics of foreign policy in the United States between 1890 and 1914, when the nation first began to assert itself in great power politics. During this period, the manufacturing sector's interest in trade protection led those representing industrialized parts of the country to see the world in a more threatening light than did those representing export-oriented agricultural regions. For reasons we will review in more detail later, this specific pattern applies mainly to this historical period, though not only to the United States. The important role of economic interests in shaping foreign policy is more general.

Previous research on the political economy of U.S. foreign policy has argued that the pursuit of overseas markets led to a more aggressive approach to the international environment during this period, but this work has neglected the critical role of protectionism in shaping

foreign policy. Historians of the Wisconsin School (for example, LaFeber 1963; McCormick 1967; Williams 2009 [1959]) emphasized a drive for export markets as a solution to the problems associated with increasing industrial productivity and falling prices during the late 19th Century. The political struggle over the tariff plays little role in these histories, which emphasize a consensus in favor of a more assertive and expansive foreign policy. More recently, some political scientists, especially Narizny (2007) and Trubowitz (1998), have presented parallel arguments emphasizing the role of trade in the growth of American foreign policy ambition. These studies cast doubt on the consensus the Wisconsin School suggested but they continue to emphasize the pursuit of overseas markets as the primary causal factor underpinning support for a more expansive foreign policy.

We build upon previous work in three ways. First, trade protection provides us with a more powerful explanatory tool in understanding why some domestic interests supported a more assertive and expansive foreign policy. Briefly, both Northern manufacturers and Southern agricultural interests relied on export markets. However, the protectionist policies supported by manufacturers, and the response they prompted from other major powers, led Northern interests to seek out new, less-developed markets. This, in turn, created further political and military tensions with other major powers that sought access to the same markets. This point is not trivial—Southern agriculture constituted the majority of American exports during this time period, and yet this did not translate into support for more aggressive policies.

Second, we also move away from statistical analyses relying on highly aggregated congressional voting data and test our argument using new data on congressional speeches, coded at the level of the individual legislator. Previous studies have used data on congressional voting to examine broader regional differences in foreign policy orientation, but such

aggregation masks substantial variation in attitudes within regions. By focusing on the individual legislator we can better understand how constituent economic interests, as well as other personal factors, shape legislators' views on the international environment.

Third, our principal interest is in policymakers' assessments of the international environment. We use statements made by members of Congress during naval appropriations debates as a source of data on these evaluations. At first glance, policymakers' statements about the international environment might seem similar to the survey responses about international conditions used to test arguments about threat perception in other research. However, threat perception, as most research on the topic understands it, is only one component of the elite threat assessment we will consider here.² Among other things, policymakers must consider their constituents' interests and opinions before making public statements on the subject. Some policymakers might share their constituents' interests through investments or property ownership in their home area. However, the distinction between their own interests and those of their constituents may make little behavioral difference. The fact that they could potentially build a reelection coalition around other issues or around constituents who have different economic interests places them in a somewhat different position than individuals contemplating their own interests. This process of representation is our primary concern.

Trade, Protectionism, and Threat Assessment

² We use the term "threat assessment" to distinguish what we are studying from the more commonly discussed phenomenon of "threat perception." Most previous work exploring threat perception at the sub-national level has emphasized individual interests, psychological processes, and ideological predispositions. Empirical analyses have typically used surveys of the general population (for example, Fordham and Kleinberg 2011; Kleinberg and Fordham 2010; Rousseau 2002; Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero) or groups of college students in a laboratory setting (for example, Kimmelmeier and Winter 2000). Although they offer several different explanations, these studies are all concerned with immediate individual reactions to the international environment.

How could societal economic interests affect elite threat assessment? Our answer builds on previous research linking these interests to foreign policy preferences on many issues. Trade is one of the most important forms of contact between states, so it is unsurprising that its effect on their constituents influences policymakers. A wide range of international conditions and policy choices could disrupt access to international markets, so many foreign policies that are not immediately concerned with trade nevertheless affect it. For example, scholars have previously connected trade policy interests to congressional votes or speeches on foreign aid (Milner and Tingley 2011), human rights (Cutrone and Fordham 2010), and national security (Fordham 2008). In each case, the relationship arises from the fact that policies on these issues can impinge on trading relationships that ultimately affect constituents' income.

We evaluate the linkage between preferences for trade protection and assessments of the international environment. Briefly stated, we expect policymakers whose constituents stood to benefit from trade protection to identify greater threats from other states and a more hostile international environment in general. While those who want to uphold or expand commercial relationships with other states have a stake in avoiding political and military conflict with their trading partners, protectionists have no such incentive. Indeed, they might actually benefit from hostile relations. Even if protectionists prefer to avoid political hostility with trading partners, the fact that their commercial policy inflicts material harm on these states may make that difficult. As other scholars have pointed out, trade protection has often implied an aggressive foreign policy (McDonald 2009). A similar relationship may exist at the individual level. For instance, Fordham and Kleinberg (2011) found that individuals associated with import-competing sectors of the economy tend to hold more negative views of China.

Both liberal and protectionist commercial policies have broader foreign policy implications because the basic conditions for exchange across international borders are not always secure. This fact holds in every historical period, but the connection between trade and security concerns was especially clear during late 19th and early 20th centuries. The international institutions regulating the international trading system today did not yet exist. The great powers commonly used military force to secure access to overseas markets. For many of these states, empire offered a way to obtain this access while excluding foreign competitors, and scholars have long noted that this course of action was especially attractive to protectionists in many countries.³

Protectionism was not the only driver of aggressive foreign policies during this period, but high tariffs, protectionist empire-building, and political hostility were complementary. Other states were bound to see the economic policies as unfriendly and possibly threatening. Sophisticated protectionists who understood that their opportunistic commercial policy would make political hostility more likely should expect other states to react in this way and should advocate an aggressive foreign policy from the beginning. Less sophisticated protectionists might simply lack any motive to cooperate with other states and view the negative responses to protectionism as evidence of those states' hostile intentions.

For their part, export-oriented interests had no reason to support trade protection or the aggressive foreign policies that accompanied it. Because of their large economies, the states that protectionists saw as their primary competitors were promising markets for exporters.

Accordingly, exporters could reasonably see these developed states as potentially valuable

³ J.A. Hobson (1965 [1902]) is the best-remembered theorist to link imperialism and protectionism at the time, but Conant (1900a; 1900b) offered a similar argument slightly earlier. Writing during the interwar period, Eckart Kehr (1977 [1927], 22-49) made a similar argument linking German protectionism to its hostility toward both Britain and Russia. More recent accounts linking late development, protectionism, and aggressive foreign policies include Snyder (1991) and McDonald (2009).

friends with whom cooperation in the pursuit of joint gains was a real possibility. Conversely, hostile political relations with these states, and their likely retaliation against the protectionists' high tariffs, threatened the interests of many exporters. Even setting aside this harm to their interests, political-military competition with other states was expensive and dangerous. Policies protectionists could see as wise preparations for inevitable political conflict struck free traders as expensive, provocative, and unnecessary.

The point that international economic interests imply complementary foreign policies holds across time, but the specific policies depend on the historical context. The 1890-1914 period differs from the post-World War II era in several key respects. The next section focuses on the implications of the conflict between the manufacturing sector, which was domestically oriented and strongly protectionist, and the agricultural sector, which was export-oriented. The American manufacturing sector became more internationally oriented after 1945. This is the most salient political feature of the 1890-1914 period for our purposes, but it is not the only difference from more recent times. Before World War I, the United States was only one power among many and lacked the influence it would have after 1945. The overarching ideological conflicts that would emerge later in the 20th Century has not yet emerged. These and other considerations prevent the simple extension of the patterns evident before World War I to later historical periods. We return to the matter of historical context in our conclusion.

