The Political Economy of Defense in WTO

Anti-Dumping Disputes

Jihye Park [*]

Abstract

The WTO dispute settlement mechanism adjudicates trade conflicts through rule-based procedures ostensibly insulated from domestic politics, yet the pace at which disputes reach resolution varies widely. This study argues that the WTO enforcement space is constricted through the reactive mobilization of defendant-side firms whose anti-dumping protections are at risk. Using US lobbying disclosure data matched to firm-level dispute participation, the analysis exploits presidential party turnover as an exogenous shock to the political environment of defendant firms. A PanelMatch estimator with covariate balancing propensity scores reveals a sharp asymmetry. Defendant firms in non-prioritized industries significantly increase lobbying expenditure following partisan transitions, whereas firms in nationally prioritized sectors shielded by executive action under Section 232 or bipartisan legislation such as the CHIPS and Science Act show no response. A stratified Cox proportional hazards model demonstrates that this mobilization delays dispute resolution. Under partisan transition, increased lobbying reduces the hazard of reaching a panel report, prolonging the period during which contested duties remain in force. Without turnover, lobbying carries no meaningful effect on dispute duration. These findings reveal how domestic politics penetrates the procedural machinery of WTO dispute settlement, exposing a vulnerability in which political uncertainty activates defensive firm mobilization.

Keywords: WTO dispute settlement, domestic politics & IR, anti-dumping, firm lobbying, difference-in-differences, survival analysis

[*]Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland 1205. Jihye.Park@unige.ch. Please do not circulate.

1 Introduction

The World Trade Organization's dispute settlement mechanism is widely regarded as the most legalized enforcement institution in international economic governance. Its capacity to adjudicate trade conflicts between sovereign states, authorize retaliation, and compel compliance has been credited with sustaining the rules-based trading order for three decades (Busch & Reinhardt, 2006; Goldstein & Martin, 2000). Yet the system's enforcement record is uneven. Some disputes move from consultations to a panel report within two years; others languish for the better part of a decade. Existing explanations for this variation have focused on the legal complexity of the contested measures, the economic stakes for complainant governments, and the strategic calculations of states as unitary actors (Bown et al., 2020; Davis, 2012). What these accounts largely overlook is the role that private actors on the defendant side play in shaping the pace and trajectory of dispute proceedings, and the domestic political conditions under which their influence is most consequential.

This omission matters because the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, despite its interstate architecture, ultimately adjudicates conflicts that originate in the commercial interests of firms. When a government imposes an anti-dumping duty, it does so on behalf of identifiable domestic producers who benefit from the resulting trade protection. When that duty is challenged at the WTO, the defendant government's posture in the dispute, its degree of cooperation, its willingness to expedite or obstruct proceedings, is shaped in no small part by the political mobilization of the firms whose rents are at stake (Pelc, 2014; Ryu & Stone, 2018). The gap between the formal state-to-state structure of dispute settlement and the actual firm-level interests driving government behavior creates an institutional vulnerability: a channel through which domestic political activity can penetrate the WTO's procedural machinery and constrict the enforcement space available to complainant governments.

This study argues that the constriction of the WTO enforcement space operates through the reactive mobilization of defendant-side firms whose anti-dumping protections are at risk. When these firms perceive a threat to the continuity of their existing trade benefits, they increase lobbying expenditure, not to secure new concessions, but to maintain access to policymakers and signal the

political salience of preserving the status quo. Presidential party turnover provides the empirical leverage to observe this mechanism in action: the change in partisan control of the executive branch introduces a discrete, exogenous shock to the political environment, reshuffling political appointees at the Department of Commerce and the Office of the United States Trade Representative and generating uncertainty about which domestic constituencies the incoming administration will prioritize. This shock activates the mobilization of defendant firms for whom protection is not structurally guaranteed, making observable a pattern of defensive political investment that would otherwise be difficult to isolate from the normal background of lobbying activity. This characterization aligns with recent work portraying corporate lobbying as a maintenance activity in which firms invest resources to retain existing benefits rather than to acquire new ones (Drutman et al., 2019; Kerr et al., 2014).

This study distinguishes between nationally prioritized and non-prioritized industry sectors, which reveals the heterogeneous conditions under which the enforcement-constriction mechanism operates. Industries that have been elevated to the status of national priorities through executive action or bipartisan legislation, such as steel and aluminum under Section 232 tariffs or semiconductors under the CHIPS and Science Act, enjoy a form of political protection that is structurally insulated from the uncertainties of partisan turnover. The commitment to shielding these sectors is embedded in presidential proclamations, national security determinations, and legislative mandates that transcend the preferences of any single administration. Firms in these sectors face no need to mobilize lobbying in response to a change in the governing party, because the political foundations of their protection do not depend on the partisan identity of the executive. By contrast, firms in non-prioritized sectors, those whose anti-dumping protection rests on ordinary administrative proceedings without the reinforcement of executive or legislative action, are acutely vulnerable to shifts in political access and policy orientation that accompany a partisan transition. It is among these firms that the reactive mobilization mechanism is activated, and it is in the disputes involving these sectors that the WTO enforcement space is most at risk of constriction.

The focus on anti-dumping disputes is motivated by several considerations that make this category of WTO litigation particularly revealing. Anti-dumping is the single most frequently

invoked trade remedy and accounts for a disproportionate share of WTO disputes (Bown, 2004; Bown et al., 2003). The policy instrument itself, the anti-dumping duty, functions as a targeted protectionist measure that creates identifiable winners and losers among domestic firms, generating clear and observable incentives for political mobilization on the defendant side. Moreover, the WTO's procedural framework for anti-dumping disputes contains significant discretionary space at each stage of the process, from the formation of the panel to the scheduling of hearings to the submission of written arguments, leaving room for the pace of proceedings to be influenced by the degree of cooperation or obstruction exercised by the defendant government. This combination of frequent litigation, transparent firm-level stakes, and procedural flexibility makes anti-dumping disputes the setting in which the enforcement-constriction mechanism is most likely to be detectable and empirically tractable.

The empirical analysis concentrates on WTO disputes involving the United States, which provides the most informative case for documenting this mechanism. The United States is the most frequent respondent in WTO dispute settlement, and its Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 generates the most comprehensive public record of firm-level political expenditure available for any WTO member. Firm-level lobbying data are drawn from the LobbyView database (Kim, 2018) and matched to defendant firms in US-related WTO anti-dumping cases using replication data from Ryu and Stone (2018). The research design exploits presidential party turnover as an exogenous shock to the political environment in which defendant firms operate, combining a PanelMatch estimator (Imai et al., 2023) to recover the causal effect of partisan transition on lobbying expenditure with a stratified Cox proportional hazards model (Cox, 1972) to estimate whether the resulting mobilization delays dispute resolution. The empirical results confirm both stages of the mechanism: defendant firms in non-prioritized sectors significantly increase lobbying after a partisan transition, while firms in prioritized sectors show no response; and this lobbying mobilization measurably reduces the hazard of reaching a panel report, prolonging the period during which contested trade measures remain in force.

These findings contribute to the literature on WTO dispute settlement by demonstrating that dispute duration is shaped not only by interstate bargaining dynamics but also by the domestic

political mobilization of private actors on the defendant side, a dimension that existing work has largely treated as a background condition rather than an active mechanism (Busch & Reinhardt, 2001; Ryu & Stone, 2018). The study also extends research on the institutional vulnerabilities of the WTO (Carnegie, 2014; Pelc, 2014) by identifying a specific, empirically documented channel, the interaction between partisan transition and reactive firm lobbying, through which the enforcement space of the dispute settlement system is constricted from within. More broadly, the analysis underscores that the WTO's capacity to enforce trade rules depends not only on the formal design of its institutional procedures, but also on the domestic political conditions prevailing in its most powerful members.

