

[Working Papers](#)

A Tariff-Growth Paradox? Protection's Impact the World Around 1875-1997

Michael A. Clemens & Jeffrey G. Williamson

SHARE



WORKING PAPER 8459

DOI 10.3386/w8459

ISSUE DATE September 2001

This paper uses a new database to establish two findings covering the first globalization boom before World War I, the second since World War II, and the autarkic interlude in between. First, there is strong evidence supporting a Tariff-Growth Paradox: protection was associated with fast growth before World War II, while it was associated with slow growth thereafter. Second, there is strong evidence supporting regional asymmetry: while the tariff-growth association was powerful and positive in the Core and rich New World before World War II, it was typically weak and negative in the poor Periphery. The paper offers explanations for the Paradox by controlling for a changing world economic environment. It shows how the oft-quoted Sachs-Warner results for 1970-1989 are significantly revised when one controls for trading partners' growth, trading partners' tariffs and the effective distance between them over the longer half-century 1950-1997. Falling partners' tariffs was the most important force accounting for the switch in sign on the tariff-growth connection after 1950. An increase in own tariffs after 1950 hurt growth, but it would not have hurt growth in a world where partners' tariffs were much higher, trading partners' growth much slower, and the world less closely connected by transportation. World

environment matters. Leader-country reaction to big world events (like the Great Depression) matter. Followers take notice.

Download a PDF

[Information on access](#)

Acknowledgements and Disclosures



Citation and Citation Data



Related

TOPICS

International Economics

Trade

History

Other History

PROGRAMS

Development of the American Economy

International Trade and Investment

More from the NBER

In addition to [working papers](#), the NBER disseminates affiliates' latest findings through a range of free periodicals — the [NBER Reporter](#), the [NBER Digest](#), the [Bulletin on Health](#), and the [Bulletin on Entrepreneurship](#) — as well as online [conference reports](#), [video lectures](#), and [interviews](#).



Martin Feldstein Lecture, Summer Institute 2025
The Fiscal Future

N. Gregory Mankiw, Harvard University and NBER
July 10, 2025

2025, 17th Annual Feldstein Lecture, N. Gregory Mankiw, "The Fiscal Future"

FELDSTEIN LECTURE

PRESENTER: [N. GREGORY MANKIW](#)

N. Gregory Mankiw, Robert M. Beren Professor of Economics at Harvard University, presented the 2025 Martin Feldstein...



Methods Lecture, Summer Institute 2025
**Uncovering Causal Mechanisms:
Mediation Analysis and
Surrogate Indices**

Raj Chetty, Harvard University and NBER
Kosuke Imai, Harvard University
July 24, 2025



2025, Methods Lecture, Raj Chetty and Kosuke Imai, "Uncovering Causal Mechanisms: Mediation Analysis and Surrogate Indices"

PRESENTERS: [RAJ CHETTY](#) & [KOSUKE IMAI](#)

SlidesBackground materials on mediationImai, Kosuke, Dustin Tingley, and Teppei Yamamoto. (2013). "Experimental Designs...



2025, International Trade and Macroeconomics, "Panel on The Future of the Global Economy"

PANEL DISCUSSION

PRESENTERS: [OLEG ITSKHOKI](#), [PAUL R. KRUGMAN](#) & [LINDA TESAR](#)

Supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation grant #G-2023-19633, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation grant #20251294...

National Bureau of Economic Research

[Contact Us](#)

1050 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02138

[617-868-3900](tel:617-868-3900)

info@nber.org

webaccessibility@nber.org

[HOMEPAGE](#)

[Accessibility Policy](#)

[Diversity Policy](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

FOLLOW



© 2025 NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.