The Economic Stakes in the American Rise to World Power

Two groups with very different views of the international system contended for control of American foreign policy during the nation's emergence as a major power. Sectoral economic interests defined the stakes, but these interests found expression through political parties. One

faction, associated with manufacturing interests and the Republican Party, sought access to markets in less developed areas of the world while also protecting American manufacturers against competition from other developed nations. This policy brought the United States into conflict with other major powers that pursued similar goals. The other faction, associated with agricultural interests and the Democratic Party, preferred to maintain cooperative relations with the other major powers, who were the primary markets for American agricultural exports. Previous research has sought to explain the politics of foreign policy in terms of export markets. However, because both groups relied on exports these politics only make sense when one also considers the implications of trade protection.

The protective tariff was important in deciding who controlled American foreign policy in the 25 years before World War I. Demands for trade protection came mainly from manufacturers, though producers of wool and sugar also played a role. As the map in Figure 1 suggests, manufacturing was largely confined to the northeastern United States. The 15 states between New England and the Great Lakes accounted for 77 percent of manufacturing employment and output in 1900 (United States Census Bureau 1901). The rest of the country remained largely agricultural. Thus the interests of manufacturing were the interests of only one region of the country—albeit a very populous and important one.

Figure 1 here

By contrast, American agricultural commodities were highly competitive, constituting the bulk of American exports before World War I. Figure 2 illustrates this pattern. Though commodities like wheat and tobacco were also important, cotton was by far the largest American

export, comprising roughly one quarter of all exports from the end of Reconstruction through 1914. Manufactured exports grew during this period, but remained far less important than agriculture. Combined exports of iron and steel, machinery, and automobiles never constituted more than 10 percent of American exports until 1910. Under these circumstances, the tariff transferred wealth from farmers to manufacturers. As one scholar explained in the *North American Review*, "[o]ur farmer sells on the basis of Liverpool prices in the market of the world. He buys home productions at a protected price, and thus he is hit both ways" (Selbie 1893).

*** Figure 2 here ***

The manufacturing sector played a central role in the Republican Party, which was strongest in the manufacturing region of the country. This was partly a legacy of the Civil War, but the Republican support for high tariffs on manufactures, especially after 1887, bolstered the Party's position there (Epstein and O'Halloran 1996; Goldstein 1993; Taussig 1910, 216-9). Between the elections of 1892 and 1912 the Republican Party Platform consistently endorsed the tariff as a core component of the party's agenda (Republican National Committee 1892-1912). Bensel (2000, 457-509) notes that more than 99 percent of Republicans in Congress voted for trade protection between 1888 and 1897. Less than 4 percent of Democrats took this position. Predictably, Democrats from agricultural states, especially in the South, were most strongly opposed to the tariff.

Although tariff reformers had a few successes along the way, advocates of trade protection had the upper hand politically. The nation's population, like its manufacturing industries, was concentrated in the Northeast. The 15 manufacturing states in the Northeast and

Great Lakes region held 214 of the 224 electoral votes needed to win the presidency in the 1900 election and were similarly critical in all the other elections during the period considered here (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration 2011). Democratic candidates, who typically endorsed "tariff reform," needed to win at least a few of these manufacturing states in order to gain the White House. They accomplished this difficult task only twice in the seven elections between 1888 and 1912. By contrast, advocates of trade protection could assemble a successful electoral coalition by gaining only a few agricultural states, something they sought to do by protecting domestic producers of wool and sugar in addition to manufactures. Republicans controlled the White House continuously from 1897 until 1913. Their agenda was the one debated in Congress.

The tariff influenced the broader foreign policy views of those who supported it. Previous research on the role of trade in American foreign policy has focused almost exclusively on the drive for export markets. There is no denying the importance of this consideration in American thinking about foreign policy during the 1890-1914 period. There were no global ideological conflicts comparable to those against fascism and communism to overshadow these economic interests. Historians of the Wisconsin School linked interest in export market to concerns about surplus production and falling prices (for example, LaFeber 1963, 150-96; McCormick 1967, 21-52). However, even writers who were more concerned about security than about the state of the American economy also focused on the need to control international commerce. For instance, the leading military theorist of the day, Alfred Thayer Mahan (1987 [1890], 25-8, 83-8) argued that control of maritime trade had always offered a decisive advantage in world politics, something he hoped would not be denied to the United States.

The search for export markets is the central explanatory factor in the work of the Wisconsin School, as well as in more recent research by political scientists such as Narizny (2007) and Trubowitz (1998) but it provides only a partial explanation for the politics of American foreign policy. The role of trade protection completes the picture. Perhaps the most obvious problem with an exclusive emphasis on exports concerns American policymakers' obsession with less-developed markets, particularly in Latin America and East Asia. This regional focus defies explanation in accounts stressing exports. Trubowitz (1998, 64-7) argues that growth in exports to these markets accounts for their salience, but he concedes that these policymakers overestimated their importance. These markets did grow during this period, but they always lagged behind those in developed countries. Europe provided by far the largest market throughout this period, receiving roughly 75 percent of American exports in 1900, compared to 16 percent for the Americas and 5 percent for Asia (Carter, Gartner, Haines, Olmstead, Sutch, and Wright 2006, Table Ee533-550). Even in Asia and the Americas, the relatively developed markets of Canada and Japan were the main destinations for American products. It is also worth emphasizing that the increase in exports to Latin America and Asia, was as much a consequence of aggressive American efforts to secure access to these markets as it was a motive for these efforts.

Narizny (2007, 44-7) explains the American obsession with less-developed markets by noting that European markets were increasingly closed to American exports. This line of argument is also somewhat misleading. European tariff barriers indeed rose during the late 19th Century, but many European states still sought reciprocal trade agreements that would have given the United States greater access to their markets. The McKinley administration signed several such treaties under the authority granted in the 1897 Dingley Tariff. These agreements

founded on objections from American manufacturers, not European protectionism. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) mounted a highly publicized National Reciprocity Convention in Washington, DC, to discuss the proposed reciprocity treaties in 1901. After criticism from many members, the Convention endorsed reciprocity "only where it can be done without injury to any of our home interests of manufacturing, commerce or farming" (National Association of Manufacturers 1901, 145). The NAM's opposition was seen as a major reason that the Senate dropped consideration of all the treaties (Laughlin and Willis 1903, 346-8). Editoralist E. J. Gibson (1901, 477) summed up the outcome in the journal *Forum*. "When we go outside the lines laid down in the last Republican National platform favoring treaties that 'open our markets on favorable terms for what we do not ourselves produce,' it is very difficult to make a reciprocity treaty not in conflict with the protective tariff."

As these comments suggest, protectionism, rather than misperceptions about less-developed markets or European tariffs, explains why political leaders committed to high tariffs turned to less-developed markets. Though some Republicans wanted to soften this commitment (Wolman 1992, xii), the National Reciprocity Convention illustrates why doing so was so politically difficult. As Bensel (2000) explains, tariffs provided a vital incentive for key constituencies to support other Republican policies, such as adherence to the gold standard. Given this political constraint, Republican policymakers had little choice but to seek out less-developed trading partners. These states exported few manufactures and thus had little cause to complain about high American tariffs on these goods. As one Republican policymaker put it, "the best hope of American commerce" was "trade with people who can send you things you want and cannot produce, and take from you in return things they want and cannot produce" (Reid 1900, 41-2).

The preference for less-developed markets mattered because maintaining access to these markets required greater political and military activism than did trade with developed countries. Internal political conflicts like the Boxer Rebellion in China disrupted trade and sometimes prompted American military intervention. Such interventions were far more frequent in the Caribbean Basin where American policymakers acted to protect American economic interests, but also to preclude similar actions by the European powers. The empire-building efforts of these states threatened American access to many less-developed markets. The division of the African continent into European colonies was an ominous precedent. Preventing a similar colonization process in Latin America was a longstanding priority enshrined in the Monroe Doctrine. After the acquisition of the Philippines, American policymakers also sought to prevent the partition of China, most notably through the Open Door notes of 1899–1900. In short, the pursuit of less developed markets brought the United States into political-military competition with other major powers.