2   Theory

The WTO dispute settlement system is widely regarded as one of the most legalized mechanisms for resolving interstate economic conflicts, yet its institutional design harbors procedural vulnerabilities that private actors can exploit (Goldstein & Martin, 2000; Rosendorff, 2005). Although the system was conceived as a state-to-state process, the underlying commercial interests that drive disputes are overwhelmingly those of firms (Busch & Reinhardt, 2006; Davis, 2012). When governments bring cases or defend against them, they act on behalf of domestic constituencies whose material stakes shape the trajectory, pace, and ultimate resolution of each dispute. The gap between formal state representation and actual firm-level agency creates space for private interests to influence enforcement outcomes in ways that the system's architects did not anticipate (Carnegie, 2014; Pelc, 2014). Understanding how this gap operates requires specifying both the type of dispute and the domestic political conditions under which firm mobilization occurs. This paper argues that anti-dumping disputes involving US defendant firms provide a particularly revealing window into the structural vulnerability of WTO enforcement to private interest manipulation, and that presidential party turnover serves as the domestic political shock that activates this vulnerability.

Anti-dumping disputes occupy a distinctive position in the WTO enforcement landscape

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for several reasons. First, anti-dumping is the single most frequently cited agreement category in WTO disputes, accounting for roughly one-fifth of all cases involving the United States (Bown, 2004; Bown et al., 2003). The sheer volume of anti-dumping litigation makes it the modal category of WTO conflict, and the policy instrument itself, the anti-dumping duty, functions as a targeted protectionist measure that directly benefits identifiable domestic firms at the expense of foreign competitors (Irwin, 2005; Prusa, 2001). Second, the institutional procedures governing anti-dumping investigations in the United States involve multiple agencies, the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the International Trade Commission (ITC), whose sequential assessments of dumping margins and material injury create multiple veto points at which political pressure can be applied (Bown et al., 2003; Lindsey & Ikenson, 2002). Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that ITC decisions tend to favor duty imposition (Lindsey & Ikenson, 2002) and that the resulting levies are often substantial even when evidence of dumping is ambiguous (Barfield, 2003; Bown, 2004). Third, unlike disputes over subsidies, safeguards, or technical barriers to trade, anti-dumping disputes feature comparatively transparent firm-level incentives: defendant firms benefit from existing duties and seek to preserve them, while complainant firms seek their removal (Bown & Reynolds, 2015). This clarity of stakes makes anti-dumping disputes an ideal empirical setting for isolating the causal mechanisms through which private interests shape WTO enforcement outcomes.

The focus on US defendant firms, rather than complainant firms or firms in other countries, is motivated by both theoretical and empirical considerations. The United States has been the world's most prolific user of anti-dumping measures and one of the most frequent respondents in WTO anti-dumping disputes (Bown, 2005, 2008). American defendant firms, those whose products are subject to anti-dumping duties challenged at the WTO, have a clear and immediate material interest in the continuation of those duties. They occupy a structurally advantageous position within the dispute settlement process because the burden of initiating and prosecuting the case falls on the complainant government, while defendant firms benefit from the status quo for as long as the dispute remains unresolved (Busch & Reinhardt, 2001; Davis & Bermeo, 2009). Moreover, the political environment in which US firms operate, characterized by a well-developed lobbying infrastructure, frequent partisan alternation in the executive branch, and a separation-of-powers system that distributes trade authority across multiple institutions, provides rich variation in the

domestic political conditions that theory predicts should activate defensive mobilization (Grossman & Helpman, 1994; Mansfield et al., 2000).

The institutional architecture of WTO dispute settlement contains features that defendant firms can exploit to their advantage. Figure 1 illustrates the procedure. Once a complaint is filed, the parties enter a consultation stage where governments negotiate on behalf of their domestic firms. If consultations fail, a panel is requested, composed, and tasked with adjudicating the dispute. Crucially, the period between the initiation of consultations and the composition of the panel represents a window during which governments retain substantial discretion over how vigorously to pursue or delay proceedings (Busch & Reinhardt, 2001; Rosendorff, 2005). For defendant firms, this window is strategically valuable: every additional half-year that a dispute remains in the consultation or pre-panel phase is a half-year in which existing anti-dumping duties remain in force. The procedural design of WTO dispute settlement, in other words, creates an asymmetry in temporal incentives. Complainant firms bear the costs of delay because the contested duties continue to restrict their market access; defendant firms reap the benefits of delay because those same duties continue to shield them from foreign competition (Bown & Crowley, 2013). This asymmetry is not a bug in the system so much as a structural feature that private interests can, and do, exploit through domestic political channels.
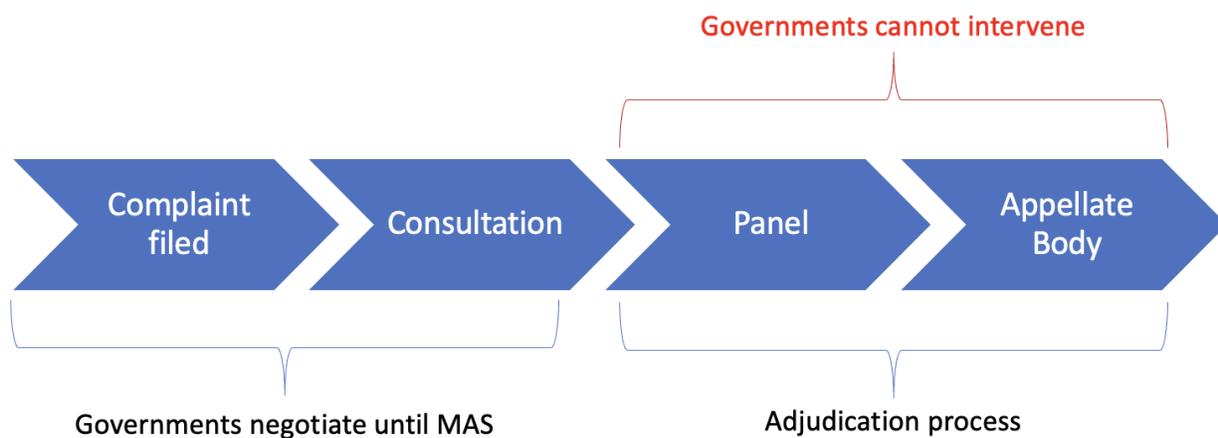

Figure 1: WTO Dispute Settlement Procedure

This procedural asymmetry is compounded by the limited capacity of complainant-side governments to compel timely resolution. The WTO dispute settlement system provides no mechanism by which a complainant can force the defendant country to accelerate consultations, expedite panel composition, or impose penalties for delay prior to a final ruling (Busch & Reinhardt, 2001;

Davey, 2005). A complainant government may request a panel after sixty days of failed consultations, but the actual formation of the panel, the selection of panelists, and the timeline for submissions remain subject to procedural negotiations in which the defendant government can exercise considerable foot-dragging without formal sanction (Rosendorff, 2005). Even after a panel is established, the dispute settlement understanding sets only aspirational deadlines that are routinely exceeded, and the complainant has no enforcement tool to penalize non-compliance until the process concludes with an adopted ruling and an expired reasonable period of implementation (Bown, 2004; Davis, 2012). Retaliation, the ultimate remedy, is authorized only at the end of this sequence, meaning that the complainant side absorbs the full economic cost of the contested measures for the entire duration of the proceedings. Complainant-side firms, for their part, face a collective action problem: the benefits of an eventual favorable ruling are diffuse across foreign exporters, while the costs of sustained advocacy fall on individual firms that may lack both the political access and the domestic institutional leverage to pressure the defendant government from the outside (Bown, 2005; Gilligan, 1997). The upshot is that the WTO's procedural architecture offers defendant firms a structurally permissive environment for delay, one in which the complainant side possesses few credible tools to counteract the drag.