Protectionism further heightened this competition by limiting the type of trade agreement that was politically feasible. The United States commonly sought access to less developed markets on a preferential basis, especially in Latin America. Adopting an idiosyncratic conditional interpretation of most-favored nation status, American policymakers refused to extend the tariff concessions granted under bilateral trade agreements to other states (Viner 1924). They also tried to persuade their Latin American trading partners not to extend trade concessions granted to the United States to European states (Taussig 1910, 240). Public discussions of trade with Latin America frequently turned to the need to "exclude European productions from our Latin neighbors," as one manufacturer put it during the 1901 National Reciprocity Convention (National Association of Manufacturers 1901, 41).

Such an opportunistic commercial policy implied hostile relations with other major powers. Among observers who favored trade protection or took its presence for granted, commentary about the inevitability of political and military conflict over control of markets was common. Brooks Adams and Alfred Thayer Mahan are perhaps the best remembered of those writing in this vein, but they were not alone (Adams 1900, 26-53; Mahan 1987 [1890]). Important policymakers such as Henry Cabot Lodge argued that the United States had a "rightful supremacy" in Latin America and that its position in the hemisphere should be defended "peaceably if we can, forcefully if we must" (Lodge 1895, 651-8). Proponents of commercial expansion in less developed markets commonly discussed economic competition using military metaphors such as "peaceful combat," "conquer[ing] by commerce," "peaceful conquest" and the like (Blaine 1892, 522; Carter 1894, 431; Eddy 1891, 421). In recent times, protectionism has been associated with isolationist foreign policy positions (for example, Mansfield and Mutz 2009). This was emphatically not the case before World War I.

The aggressive policies that protectionists favored made little sense to those who did not share their commitment to the tariff. Then as now, advocates of free trade objected that trade was not a zero-sum endeavor. Edward Atkinson (1896, 84) wrote during the dispute with Britain over the Venezuelan border with British Guiana that "[t]he mediaeval error that in all commerce what one nation gains another must lose, is one of the most potent causes of the animosity against England which now depraves the minds of many people in this country." Protectionist policymakers preferred the militarized language, which sometimes threatened to become more than a metaphor. As one critic summarized this perspective, "[i]ts spirit is that of conquest; its first reason, as well as its last, is force" (Gray 1895, 424). The fact that those who opposed the aggressive new foreign policy were often Democrats representing the most export-dependent

region of the United States demonstrates that export interests alone are not sufficient to explain support for this policy. Protectionism is just as important.

Testing the Influence of Economic Interests on the Politics of Foreign Policy

The qualitative evidence reviewed above suggests that demands from the manufacturing sector to secure markets in less developed areas while maintaining high tariffs influenced elite discourse on foreign policy. However, this evidence alone does not suffice to show a systematic pattern in the politics of American foreign policy. Even if it did, questions would remain about the importance of economic interests compared to other influences. In this section, we will set out a quantitative research design for addressing these questions using data on congressional deliberations over foreign policy.

We use two types of data to test hypotheses about the influence of economic interests on congressional assessments of the international threat environment. First, we measure each state's economic structure using occupational data from the 1900 Census (United States Census Bureau 1901). For each state, we use the proportion of workers in manufacturing occupations to indicate the size of the manufacturing sector. Because these values come from the 1900 census, this variable is constant across the entire timeframe of our sample. These are the data reported in Figure 1. Though we have census data only on states rather than congressional districts, this should not bias our results in favor of our claims about the role of economic interests. If anything, the measurement error associated with state-level data should bias against support for our hypotheses. In principle, it would make sense to include a separate variable indicating the size of the agricultural sector. However, because manufacturing and agriculture dominated the economy as a whole during this time period, these two variables are essentially mirror images of

each other ($r = -0.94$). While we will use the size of the manufacturing sector in the analysis that follows, the results should be understood to reflect the balance between the contrasting interests of agriculture and manufacturing, not just manufacturing alone.⁴

One possible objection to using the size of the manufacturing sector as our principal independent variable is that a measure of export-orientation or import-sensitivity like those used in previous research (for example, Bailey and Brady 1998; Fordham 1998; 2008) might better reflect the trade interests of each state. There are two problems with using these measures in the pre-1914 period. First, low observed import-penetration reflects high tariffs as much as vulnerability to import competition during this period. Effective rates of trade protection were even greater than the high nominal tariff level would suggest, often exceeding 100 percent in many manufacturing industries (Hawke 1975, 90). Second, as we noted in the preceding section of this article, the pattern of actual exports cannot explain manufacturers' interest in less-developed markets in Asia and Latin America. This interest was a function of their expectations about the future, including their belief that European markets would increasingly be closed as these states reacted to American protectionism. We explain these problems in greater depth in the Online appendix.

Second, we use data on speeches given during naval appropriations debates to indicate the foreign policy views of members of Congress. We chose these debates because they occurred on a regular basis in every congress, not just when special domestic or international circumstances required them. The Navy was the principal power projection tool available to the United States during this period. In contrast, the Army was small and had never been deployed overseas in 1890. Consequently, the Army appropriations bill rarely engaged larger questions

⁴ A few agricultural commodities, particularly sugar, wool, and rice, were import-competing. As a robustness check, the Online appendix reports an analysis that includes a variable indicating the importance of these commodities in the agricultural sector of each state. Our principal results remain substantively unchanged.

about the international environment that were regularly discussed in debates about the Navy. The size of the battleship fleet—the most common bone of contention in these debates—depended critically on the intentions of other states and the character of international politics.⁵ These debates are especially interesting because members were essentially free to say whatever they liked. By contrast, their roll-call voting record is more likely to reflect the efforts of the congressional leadership to control the agenda and get members to follow the party's preferred position.

We examined all the statements members made during the annual naval appropriations debates between 1890 and 1914—the 52nd through the 63rd Congresses. We coded both specific evaluations of other states and broader positions concerning the international threat environment in general. Among other things, we evaluated each statement for the following two features: (1) references to the international environment or to a particular state as threatening, or as having actual or potentially hostile relations with the United States; (2) references to the international environment or a particular state as unthreatening, or as having actual or potentially cooperative relations with the United States. The frequency with which members provided these evaluations should reveal something about their assessments of the international threat environment. Our dependent variables in the analysis that follows are counts of the number of speeches in which members gave one of these two kinds of evaluations. The online appendix contains additional descriptive statistics on these speeches, as well as a typical example of each type.

Overall, there were 5,199 speeches made during the naval appropriations debates between 1890 and 1914. Because floor speeches were frequently interrupted, and members often

⁵ Not surprisingly, assessments of the international environment were closely linked to the speaker's preferred level of naval spending and, implicitly, of the foreign policy activism it made possible. In speeches assessing both the international environment and the level of spending, those who gave negative evaluations of the international environment called for greater spending roughly 89% of the time. Those who gave positive evaluations called for spending cuts 87% of the time.

gave their remarks as part of an ongoing exchange with their colleagues, we treated all statements made on the same day as part of the same speech. Roughly 30 percent of these statements consisted of two sentences or less. Often these short statements were questions for another member. Statements about international threat were relatively rare, occurring in 363 of these speeches, roughly 7 percent of the total, or 12 percent of the speeches of more than two sentences. The debates included a nearly identical number of positive and negative evaluations, 195 and 194, respectively. In 26 cases, members provided both a negative and a positive evaluation in the same speech. General evaluations of the international environment were slightly more common than specific assessments of other states. In some instances, members offered both general and specific evaluations in the same speech. Comments about particular states focused primarily on other major powers, though Spain received some attention before the Spanish-American War, and Mexico received heightened attention during the final years of our study, when the Mexican revolution got underway.

Our principal hypotheses follow from the theoretical and historical argument we presented in the two preceding sections. They concern the effect of the manufacturing and agricultural sectors in each state on their representatives' assessments of the international environment.

H1. The size of the manufacturing sector in their home state positively correlates with the number of negative evaluations of the international environment.

H2. The size of the manufacturing sector in their home state negatively correlates with the number of positive evaluations of the international environment.

We compare our findings concerning economic structure to three other potential influences on threat assessment. The most important is political party. As we noted in the preceding section, Republicans controlled the White House for most of the period we are

considering here and supported the more aggressive foreign policy the United States pursued during this period. The leading figures associated with a more activist foreign policy during this period, including Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, and others, tended to be Republicans. Party affiliation might account for threat assessment as well or better than economic structure. Indeed, because it is correlated with economic structure, testing hypotheses 1 and 2 without considering the effect of party could bias our analysis in favor of our hypotheses.⁶

We will also compare our findings concerning economic structure to the effects of two other individual-level considerations. First, members of Congress who attended college should be more aware of the international environment and more likely to take positions on it, either positive or negative. In the post-World War II era, education has been among the strongest predictors of support for an activist foreign policy. Second, members of Congress who had served as military officers should be more attuned to international threats than members who lacked this experience. For example, Richmond Hobson, whose grim assessment of the international environment we quoted at the beginning of this article, had a distinguished naval career before his election to Congress. We focus on former officers because members who had served in the enlisted ranks during the Civil War—the primary source of military experience during this period—might have had little cause to reflect on international threats. These data are drawn from ICPSR and McKibben (1997). Though these are not the only individual-level factors that might influence threat assessment, more extensive data are not available for this time period,

⁶ At the same time, party might embody part of the effect of economic interests. We assess this issue more thoroughly in the Online appendix. Our findings show that while economic structure indeed influenced the two parties' electoral fortunes, its effects were not so strong that including party alongside economic structure is unreasonable.

and they should provide another reasonable baseline against which to assess the size of the effects associated with economic interests.

Empirical Analysis and Discussion

To test the hypotheses concerning the effect of economic structure on legislators' threat assessments, we estimate two types of speech models. Using the legislator-congress as our unit of analysis, we constructed two dependent variables counting the speeches that each legislator gave during each congress containing evaluations of the level of threat in the international environment. The dependent variable in our first speech model is the number of times each legislator characterized the international environment in general, or another state, as hostile or threatening. The second dependent variable is the number of times a legislator evaluated the international environment or another state as benign or friendly. Because these variables are counts and the data are overdispersed, we use a negative binomial model.⁷ We also include fixed-effect dummy variables for each congress after the 52nd in order to control for changes over time in the baseline number of speeches evaluating the international environment.

We begin with some simple graphical comparisons to illustrate the relationships between a state's economic structure and threat assessments made by that state's legislators. The red and green lines in Figure 3 plot the average number of evaluations legislators from each state provided per congress. The states shown in Figure 3 are ordered according to the size of the manufacturing sector, with the smallest on the left and the largest on the right. The shaded area indicates the proportion of each state's workers employed in the manufacturing sector.

*** Figure 3 here ***

⁷ The α parameter is statistically significant across all models: $p < .01$.

Figure 3 provides some preliminary support for our basic expectations. Rhode Island, the state with the largest manufacturing sector, has a rate of 0.5 negative evaluations per legislator and no positive evaluations at all over the 24-year period that we examine. With the second largest manufacturing sector, Massachusetts has a rate of approximately 0.9 negative evaluations, and only about 0.4 positive evaluations per legislator. New York, the sixth largest manufacturing state is also a useful illustrative case as we can look at county-level data from the 1900 census to add additional context. New York is large enough—in terms of geographically and population—to contain significant variation in county and district-level manufacturing employment. For example, during the 55th Congress six legislators from New York spoke on the international environment and all made negative evaluations. Five of these legislators represented districts in the New York City area, and one represented a district that included the Saratoga/Albany area—all of which were high manufacturing parts of the state. Additionally, these evaluations were evenly divided between three Democrats and three Republicans.

Broadly speaking, the states with the highest rates of negative evaluations are generally clustered on the right half of Figure 3. States on the left half more frequently have few or no negative evaluations. Alternatively, Figure 3 also shows that positive evaluations are distributed more evenly across the states listed. However, higher rates of positive evaluations appear slightly more prevalent in the states that are less dependent upon manufacturing than in those that are more dependent on it.

The bivariate comparisons are suggestive, but multivariate models permit more rigorous hypothesis tests, as well as the comparison of economic structure with other variables. Table 1 shows the results from three sets of models of the number of negative and positive evaluations

that legislators gave during each congress. Our primary interest is the effect of economic structure, so models 1 and 2 evaluate the impact of the manufacturing without additional variables. Models 3 and 4 add partisanship and individual characteristics, and serve as our primary models.

Models 5 and 6 include additional controls to evaluate the robustness of our findings. First, we add a control for whether or not the observed legislator is from a coastal state. Legislators from coastal states might be more likely to view the international environment as threatening because of their greater exposure to potential naval threats. This was an important concern during this period, because the Navy was not yet large enough to deploy a substantial force to both the Atlantic and the Pacific simultaneously. The Panama Canal, which speeded up movement between the two oceans, was not completed until 1914. Speeches by legislators from the Western coastal states reveal the importance of this consideration as the United States became more active in East Asia and as relations with Japan worsened. Second, we include a dummy variable indicating whether or not the legislator was a Senator. As members of a smaller body, Senators might have more likely to comment on international affairs than members of the House. Third, we control for the size of the observed legislator's state delegation to Congress. Because our data on manufacturing is only measured at the state level, measurement error should be greater in larger states. The size of the legislative delegation should capture the effects of this measurement error on our results.

Lastly, our focus on the influence of trade interests might seem to slight the effects of legislators' economic interests in military spending itself. This issue plays a major role in analyses of the politics of national security policy in Congress during the postwar era (for example, Mayer 1991; Rundquist and Carsey 2002). To address this possibility we also include a

variable indicating the share of employment in the iron and steel shipbuilding sector. While important in theory, its relevance during this historical period is questionable. Military spending before World War I was too small to have played the political role that some have accorded it in more recent times. Balke and Gordon's estimates of the size of the U.S. economy, coupled with historical data on the budgets for the War and Navy Departments, suggest that overall military spending during the 1890–1914 period peaked at 1.65 percent in 1899, reflecting expenditures on the Spanish-American War (Carter, et al. 2006, Table Ea636-643; Balke and Gordon 1989). It was less than one percent in most years. By contrast, military spending has not dropped below 4 percent of GDP since World War II.⁸

*** Table 1 here ***

The results largely support our hypotheses about economic structure. The size of the manufacturing sector performs as expected across nearly all of the models shown in Table 2. In model 1, where we include only the manufacturing variable, a larger manufacturing sector is positively correlated with the number of negative remarks a legislator made about the international environment. This variable is also negatively correlated with the number of positive remarks a legislator makes, as shown in model 2. Models 3 and 4 show that the effect of the manufacturing sector is robust to the inclusion of variables for partisanship, college attendance, and service as a military officer. When we include the final set of control variables in models 5

⁸ In comparing the base models (1–2) and full models the BIC score is lower for the base models. The scores are 1,660.78 (Models 1–2), 1,666.34 (Models 3–4), and 1,686.27 (Models 5–6) for the negative evaluation models and 1,670.40 (Models 1–2), 1,687.98 (Models 3–4), and 1,720.21 (Models 5–6) for the positive evaluation models. Because the absolute difference in scores is > 6 in both cases we have strong support for the more basic models over the more fully specified models (see Long 1997, 110–112). We use Models 1–2 to generate the figures for the manufacturing variable, and Models 3–4 to generate the figures that include the comparisons of legislators' background traits.

and 6 we see manufacturing continues to correlate negatively and significantly with negative evaluations, though manufacturing no longer correlates significantly with positive evaluations. Of the new variables, only the coastal state variable correlates significantly with negative evaluations in model 5.