Presidential party turnover introduces a domestic political shock that activates this structural vulnerability by raising fundamental uncertainties about the future policy agenda of the incoming administration. When a new party takes the White House, defendant firms confront two distinct threats. First, the incoming president may hold different trade policy preferences, potentially favoring a more liberal stance that would prioritize compliance with adverse WTO rulings or seek to negotiate away anti-dumping protections as part of broader trade deals (Kono, 2006; Milner & Rosendorff, 1997). The concept of party issue ownership suggests that partisan transitions can shift the salience and direction of trade policy in ways that directly threaten the status quo (Fagan, 2021; Petrocik, 1996). Second, and perhaps more consequentially, a change in governing party disrupts the established channels of access that firms have cultivated with executive branch officials, agency appointees, and legislative allies aligned with the outgoing administration (Fouirnaies & Hall, 2018; Kerr et al., 2014). The political capital that firms invested in building relationships with the previous government depreciates sharply, leaving them exposed at precisely the moment

when the policy environment becomes most uncertain.

Faced with these twin threats, defendant firms are expected to respond by expanding lobbying expenditures broadly rather than selectively targeting specific government agencies. This prediction runs counter to a narrower model of lobbying in which firms would concentrate resources on the USTR, the DOC, or other agencies most directly involved in managing the dispute. The logic for broad-based mobilization rests on several foundations. First, presidential party turnover reshuffles personnel and priorities across the entire executive branch, not just within trade-specific agencies; firms therefore cannot predict ex ante which institutional venue will prove most consequential for their case (Ellis & Groll, 2020; Hall & Deardorff, 2006). Second, the informational model of lobbying suggests that firms provide specialized knowledge to policymakers in exchange for access and influence (Chalmers, 2013; Schnakenberg, 2017). When a new administration takes office, the demand for such information rises across all agencies as incoming officials seek to understand the landscape of inherited commitments, and firms that supply information broadly are better positioned to rebuild influence networks (Grossman & Helpman, 2001). Third, anti-dumping disputes touch on issues, including tariff revenue, employment in import-competing sectors, and bilateral trade relationships, that cut across the jurisdictions of multiple congressional committees and executive agencies (Oatley, 2011; Ryu & Stone, 2018). Concentrating lobbying in a single venue would leave firms vulnerable to adverse decisions in others. Broad lobbying, in this sense, functions as a hedging strategy under conditions of political uncertainty.

The expectation of broad mobilization is further supported by the empirical observation that lobbying in the United States operates as a market characterized by high entry costs, persistent spending, and concentrated returns (Ansolabehere et al., 2003; Kerr et al., 2014). Drutman et al. (2019) document that a small tier of elite firms accounts for a disproportionate share of total lobbying expenditure, and that these firms must continually increase spending simply to maintain their position. In the context of a presidential party turnover, the need to re-establish access across a new political landscape compels defendant firms to raise overall expenditures rather than reallocate existing budgets. The alternative, selectively targeting a single agency or committee, would leave too many access points unattended. Consider the counterfactual in which a defendant

firm ceases or reduces lobbying following a partisan transition: the new administration, lacking informational inputs from the firm, would have little incentive to prioritize the firm's case, while complainant governments and their allied firms would face reduced resistance to pushing the dispute toward resolution (Li, 2018). The rational response, therefore, is to expand the scope and scale of lobbying simultaneously, treating the transition as a period of acute vulnerability that demands broad defensive action.

Not all defendant firms, however, are expected to exhibit the same degree of responsiveness to presidential party turnover. Industries that already enjoy privileged political protection through instruments outside the WTO anti-dumping framework should be less compelled to mobilize in response to the domestic political shock. The most salient category is industries covered by Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which authorizes the president to impose tariffs on national security grounds. Steel and aluminum, the two sectors that received sweeping Section 232 tariffs in 2018, exemplify this logic: their protection operates through a unilateral executive instrument that enjoys bipartisan support rooted in national security discourse and is largely insulated from the WTO adjudication process (Irwin, 2005; Noland, 2021). The Section 232 framework has also been invoked to investigate other strategically significant industries, though with varied outcomes. The Department of Commerce conducted a Section 232 investigation into automobile and automobile parts imports in 2019, concluding that imports did threaten national security; yet the president declined to impose tariffs, opting instead for negotiated agreements with key trading partners (Bown, 2021). This distinction matters: whereas steel and aluminum firms secured active, durable tariff protection, the automobile sector received a weaker and more conditional resolution, illustrating that Section 232 investigations do not uniformly translate into sustained protective measures.

The broader pattern of national-priority industrial policy further insulates certain sectors from the political uncertainties of partisan turnover. Beyond Section 232, the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 exemplifies how bipartisan legislative initiatives can shield strategically designated industries, in this case semiconductor manufacturing, from the vicissitudes of electoral politics (Gulotty & Li, 2023). Like Section 232 tariffs for steel and aluminum, the CHIPS Act provides

its beneficiary firms with a protective instrument that does not depend on the maintenance of specific anti-dumping duties or on the political relationships that any particular administration cultivates. Industries that fall under such national-priority umbrellas, whether through executive tariff authority or legislative industrial policy, face a fundamentally different political calculus than industries whose sole protective instrument is a WTO-adjudicated anti-dumping duty. Firms in steel, aluminum, and semiconductors can afford to be relatively quiescent in the face of presidential party turnover because their protection is anchored in durable institutional commitments that transcend partisan cycles. Their lobbying response to a new administration, while not necessarily zero, should be substantially muted relative to industries lacking such alternative shields (Evenett & Fritz, 2021; Rickard, 2012).

Hypothesis 1: Following presidential party turnover, defendant firms in non-prioritized industries increase lobbying expenditure to a greater extent than defendant firms in nationally prioritized sectors.

By contrast, defendant firms in industries that do not benefit from Section 232, the CHIPS Act, or comparable non-WTO protective instruments are the most exposed to the political uncertainties generated by partisan turnover. These non-prioritized industries, lacking the safety net of national security tariffs or bipartisan industrial policy, depend entirely on the continued application of WTO-adjudicated anti-dumping duties for their competitive advantage. When a new president takes office, these firms face the full force of the dual threat: both a potential shift in trade policy orientation and a loss of established access channels. Their response, increased broad-based lobbying, should in turn translate into a tangible downstream consequence: the prolongation of dispute resolution. Defendant firms have clear stakes in delaying settlement. As long as a WTO anti-dumping case remains unresolved, the duties at issue continue to apply, generating rents for the protected domestic industry (Bown, 2004; Prusa, 2001). A rapid resolution, particularly one resulting in an adverse panel ruling, would compel the removal or modification of those duties. The incentive to delay is therefore not merely a preference but a material imperative, and this tendency should be amplified under presidential party turnover due to the heightened uncertainties surrounding the new regime's policy agenda (Davis, 2012; Rosendorff & Milner, 2001). Increased lobbying

expenditure following a partisan transition serves precisely this purpose: by re-establishing access and supplying information to the new administration, defendant firms seek to ensure that the government does not accelerate dispute resolution under pressure from complainant countries. The empirical implication is that the lobbying mobilization documented in the first hypothesis should produce a measurable effect on dispute duration, with non-prioritized industries experiencing more pronounced delays following presidential party turnover. Together, these dynamics expose a structural weakness in the WTO dispute settlement system: the enforcement space is constricted not only by interstate bargaining and legal adjudication but also by the firm-level political mobilization that domestic institutional shocks generate (Carnegie, 2014; Goldstein & Martin, 2000).