These results support Hypotheses 1 and 2. As the qualitative evidence reviewed earlier suggests, legislators representing states with large manufacturing sectors tended to adopt a more hostile tone than those representing largely agricultural constituencies. The preference of the manufacturing sector for the protection of domestic markets and the acquisition of markets in less-developed areas implied that conflict with other great powers was relatively likely. These states frequently sought preferential access to these markets, potentially interfering with American access. By contrast, other great powers constituted the principal market for American agricultural exports. Legislators representing relatively agricultural states tended to view these states, and the international environment in general, in a more benign way.

Though it did not obviate the influence of economic structure, partisanship also influenced threat assessment in ways that generally accord with the qualitative historical evidence. Perhaps surprisingly given the presence of some prominent hawks in the party, Republicans were no more likely than Democrats to assess the international environment as threatening. Party is not statistically significant in models 3 or 5. More in line with our expectations, the negative and significant party coefficients in models 4 and 6 indicate that Republicans were less likely to give positive evaluations of the international environment. These results suggest that party was not the only vehicle for transmitting the foreign policy interests of the manufacturing sector. Robustness tests using ideology in place of partisanship yield similar results—ideology yields null coefficients for the negative evaluation models, but is negative and

significant in the positive evaluation models, indicating that more conservative legislators were less apt to make positive statements about the international environment.⁹ Economic structure has an independent effect even when controlling for partisan and ideological factors.

The results from models 3–6 also indicate that some of the personal attributes we included had substantial effects on negative evaluations of the international environment. As we expected, having served as a military officer before entering Congress was positively associated with the number of negative evaluations. On the other hand, our expectations about college attendance were not supported. We hypothesized that attending college should make members more aware of the international environment, and thus more likely to take both types of positions. However, college attendance is not statistically significant for either positive or negative evaluations.

To better understand the impact that their state's economy had on legislators' evaluations of the international environment, Figure 4 plots the predicted probability of that a member would make at least one evaluation of each type in a given congress. These predictions are based on models 3 and 4 from Table 1. The X-axis covers the approximate observed range of the manufacturing variable. In panel A of Figure 4, we see that legislators from the districts least reliant on manufacturing have a 0.06 probability of making at least one negative comment about the international environment. This probability increases to 0.08 for states where 25 percent of the workforce was engaged in the manufacturing sector. Legislators from the states most reliant on the manufacturing sector (50 percent) had a probability of 0.13 of making at least one negative assessment.

⁹ We estimated these models using ideology, as indicated by the DW-NOMINATE Common Space Scores, rather than party (Carroll, Lewis, Lo, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009; Poole and Rosenthal 2007). Results from these models can be found in the Online appendix (Table A-4).

Panel B in Figure 4 shows the predicted probability of observing at least one positive evaluation of the international environment across the same range of manufacturing. The manufacturing variable is negative and significant, but its substantive effect on positive evaluations is considerably smaller than its effect on negative evaluations. Republicans were also statistically significantly less likely than Democrats to offer positive evaluations. There was no statistically significant difference between the parties for negative evaluations, however. Legislators from states with relatively small manufacturing sectors had the highest probability of making at least one positive evaluation, approximately 0.01. This probability shrinks to .006 at the high end of the manufacturing variable.

Why would the manufacturing variable have a greater effect on negative evaluations than on positive evaluations? Our data do not provide a certain answer to this question, but it is worth remembering that the strategy the executive branch pursued during most of this period rested on a negative view of the international environment and called for a larger navy. The executive's ability to set the agenda might have made the patterns we expect more visible on negative speeches. For tactical reasons, those from mainly agricultural areas might not have disputed the claim that the international environment was dangerous, but instead proposed different *strategies* for responding to those risks. For instance, several debates over the construction of a battleship fleet revolve around whether or not to construct a seagoing navy versus a fleet of coastal defense ships, the latter being smaller, cheaper, and less likely to antagonize the major trading partners that agricultural states relied on. Rather than providing a different assessment of the international environment, skeptical legislators might instead have proposed a less aggressive strategy. Another possibility is that both sides make positive speeches on occasion for reasons largely unrelated to economic interests. For example, many northeastern Republicans make positive

evaluations of some aspect of the international environment during this time period. It is possible that other factors, such as the Roosevelt administration's emphasis on international arbitration and the Hague Conventions, are driving these remarks rather than economic interests. Lastly, it is also possible that language concerning military buildup is often accompanied by positive evaluations about the potential for the United States to work with other countries now that it can promote "peace through strength," so to speak. Ultimately, although the speeches we coded do often contain such remarks, we do not have the information to test these alternative explanations systematically.

*** Figure 4 here ***

Our results indicate that economic structure, party, and some personal attributes shaped the attitudes of individual legislators. The relative size of these relationships is informative. Figure 5 plots the predicted probability of observing at least one positive and one negative evaluation. The base model shows the predicted probabilities for Democrats and Republicans who were not college educated, had not served as military officers, and represented a state with a manufacturing sector in the 25th percentile. Each subsequent category shows the predicted probability of observing at least one negative or positive evaluation when we change the values of the indicated variable. The dummies for college education and service as a military officer change from 0 to 1. The manufacturing variable increases from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile.

The baseline predicted probability of a negative evaluation is roughly four to five times the baseline predicted probability of a positive evaluation. While party mattered for positive

evaluations, it had little effect on the probability of a negative evaluation. For the sake of comparison we include college education in Figure 5, which increased the predicted probability of observing at least one negative evaluation by approximately 1.3 percentage points. The impact of a shift in manufacturing from the 25th to the 75th percentile has a slightly larger impact than having attended college. This change in manufacturing increases the probability of at least one negative evaluation by approximately 2.5 percentage points. Finally, having served as a military officer prior to entering Congress led to an increase over the base model of 4.7 percentage points. Of these variables, experience as a military officer had the greatest impact on perceptions of a hostile and dangerous international environment. Of course, the manufacturing variable could have a larger effect than that depicted in Figure 5, where we look at the effect of changes from the 25th to the 75th percentiles. This range represents a change between two fairly common points in the data, but the impact of this variable could be much larger across its full range, as Figure 4 indicates. Overall, these comparisons suggest that the impact of economic structure on evaluations of the international environment typically fell somewhere between that of college education and service as a military officer.

Neither college education nor military service had a statistically significant effect on the number of positive evaluations. As can be seen in Figure 5, party affiliation had the largest substantive effect on positive evaluations. The size of the manufacturing sector is statistically significant and negative, but, its substantive effect was relatively small.

*** Figure 5 here ***

Conclusion

The evidence we have presented here suggests that demands for trade protection were important in shaping threat assessment. During the 1890-1914 period, representatives of the manufacturing sector, both in Congress and in groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, sought both trade protection and greater access to overseas markets. These goals prompted them to look primarily to markets in less developed areas of the world that would not export manufactured goods to the United States. This foreign policy led its proponents to view the other major powers with suspicion, both because American policy threatened the interests of these states and because most of them were engaged in parallel efforts to gain privileged access to less-developed markets on behalf of their own nationals. Legislators with ties to this sector of the economy tended to offer negative evaluations of other major powers, and of the international environment in general. By contrast, representatives of more agricultural regions of the United States saw these same great powers as their best customers. These interests led them to hold more favorable views of the international environment, a pattern that is evident in the speeches they gave during naval appropriations debates.

These economic interests were not the only influences on threat assessment, but they were substantively important. We find that individual characteristics such as service as a military officer also influenced legislators' evaluations of the international environment. While we lack more refined data on the kinds of individual-level considerations cited in more recent research on threat perception, we strongly suspect these things would also make a difference. The estimated size of this particular individual effect was roughly comparable to that of economic interests. In sum, both sets of considerations made a difference and deserve the attention of future researchers.

Political party also mattered but it does not fully explain the politics of foreign policy. Like the present, the 1890-1914 period was a time of relatively high party polarization. While this strong party division influenced threat assessments, its effect was not especially strong. Controlling for the effects of economic structure, Republicans were no more likely to give negative evaluations of the international environment than Democrats were. Moreover, even in the case of positive evaluations, where party did yield a statistically significant and negative effect in model 4, its impact was smaller than that of economic structure, college attendance, or military service. Using ideology rather than party produces similar results.

How do these findings apply to other historical settings? The theoretical logic behind the influence of economic interests and support for protectionism suggests that we should expect to observe related patterns in other times and places. Other imperial powers coupled protectionism at home with an aggressive search for access to less developed markets during the 1890-1914 period. Exposure to the international economy has always generated winners and losers, and should thus often shape political conflict over foreign policy. Nevertheless, at least two caveats are in order. First, the connection between interests and policies depends on the historical context. The interests of particular sectors can change as they develop. American protectionists became much weaker after the manufacturing sector became more internationally competitive during and after World War I. Though protectionist groups in American society may still correlate with more negative attitudes towards the international environment, they have not recovered the political predominance they had during the period considered here. Changes in the international environment also alter the policies that best serve particular economic interests. Political and military threats to American access to European markets emerged after 1914, changing the foreign policy interests of those who relied on these markets. Similarly, the pursuit

of overseas markets today takes place in an institution-rich environment where military force no longer plays the role it once did. States (or factions within them) that might once have supported a relatively aggressive foreign policy to maintain market access may no longer need this policy instrument.

Second, the 1890-1914 period featured no global ideological conflict comparable to that prevailing during the Cold War. Such conflicts might well exert a very strong influence on the politics of foreign policy, perhaps even overshadowing the influence of economic interests we found during the 1890-1914 period. While this pattern is possible in some historical periods, economic interests still deserve our attention. Previous research has found evidence that economic interests played a role in shaping the politics of foreign policy even during the Cold War (for example, Eden 1985; Fordham 1998; Trubowitz 1998). We cannot assume that even fairly intense ideological conflicts entirely trump the pattern found here. Even if one could find periods when ideological conflicts or other international issues overshadowed the economic stakes in foreign policy, there would be no reason to treat these periods of history as the norm. The central issues in international politics change. Given the importance of economic interests in political life generally, there is every reason to expect that they will frequently influence foreign policy in general and threat assessment in particular as they did during the 1890-1914 period.

These cautionary notes aside, economic interests—including differing stakes in trade and trade protection—deserve a place alongside the individual-level considerations stressed in current research on threat perception, especially when considering threat assessment among policymaking elites. Economic interests of the sort considered here unite groups of people and are thus more likely to serve as the basis for political action than potentially idiosyncratic characteristics that influence individual threat perception. By their very nature, economic

interests are also linked to the resources needed to make their advocates politically effective. The fact that members of Congress must consider the interests and opinions of their constituents might attenuate the influence of their individual psychology and increase the salience of economic interests in their home state when making policy. Accordingly, the broader economic and societal factors that influence elite threat assessment might thus differ from what one would typically find in surveys of the general public. These factors are nevertheless important because they have the potential to directly affect the policymaking process.

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Table 1.
Negative Binomial Models Predicting Legislator Evaluations of the International Environment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Negative Evaluations	Positive Evaluations	Negative Evaluations	Positive Evaluations	Negative Evaluations	Positive Evaluations
Manufacturing	2.27 ^{***} (0.67)	-2.16 ^{***} (0.73)	2.61 ^{***} (0.66)	-1.25 [*] (0.73)	2.13 ^{***} (0.75)	-0.92 (0.88)
Republican			-0.12 (0.17)	-0.55 ^{***} (0.19)	0.05 (0.19)	-0.56 ^{***} (0.20)
Attended College			0.28 (0.18)	0.03 (0.18)	0.28 (0.18)	0.01 (0.18)
Officer			0.82 ^{***} (0.20)	0.06 (0.22)	0.76 ^{***} (0.20)	0.01 (0.22)
Coastal State					0.59 ^{***} (0.18)	-0.02 (0.17)
Shipbuilding, Iron, and Steel Production					-92.51 (91.11)	-142.99 (150.49)
Senate Dummy					0.12 (0.19)	0.21 (0.20)
Size of Delegation					-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Constant	-4.05 ^{***} (0.35)	-2.56 ^{***} (0.25)	-4.60 ^{***} (0.35)	-2.64 ^{***} (0.28)	-4.84 ^{***} (0.34)	-2.76 ^{***} (0.30)
ln alpha	1.45 ^{***} (0.28)	1.90 ^{***} (0.23)	1.34 ^{***} (0.27)	1.86 ^{***} (0.24)	1.28 ^{***} (0.25)	1.85 ^{***} (0.24)
Observations	5846	5846	5846	5846	5846	5846

Standard errors in parentheses

Note: Fixed effects for individuals congresses not shown.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Manufacturing Employment by State, 1900

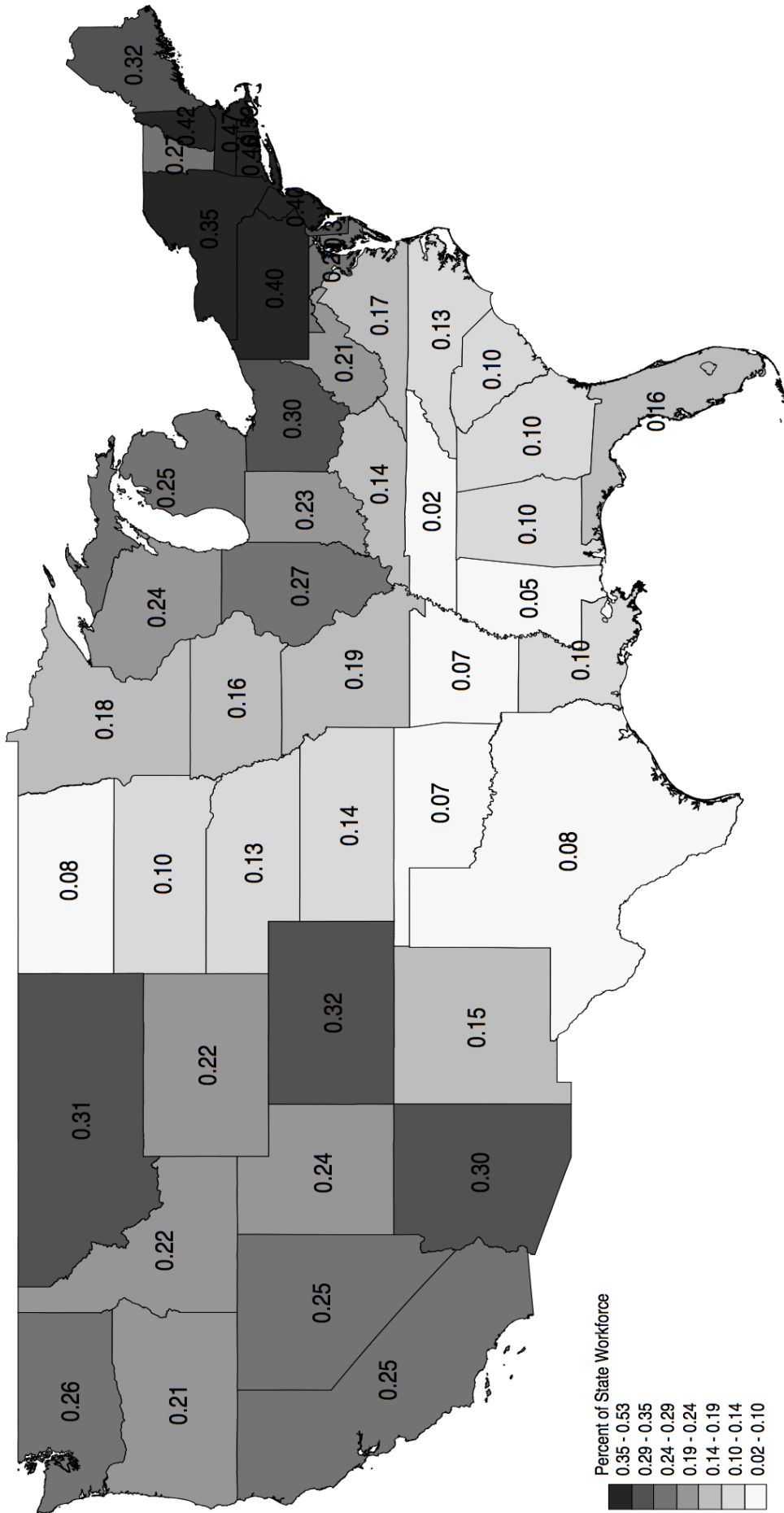


Figure 1 – Manufacturing Sector Size by State.