Hypothesis 2: Following presidential party turnover, heightened lobbying by defendant firms in non-prioritized industries delays dispute resolution, extending the duration before a panel report is issued.

3 Empirical evidence

3.1 Data & methods

The empirical analysis concentrates on the United States for two complementary reasons. First, the United States has been the most frequent participant in WTO dispute settlement, appearing as either complainant or respondent in a large share of all cases filed since 1995 (Bown, 2005; Davey, 2005). Second, and more critically, the United States is the only major trading nation that mandates comprehensive disclosure of lobbying activity, making it uniquely suited for linking firm-level political behavior to dispute outcomes. Comparable lobbying databases are unavailable elsewhere because reporting is either voluntary or nonexistent.

The dataset is constructed by merging three primary sources. The universe of WTO disputes and their procedural attributes is drawn from the WTO Dispute Settlement Database maintained by the case law project organized by Bown, Horn, and Mavroidis (Hoekman et al., 2020; Johannesson & Mavroidis, 2017), using the version updated through 2020. This database

records the identity of complainants and respondents, the agreements cited, the dates of each procedural milestone (consultation request, panel establishment, panel report circulation, appellate body ruling, and implementation), and the final disposition of each case. To identify the specific US firms involved on the defendant side of each dispute, I rely on the replication data of Ryu and Stone (2018), which maps WTO disputes to the domestic firms whose commercial interests are at stake. This firm-level identification was further augmented through independent research with the assistance of graduate research assistants, drawing on corporate filings and news coverage indexed in Nexis Uni to verify and extend the firm-dispute linkages, particularly for cases initiated after the original replication dataset's coverage period. The resulting firm-dispute crosswalk is then matched to LobbyView (Kim, 2018), a comprehensive database of federal lobbying disclosures compiled from mandatory filings under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. LobbyView records the identity of the lobbying client, the government entities contacted, and the issue areas reported on each filing. Critically, the expenditure variable in LobbyView reflects the cost of maintaining lobbying operations, not the amount of political contributions or campaign donations. Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act, organizations employing in-house lobbyists report a good faith estimate of total expenses incurred in connection with lobbying activities, a figure that encompasses employee compensation, associated overhead, and payments to outside lobbying firms. For organizations that hire external lobbying firms, the reported amount captures the income received by the firm from the client for lobbying services. The dependent variable in this study therefore measures the scale of a firm's investment in sustaining access to policymakers, a conceptually distinct quantity from campaign finance that more directly captures the ongoing maintenance costs of political engagement. The merged dataset spans 1999 through 2024, covering multiple presidential administrations and partisan transitions.

One thing to note about the data structure is its half-year frequency. Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act, firms were required to file lobbying reports on a semi-annual basis through the end of 2007; beginning in 2008, the reporting cycle switched to quarterly filings following the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act. To maintain temporal consistency across the entire study period, all quarterly reports from 2008 onward are aggregated to the half-year level. The dependent variable for the lobbying analysis is total lobbying expenditure (in US dollars) spent

by each defendant firm in a given half-year period. Each firm-half-year observation is classified by whether the firm is currently involved in a WTO anti-dumping dispute as a defendant, and whether the firm belongs to a nationally prioritized sector, defined at the three-digit NAICS level as steel and aluminum manufacturing (311), automobile and automobile parts manufacturing (334), or semiconductor manufacturing (336), corresponding to the industries shielded by Section 232 tariffs or the CHIPS and Science Act as discussed in the theory section.

To test whether defendant firms in non-prioritized industries increase lobbying expenditure following presidential party turnover, I employ PanelMatch (Imai et al., 2023), a matching and weighting estimator designed for time-series cross-sectional data with binary treatments. PanelMatch constructs matched sets by pairing each treated unit, here a defendant firm whose involvement in an anti-dumping dispute is coded as treatment onset, with control units that share a similar treatment history over a specified lag window. The method addresses the staggered nature of dispute involvement: firms enter disputes at different points in time, and the treatment, being a defendant in an active anti-dumping dispute, switches on at different half-year periods across firms.

The refinement method used to weight matched sets is the covariate balancing propensity score (CBPS) (Imai & Ratkovic, 2014), which simultaneously estimates the propensity score and optimizes covariate balance between treated and control units. Balance is achieved on the lagged values of the dependent variable, lobbying expenditure, over the lag window, ensuring that treated and control firms exhibited similar spending trajectories prior to treatment onset. This approach guards against confounding from pre-existing trends in lobbying intensity that might correlate with both dispute involvement and post-treatment spending.

The principal advantage of PanelMatch for the present analysis is its capacity to recover a causally interpretable average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) under weaker assumptions than conventional two-way fixed effects or difference-in-differences estimators. Standard TWFE regressions in panel settings with staggered treatment adoption can produce biased estimates when treatment effects are heterogeneous across cohorts or over time, a well-documented problem in recent econometric literature (Sun & Abraham, 2021). PanelMatch circumvents this issue by constructing matched sets nonparametrically: for each treated unit-period, the estimator identifies

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control units with an identical treatment history over a researcher-specified lag window, thereby conditioning on the observable trajectory of treatment status rather than relying on a parametric model of selection (Imai et al., 2023). The causal warrant rests on a conditional parallel trends assumption: within each matched set, the counterfactual outcome trajectory of the treated unit, had it not been treated, is assumed to follow the same path as the weighted average of its matched controls. By refining matched sets with CBPS weights that optimize balance on the lagged dependent variable and time-varying covariates, the estimator strengthens this assumption empirically, ensuring that treated and control firms were on comparable lobbying expenditure trajectories prior to the onset of dispute involvement (Imai & Ratkovic, 2014). The resulting ATT estimates can therefore be interpreted as the causal effect of entering an anti-dumping dispute as a defendant on subsequent lobbying expenditure, net of confounding from pre-treatment trends and observable time-varying characteristics.

The covariates included in the matching and estimation procedure capture the breadth of each firm's lobbying footprint directed at the government entities most relevant to trade policy. Specifically, I construct counts of lobbying reports filed by each defendant firm in each half-year period targeting two institutional categories: Congress and the executive branch. For the executive branch, the count aggregates reports directed at the White House Office, the Executive Office of the President (EOP), the Department of Commerce (DOC), the International Trade Administration (ITA), the International Trade Commission (ITC), and the National Economic Council (NEC), the agencies with the most direct jurisdiction over anti-dumping proceedings and trade policy formulation. To ensure that the lobbying activity captured is substantively relevant to WTO dispute dynamics, the count of reports is restricted to filings that list trade, tariff, or foreign relations as their issue area. Reports on unrelated policy domains are excluded. The estimation includes a moderator variable indicating whether a firm belongs to a nationally prioritized sector at the three-digit NAICS level, as defined above, allowing the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) to vary between prioritized and non-prioritized industries.

To test whether the lobbying mobilization translates into delayed dispute resolution, I estimate a Cox proportional hazards model (Cox, 1972) at the firm level. The event of interest is

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the issuance of a panel report, the procedural milestone at which the WTO formally adjudicates the dispute and after which the defendant government's discretion to delay narrows substantially. Duration is measured in half-year intervals from the initiation of consultations to the circulation of the panel report, with firms that have not yet reached this milestone right-censored at the end of the observation period.

The Cox model is specified using a counting-process formulation to accommodate time-varying covariates:

$$h(t|X_{i,t}) = h_{0,s}(t)\exp(\beta_1 lobby\_sum_{i,t} + \beta_2 pp\_turnover_{i,t} + \beta_3(lobby\_sum \times pp\_turnover)_{i,t} +$$

$$\beta_4 divgov_t + \beta_5 exec\_lobs_{i,t} + \beta_6 cong\_lobs_{i,t})$$

where $s \in \{AD, str\_imp\}$ indexes the stratum defined by the combination of anti-dumping status (AD) and priority sector membership (str_imp), so that each subgroup receives its own baseline hazard $h_{0,s}(t)$.

Stratification on these two dimensions is motivated by the structural heterogeneity in how disputes reach, and move through, the panel stage. Anti-dumping disputes follow a distinct procedural track within the WTO: they are governed by the Anti-Dumping Agreement (Article VI of GATT 1994), which imposes its own evidentiary standards for injury determination and permits provisional measures that other dispute types do not. As a result, the baseline tempo of dispute progression differs systematically between AD and non-AD cases, and pooling them under a single baseline hazard would conflate procedural differences with the substantive effects of lobbying and partisan turnover. Separately, disputes involving nationally prioritized sectors, such as steel and aluminum under Section 232, operate under a qualitatively different political calculus. The defendant government's commitment to protection in these industries is anchored in executive proclamations and national security justifications that are largely insulated from firm-level lobbying pressure. Allowing the baseline hazard to vary across the $AD \times str\_imp$ strata accommodates these differences nonparametrically, so that the estimated coefficients capture the effect of lobbying and

turnover net of the distinct dispute dynamics inherent to each subgroup.

A practical advantage of stratification over including AD and str_imp as covariates is that it relaxes the proportional hazards assumption for these grouping variables. If the ratio of hazard functions between, say, AD and non-AD disputes is not constant over time, a covariate specification would be misspecified, whereas stratification allows each group's hazard trajectory to take any shape. The proportional hazards assumption is retained only for the covariates of theoretical interest, $lobby\_sum$, $pp\_turnover$, and their interaction, whose effects are estimated as common coefficients shared across all strata.

The key independent variable, $lobby\_sum$, captures total lobbying expenditure by the defendant firm, and $pp\_turnover$ is a binary indicator for presidential party turnover occurring during the dispute. Their interaction tests whether the effect of lobbying on dispute duration is amplified under partisan transitions, as Hypothesis 2 predicts. The model includes the same trade-relevant lobbying report counts used in the PanelMatch analysis, $exec\_lobs$ (executive lobbying) and $cong\_lobs$ (congressional lobbying), to control for the scope of political engagement, along with $divgov$, an indicator for divided government, which is expected to independently slow dispute resolution by introducing additional veto players into the policymaking process. Standard errors are clustered at the dispute level to account for the correlation among firms involved in the same case.

3.2 Party turnover & firm lobbying

I begin by examining whether presidential party turnover triggers differential lobbying mobilization among defendant firms, as Hypothesis 1 predicts. The PanelMatch estimator, applied separately to non-prioritized and Section 232 industries, yields matched ATT estimates that trace the dynamic trajectory of lobbying expenditure over eight post-treatment half-year periods. Figure 2 presents these estimates, comparing non-prioritized industries (diamonds) with Section 232 sectors (circles). Filled markers denote statistical significance at the 95% level, where the confidence interval excludes zero.

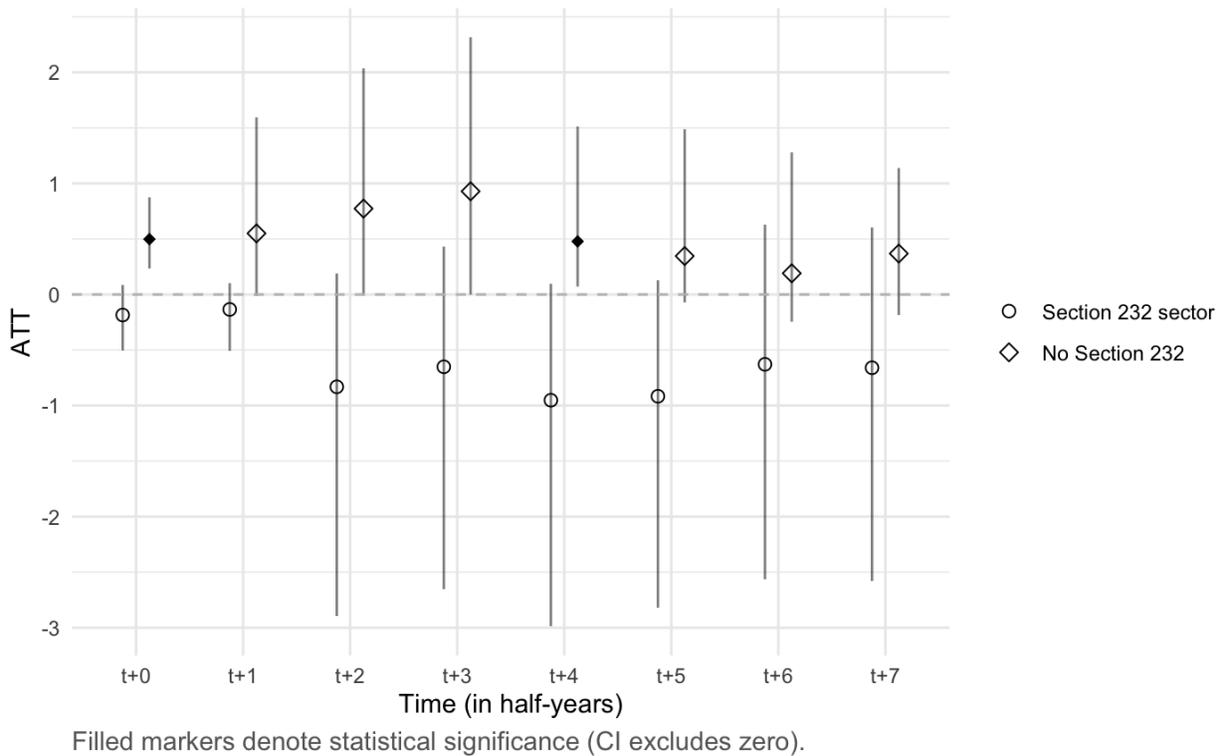Filled markers denote statistical significance (CI excludes zero).