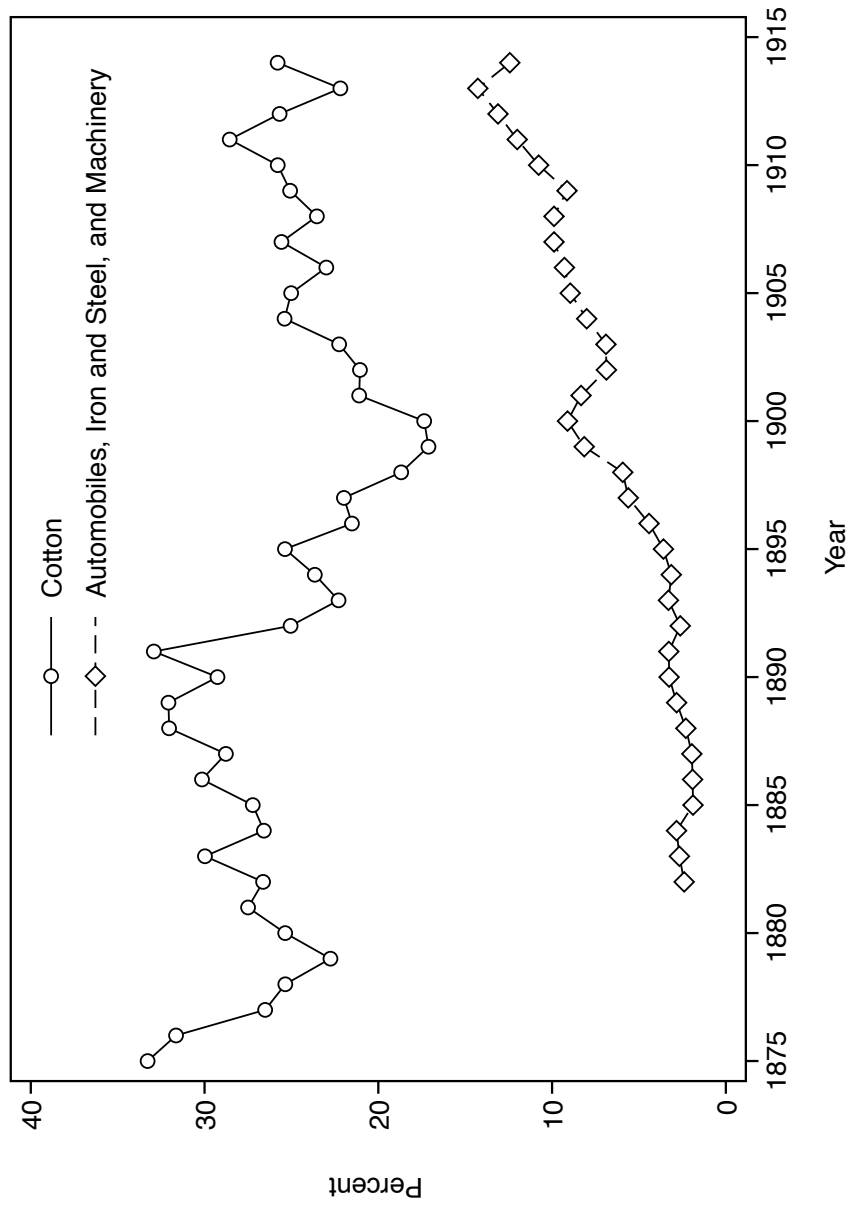


Figure 2 – Selected Commodity Exports by Sector as a Percentage of Total Exports.

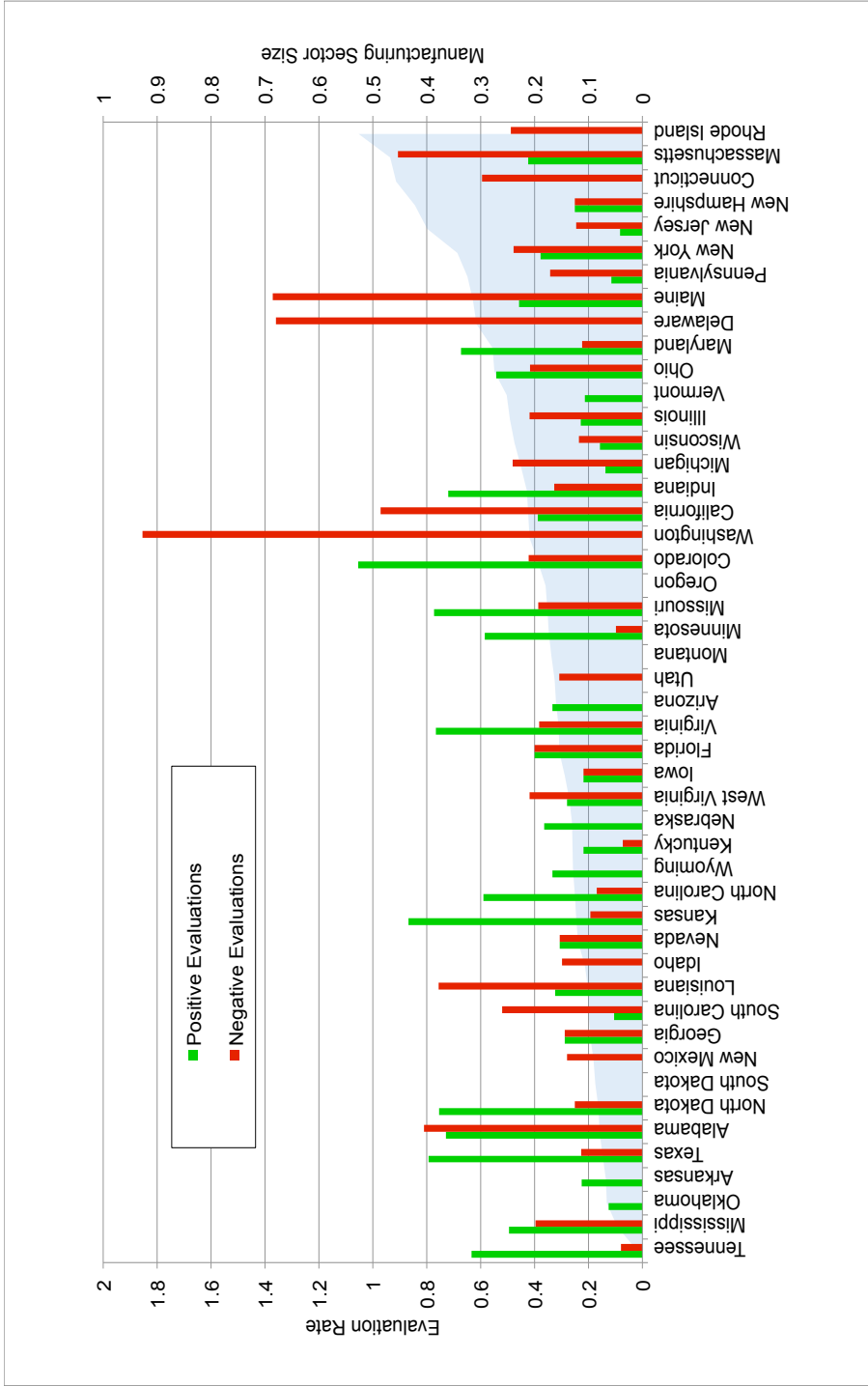


Figure 3 – Manufacturing Sector Size and Evaluation Rate by State.