Figure 2: PanelMatch estimates - prioritized vs. non-prioritized

The results provide strong support for Hypothesis 1. Among defendant firms in non-prioritized industries, the ATT is positive and statistically significant at the onset of treatment $(t + 0)$, with an estimated effect of 0.498 on the log scale. Given that the dependent variable is the natural log of lobbying expenditure in US dollars (Table 1), this translates to a roughly 65% increase in the level of spending relative to matched controls $(\exp(0.498) - 1 \approx 0.65)$, or approximately \$598,000 in additional expenditure evaluated at the mean $(\exp(\bar{y}) \times 0.65)$. The effect grows steadily over the following periods: the point estimate rises to 0.550 at $t+1$ $(\exp(0.550)-1 \approx 0.73$, a 73% increase), 0.773 at $t + 2$ $(\exp(0.773) - 1 \approx 1.17$, a 117% increase), and peaks at 0.929 at $t + 3$, which implies that treated firms spend roughly 153% more than their matched counterparts $(\exp(0.929) - 1 \approx 1.53)$, an additional \$1.42 million evaluated at the mean (Table 1). This peak corresponds to approximately 0.37 standard deviations of the dependent variable $(0.929/2.498 \approx 0.37$; refer to Table 1). At $t + 4$, the effect is again statistically significant at 0.478 $(\exp(0.478) - 1 \approx 0.61$, a 61% increase), before attenuating to 0.346 at $t + 5$ (41%), 0.191 at $t + 6$ (21%), and 0.369 at $t + 7$ (45%). In substantive terms, the cumulative pattern indicates that non-prioritized defendant firms redirect hundreds of thousands to over a million dollars in additional lobbying expenditure during the first two years following dispute onset, a period that coincides precisely with the window in which firms must rebuild access channels and signal their stakes to a

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potentially unfamiliar or ideologically distant administration.

The temporal profile of the ATT estimates maps closely onto the theoretical mechanism. The immediate and significant effect at $t+0$ reflects the acute vulnerability that defendant firms face upon entering a dispute: the onset of WTO proceedings signals that their anti-dumping protection is under formal challenge, triggering a rapid lobbying response aimed at shoring up political support. The sustained escalation through $t+1$ to $t+3$, where the effect size grows from 0.20 to 0.37 standard deviations (Table 1), corresponds to the period during which firms are most actively rebuilding influence networks and supplying specialized information to policymakers under the new administration. The peak at $t+3$, one and a half years after treatment onset, suggests that lobbying intensity does not plateau immediately but ramps up as firms invest progressively in maintaining access and as the policy stakes of the dispute become more salient. The return to significance at $t+4$ is notable: it suggests a secondary pulse of defensive spending, potentially coinciding with key procedural milestones in the dispute or with the consolidation of the new administration's trade policy agenda. The gradual decay after $t+4$ is consistent with the logic of Drutman et al. (2019), who argue that lobbying functions as a placeholder activity; once firms have re-established access and signaled their stakes to the new government, the marginal benefit of additional expenditure diminishes.

The contrast with Section 232 sectors is stark. For firms in steel, aluminum, and other nationally prioritized industries, the ATT estimates are uniformly small and statistically indistinguishable from zero across all post-treatment periods. The point estimates hover near zero or are slightly negative, indicating no meaningful increase in lobbying expenditure following dispute involvement. This pattern confirms the theoretical expectation that firms benefiting from durable, non-WTO protective instruments, such as Section 232 tariffs, have little incentive to escalate lobbying in response to anti-dumping dispute involvement. Their core protection is insulated from both the WTO adjudication process and the partisan dynamics of presidential turnover, rendering the political shock that drives non-prioritized firms to mobilize largely irrelevant to their strategic calculus. The heterogeneity between the two groups is precisely what Hypothesis 1 predicts: the lobbying response to dispute involvement is concentrated among firms whose protection depends

entirely on the continued application of WTO-adjudicated anti-dumping duties, not among those shielded by alternative instruments anchored in national security or industrial policy rationales.

3.3   Strategic delay in resolution

Having established that defendant firms in non-prioritized industries mobilize lobbying in response to presidential party turnover, I now turn to whether this mobilization translates into delayed dispute resolution. The stratified Cox proportional hazards model tests Hypothesis 2 by estimating the effect of lobbying expenditure on the hazard of reaching a panel report, conditional on partisan transition. The model is estimated on 345 firm-half-year observations containing 45 events, where an event is defined as the circulation of a panel report. The baseline hazard is stratified by anti-dumping status and priority sector membership, and standard errors are clustered at the dispute level. The results are reported in Table 2.

The key finding is the interaction between lobbying expenditure and presidential party turnover. The coefficient on *lobby_sum* × *pp_turnover* is −0.300, corresponding to a hazard ratio of 0.741. This means that, conditional on a presidential party turnover having occurred during the dispute, each unit increase in logged lobbying expenditure reduces the hazard of reaching a panel report by approximately 26%. In substantive terms, higher lobbying spending by defendant firms under a new administration meaningfully delays the procedural milestone at which the WTO formally adjudicates the case, extending the window during which existing anti-dumping duties remain in force. This is the central prediction of Hypothesis 2: the lobbying mobilization triggered by partisan turnover does not merely represent expressive political activity but translates into a tangible downstream consequence for dispute resolution.

The constituent terms illuminate the mechanism further. The main effect of *lobby_sum* is small and statistically insignificant (HR = 1.033), indicating that, absent presidential party turnover, lobbying expenditure alone does not systematically accelerate or delay the issuance of a panel report. Lobbying in a stable political environment, where established access channels remain intact and the administration's trade policy orientation is known, does not confer additional

delay. The main effect of *pp_turnover* is large and positive in sign (HR = 4.413), suggesting that partisan transitions are, on average, associated with a higher baseline hazard of reaching a panel report, though this effect does not reach conventional significance. The directional interpretation is that, absent a lobbying response, disputes under a new administration may actually resolve faster, potentially because the incoming government, lacking the political commitments of its predecessor, is less invested in defending the contested duties. This counterfactual is critical, as it implies that the delay effect of lobbying under turnover is not merely additive but compensatory, with defendant firms spending to prevent an acceleration of resolution that would otherwise occur.

The combined effect for firms that both experience presidential party turnover and increase lobbying can be computed from the constituent and interaction terms. For a firm facing turnover, the net effect of a one-unit increase in logged lobbying expenditure on the hazard is $\exp(0.032 - 0.300) = \exp(-0.268) \approx 0.765$, a 23.5% reduction in the hazard of reaching a panel report per unit of log expenditure. Evaluated at the mean level of lobbying expenditure (Table 1; $e^{\bar{y}} \approx \$927,000$), a doubling of spending from this baseline would reduce the hazard by roughly 17%, meaningfully extending the expected duration before a panel report is issued. For firms not experiencing turnover, by contrast, the corresponding effect is $\exp(0.032) \approx 1.033$, a negligible 3.3% increase in the hazard that is statistically indistinguishable from unity. The asymmetry is sharp: lobbying delays dispute resolution only when a partisan transition has disrupted established political channels, precisely the condition under which the theory predicts defensive mobilization to be most consequential.