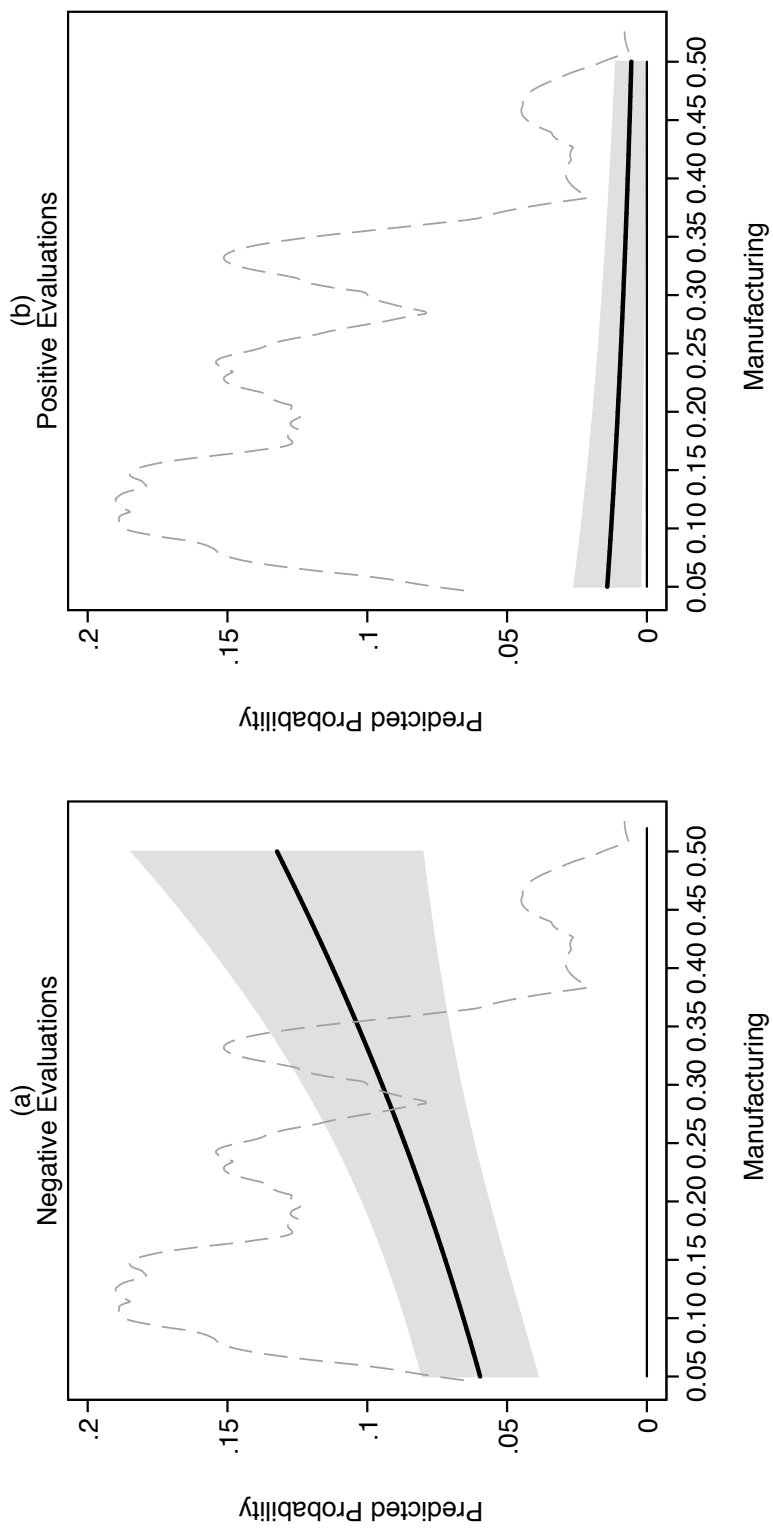


Figure 4 – Predicted Probability of Non-Zero Counts by Manufacturing Sector Size

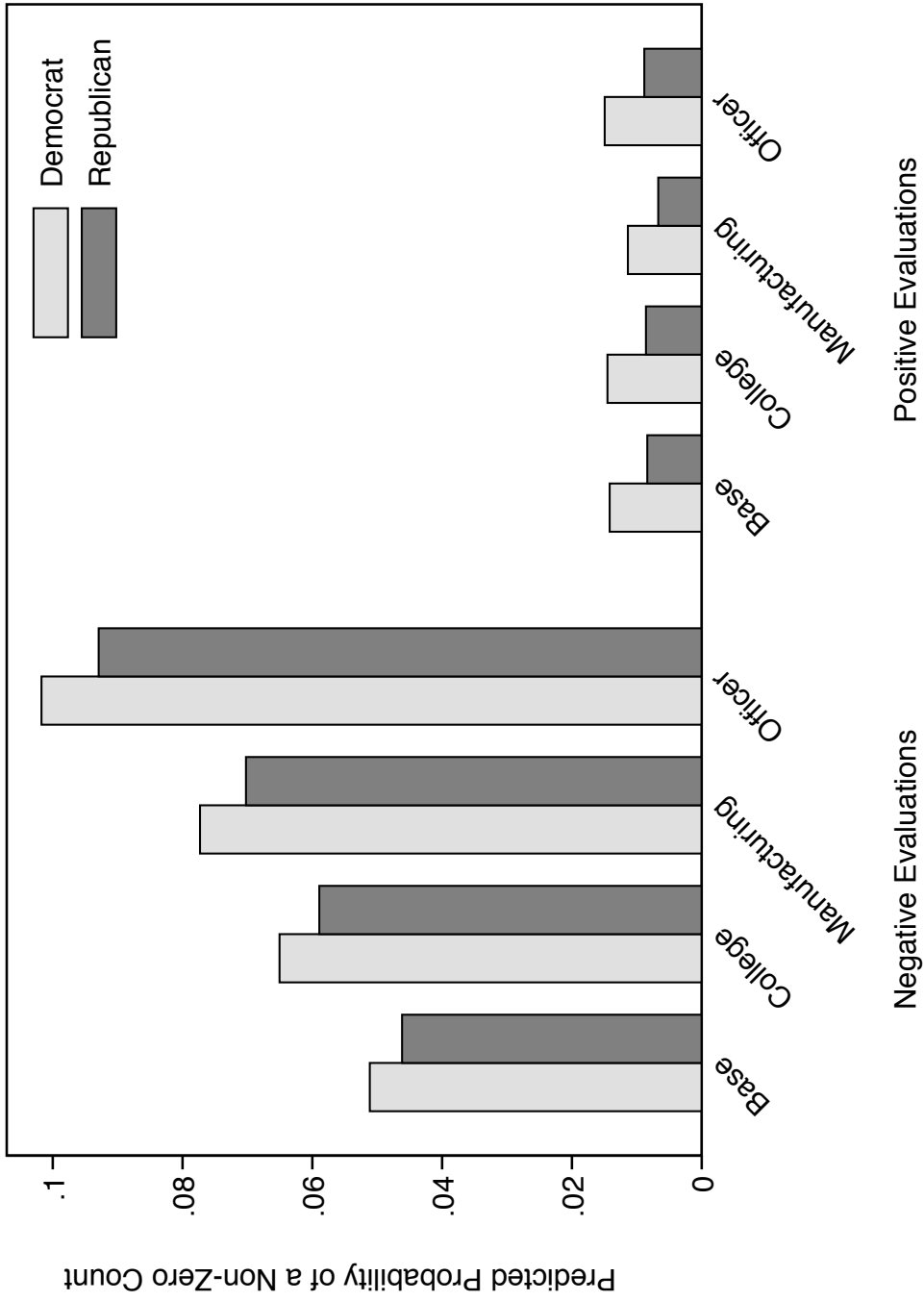


Figure 5 – Predicted Probability of Non-Zero Counts by Individual Attribute.