Among the covariates, the count of lobbying reports targeting the executive branch (*exec_lobs*) is the only additional statistically significant predictor (HR = 1.523). Each additional trade-related lobbying report directed at executive agencies, including the DOC, ITA, ITC, and White House, is associated with a 52% increase in the hazard of reaching a panel report. This may appear counterintuitive, but it is consistent with a selection effect: firms that file more reports with the executive branch are those whose disputes have progressed further toward adjudication, and the increased contact reflects the intensification of procedural activity rather than a causal acceleration of resolution. Lobbying reports targeting Congress (*cong_lobs*) carry a negative but insignificant

coefficient (HR = 0.847), directionally consistent with congressional engagement serving a delay function but lacking sufficient statistical power in this sample. Divided government (*divgov*) has a positive but insignificant coefficient (HR = 2.490), directionally suggesting that the presence of additional veto players may hasten procedural milestones, though this effect is imprecisely estimated.
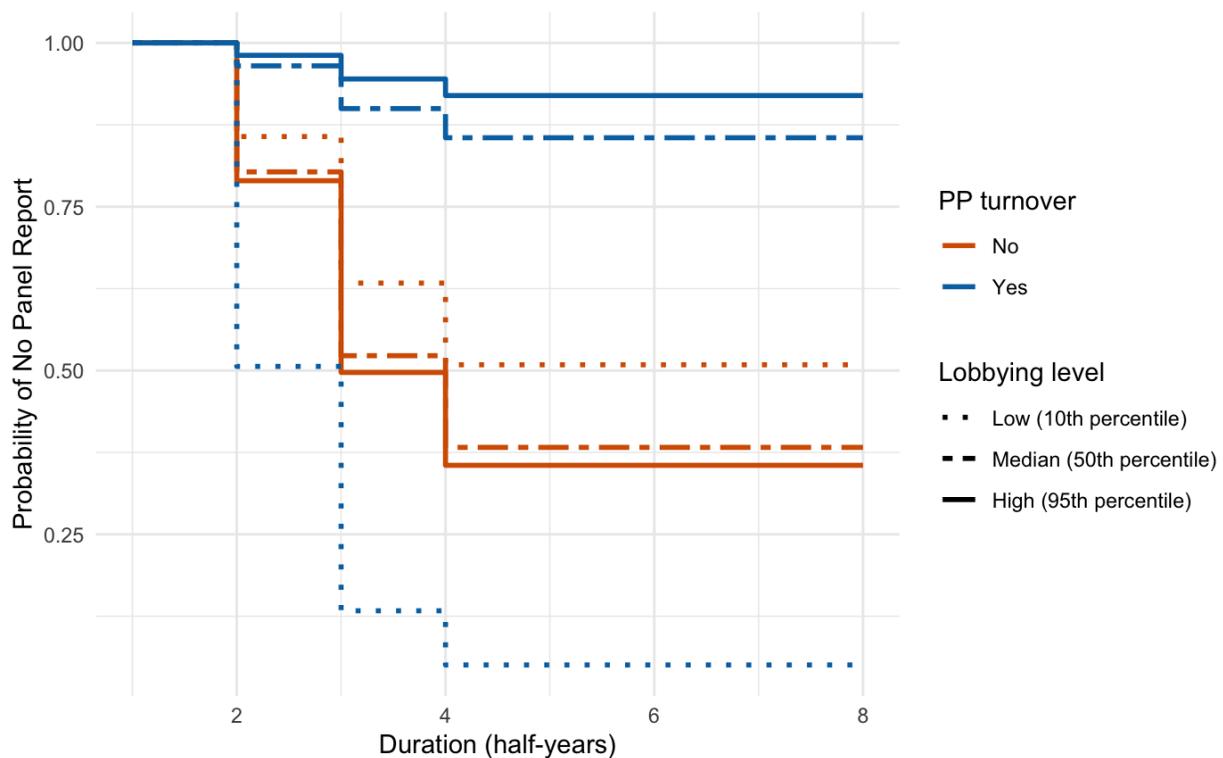

Figure 3: Survival curves - AD, non-prioritized

Figure 3 illustrates the survival curves for the stratum of interest: anti-dumping disputes involving non-prioritized industries ($AD = 1$, $str\_imp = 0$). The curves depict the probability of not yet having reached a panel report as a function of dispute duration in half-years, disaggregated by presidential party turnover and lobbying intensity. The visual pattern reinforces the regression results. Disputes in which defendant firms face presidential party turnover and maintain elevated lobbying expenditure exhibit the slowest resolution, with survival probabilities remaining high well into the later half-year periods. By contrast, disputes under partisan turnover in which firms fail to increase lobbying resolve markedly faster, consistent with the interpretation that the new administration, unconstrained by prior commitments to defend the duties, allows or facilitates swifter adjudication. Disputes without presidential party turnover occupy an intermediate position regardless of lobbying levels, confirming that the interaction between political disruption and firm mobilization, rather than either factor in isolation, is what constricts the WTO enforcement space.

4   Discussion

The empirical results of this study carry implications that speak to the institutional loopholes in the WTO dispute settlement mechanism. The research design exploits US presidential party turnover as an exogenous shock to the political environment in which defendant firms operate, providing a rare window into how firm-level lobbying behavior responds to domestic political uncertainty. The United States is a uniquely informative case, as it is the most frequent respondent in WTO dispute settlement, maintains the most transparent lobbying disclosure regime, and wields sufficient market power that its procedural choices in dispute proceedings carry outsized consequences for the system as a whole. The patterns documented here, namely that defendant firms ramp up lobbying after a partisan transition and that this mobilization is associated with slower dispute resolution, reveal a channel through which domestic politics penetrates the WTO's institutional machinery, not through overt defiance of international obligations, but through the quieter exploitation of procedural flexibility built into the system.

The WTO dispute settlement mechanism was designed to be rule-based and insulated from the domestic politics of its member states. In practice, however, the system's procedural architecture contains significant discretionary space that defendant governments can exploit. The gap between the initiation of consultations and the circulation of a panel report is not rigidly scheduled. At each stage, from the formation of the panel to the submission of written arguments and the scheduling of hearings, the pace of proceedings can be influenced by the degree of cooperation or obstruction exercised by the parties. When defendant-side firms increase their lobbying expenditure following a presidential party turnover, they are investing in maintaining access to a new set of policymakers whose trade policy preferences are uncertain and whose attention must be actively cultivated. The survival analysis confirms that this investment translates into a measurable deceleration of the dispute process: each unit increase in log lobbying expenditure under partisan transition reduces the hazard of reaching a panel report by roughly 26%, effectively prolonging the period during which the defendant government retains discretion over the contested trade measure.

The case of US antidumping duties on frozen warmwater shrimp illustrates this dynamic with particular clarity. The original antidumping order was initiated in late 2003 by the Ad

Hoc Shrimp Trade Action Committee (ASTAC), a coalition of shrimp producers concentrated in the Gulf Coast states, and duties were imposed on imports from six countries in 2005. Thailand challenged the US measures at the WTO in April 2006 (DS343), and Vietnam followed with its own complaint in February 2010 (DS404), with China filing shortly after in February 2011 (DS422). The shrimp industry is a textbook non-prioritized sector, as it lacks the national security justifications that shield steel and aluminum under Section 232, and it does not benefit from the bipartisan industrial policy umbrella of legislation such as the CHIPS and Science Act. Yet the domestic shrimp lobby, anchored by organizations such as the Southern Shrimp Alliance and individual Gulf Coast producers, maintained a sustained lobbying presence throughout the dispute period. The Bush-to-Obama transition in January 2009 introduced precisely the kind of partisan uncertainty that the theory predicts would trigger heightened mobilization: a new administration with different trade policy priorities, a reshuffled set of political appointees at the Department of Commerce and USTR, and an incoming Congress with shifting committee leadership. The disputes initiated during and after this transition experienced protracted timelines, with panel reports in the shrimp cases not circulated until July 2011 (DS404) and June 2012 (DS422), years after the initial requests for consultations.

This pattern is not unique to the shrimp industry. Across the broader population of non-prioritized sectors in the dataset, the PanelMatch estimates show that defendant firms increase lobbying expenditure by approximately 153% at the peak (three half-year periods after a partisan transition), translating to roughly $1.42 million in additional spending at the mean level. The fact that this mobilization is concentrated among firms outside the nationally prioritized sectors is itself revealing: firms in industries shielded by executive action (such as steel and aluminum under Section 232) have no need to ramp up lobbying because their protection is already secured through channels that are largely immune to the vicissitudes of partisan turnover. It is precisely the firms in vulnerable, non-prioritized industries that must bear the cost of maintaining political access when the governing coalition shifts.

The institutional implications merit careful consideration. The WTO dispute settlement mechanism's effectiveness as an enforcement device rests on the assumption that disputes proceed

at a pace determined by legal and procedural considerations rather than by the domestic political economy of the defendant state. The US case reveals how this assumption can break down in practice. Because the United States occupies a uniquely powerful position in the multilateral trading system, its domestic political cycles carry disproportionate weight: when a presidential party turnover reshuffles the policymaking apparatus, the resulting uncertainty creates an opening for defendant firms to intensify their lobbying, and the scale of US market power means that the procedural consequences of this mobilization reverberate across the dispute settlement system. The mechanism through which this operates, firm-level lobbying that incentivizes the defendant government to slow-walk dispute proceedings, is difficult to detect from the outside and nearly impossible to sanction within the existing institutional framework. The WTO's procedural rules do not account for the possibility that delays in dispute resolution reflect not administrative complexity or good-faith legal contestation, but strategic obstruction financed by domestic firms seeking to preserve the status quo. Whether similar dynamics arise in other major WTO respondents, such as the European Union or China, remains an open empirical question. Nonetheless, the transparency of the US lobbying disclosure regime makes it the most tractable setting in which to document this channel.

This gap in institutional design has become more consequential as the WTO's appellate function has been effectively paralyzed since December 2019, when the Appellate Body lost its quorum due to the United States' sustained blocking of new appointments, a policy maintained across the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations. Without a functioning appellate mechanism, the already limited tools available to complainant governments for compelling timely resolution have been further eroded. The combination of defendant-side lobbying, procedural flexibility, and appellate dysfunction creates a compounding dynamic in which disputes involving non-prioritized sectors can languish for years without meaningful progress toward resolution, all while the contested trade measures remain in force and the defendant country's domestic firms continue to benefit from the protection they have lobbied to maintain.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the WTO enforcement space is not constricted by any single factor in isolation, but by the interaction between domestic political shocks and the

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institutional vulnerabilities of the dispute settlement system. In the US context, presidential party turnover serves as an exogenous shock that activates a chain of firm-level political behavior; the turnover itself does not cause delays in WTO proceedings, but it creates the conditions of political uncertainty under which defendant firms find it rational to invest in lobbying that exploits the procedural slack inherent in the system's design. The generalizability of this mechanism hinges on the extent to which other WTO members combine powerful defendant-side industries, politically responsive trade bureaucracies, and sufficient institutional leverage to slow dispute proceedings. Even if the specific channel documented here is most pronounced in the United States, the broader lesson is that WTO dispute settlement reform must attend not only to the appellate crisis and the formal procedural timeline, but also to the less visible channels through which defendant-country domestic politics, particularly in the system's most influential members, shapes the tempo of international adjudication.

5 Conclusion

This study has examined how domestic political shocks in the defendant country shape the trajectory of WTO dispute settlement, focusing on the channel through which firm-level lobbying responds to presidential party turnover and, in turn, conditions the pace at which anti-dumping disputes reach resolution. The research design exploits the unique transparency of US lobbying disclosure to document this mechanism at the firm level, using a PanelMatch estimator to recover the causal effect of partisan transition on lobbying expenditure and a stratified Cox proportional hazards model to estimate its downstream consequences for dispute duration.

The central finding is a sharp asymmetry in how defendant firms respond to political uncertainty. In non-prioritized industries, where firms lack the insulation provided by executive action under Section 232 or bipartisan industrial policy such as the CHIPS and Science Act, presidential party turnover triggers a substantial and sustained increase in lobbying expenditure, peaking at approximately 153% above counterfactual levels three half-year periods after the transition. This mobilization is consistent with the characterization of corporate lobbying as a maintenance activity

(Drutman et al., 2019; Kerr et al., 2014): defendant firms invest not to secure new policy concessions, but to preserve existing anti-dumping protections whose continuity is threatened by the arrival of a new administration with uncertain trade policy priorities. Firms in nationally prioritized sectors, by contrast, show no significant lobbying response, because the political commitment to their protection is anchored in mechanisms that operate independently of partisan turnover.

The survival analysis demonstrates that this lobbying mobilization carries real consequences for the WTO dispute process. Under presidential party turnover, each unit increase in log lobbying expenditure reduces the hazard of reaching a panel report by roughly 26%, effectively prolonging the period during which the contested trade measures remain in force and the defendant government retains discretion over the pace of proceedings. The mechanism operates through the procedural flexibility inherent in WTO dispute settlement: the gap between consultations and panel adjudication is not rigidly scheduled, and defendant governments that face intensified domestic lobbying pressure have both the incentive and the institutional space to slow-walk the process.

These findings speak to a broader vulnerability in the WTO's institutional design. The dispute settlement mechanism presumes that the tempo of proceedings is determined by legal and procedural considerations rather than by the domestic political economy of the parties. The evidence presented here suggests that this presumption breaks down in the case of the United States, whose combination of frequent respondent status, powerful defendant-side industries, and politically responsive trade bureaucracy creates conditions under which domestic firm mobilization can meaningfully constrict the enforcement space. Whether analogous dynamics arise in other major WTO respondents remains an open question, but the US case establishes the plausibility and empirical tractability of this channel.

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The analysis is confined to anti-dumping disputes involving the United States, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other dispute types and respondent countries. The lobbying expenditure variable, while comprehensive in its coverage of LDA filings, captures only the formal, disclosed dimension of firms' political activity and may understate the full scope of political engagement. Future research could extend the framework to other WTO members with developing lobbying disclosure regimes, examine whether similar

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dynamics operate in countervailing duty or safeguard disputes, and investigate the mechanisms through which lobbying expenditure translates into specific government actions within the dispute process.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the study makes a clear contribution: it identifies and documents a specific, empirically grounded channel through which defendant-country domestic politics penetrates the institutional machinery of WTO dispute settlement. The policy implication is that efforts to reform the WTO's enforcement capacity must attend not only to the well-documented appellate crisis and the formal procedural timeline, but also to the less visible ways in which the domestic political economy of powerful members shapes the pace and outcomes of international adjudication.

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Appendix

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
lobby_sum	13.74	2.498	0	17.55	1,574
exec_lobs	16.16	29.570	0	320	1,574
cong_lobs	34.73	65.811	0	520	1,574
pp_turnover	0.297	0.457	0	1	1,574
AD	0.189	0.391	0	1	1,574
str_imp	0.550	0.498	0	1	1,574
divgov	0.478	0.500	0	1	345

Table 2: Cox Proportional Hazards Model: Time to Panel Report

	Coef.	HR
lobby_sum	0.032	1.032
	(0.070)	
pp_turnover	1.485	4.413
	(0.931)	
lobby_sum × pp_turnover	−0.300**	0.741
	(0.106)	
divgov	0.912	2.490
	(0.681)	
exec_lobs	0.420*	1.523
	(0.172)	
cong_lobs	−0.166	0.847
	(0.130)	
N	345	
Events	45	
Concordance	0.800	
Likelihood ratio test	23.69 on 6 df ($p < 0.001$)	
Wald test	19.19 on 6 df ($p = 0.004$)	

Robust SEs clustered at the dispute level in parentheses
Baseline hazard stratified by $AD \times str\_imp$
$HR = \exp(coef.)$; $HR < 1$ indicates slower resolution
*Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05, +: 0.1*