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TRADE & INVESTMENT POLICY WATCH

Trump's Trade War Timeline: An Up-to-Date Guide

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This post, originally published on April 19, 2018, will be updated as trade disputes with China and other countries evolve.

In 2018, former President Donald Trump started a trade war with the world involving multiple battles with China as well as American allies. Each battle has used a particular US legal rationale, such as calling foreign imports a national security threat, followed by Trump imposing tariffs and/or quotas on imports. Subsequent retaliation by trading partners and the prospect of further escalation risked significantly hampering trade and investment, and possibly the global economy. President Joseph R. Biden Jr. must now determine whether to keep US tariffs and other trade barriers in place or adjust policies in the wake of changing conditions, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The timelines below track the development of the most pressing trade conflicts with links to the latest available data and PIIE analysis.

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BATTLE #1: SOLAR PANEL AND WASHING MACHINE IMPORTS INJURE US INDUSTRIES

USITC Recommends Remedies
October 31, 2017

The US International Trade Commission finds that imports of solar panels (October 31, 2017) and washing machines (November 21, 2017) have caused injury to the US solar panel and washing machine industries and recommends President Trump impose "global safeguard" restrictions. Two US industries filed separate requests for the investigations earlier in 2017 under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974. These were the first industry petitions under the law since 2001.

Read "Solar and Washing Machine Safeguards in Context: The History of US Section 201 Use" by Chad P. Bown and Junie Joseph.

Trump Imposes Safeguard Tariffs
January 22, 2018

President Trump approves global safeguard tariffs on $8.5 billion in imports of solar panels and $1.8 billion of washing machines, a relatively rare move historically even when the president is granted the authority to do so.

Read "Donald Trump's Solar and Washer Tariffs May Have Now Opened the Floodgates of Protectionism" by Chad P. Bown (*Washington Post*).

China Investigates US Exports of Sorghum
February 5, 2018

The Chinese government self-initiates antidumping and countervailing duty investigations of roughly $1 billion of US exports of sorghum. While this is not an explicit retaliation linked to Trump's tariffs on solar panels and washing machines, the coincidence of timing suggests a repeat of China's retaliatory response to President Obama's imposition of a safeguard tariff on tires in September 2009.

"China's Latest Trade Maneuver Is Worrying. Here's the Story" by Chad P. Bown (*Washington Post*).

China Imposes Preliminary Tariffs on US Sorghum
April 17, 2018

The Chinese government announces preliminary antidumping duties of 178.6 percent on imports from the United States of sorghum.

Korea Files WTO Disputes
May 14, 2018

South Korea challenges the solar panel and washing machine tariffs through the WTO, claiming they violate WTO rules.

China Ends Tariffs on US Sorghum During Negotiations
May 18, 2018

China's Commerce Ministry announcement comes as US and Chinese negotiating teams meet to resolve trade disputes.

China Files WTO Dispute Against US Solar Panel Tariffs
August 14, 2018

China's Commerce Ministry announces a formal case alleging that US tariffs have damaged China's trade interests.

Trump Extends Tariffs on Washing Machines
January 14, 2021

Only six days before leaving office, the Trump administration extends Section 201 import protection for washing machines by two years.

Biden Extends Trump-Era Solar Tariffs
February 4, 2022

The Biden administration extends Section 201 tariffs on imported solar panels and cells by four years with some modifications. “Bifacial” solar panels, which generate electricity on both sides and are often used in utility-scale solar projects, will be exempt, and the highest tariff rate will apply only to cells that generate more than 5 gigawatts of power per year, up from 2.5.

Biden Temporarily Suspends Tariffs on Southeast Asian Solar Panels
June 6, 2022

President Biden declares an emergency and invokes a rarely used provision to waive tariffs—including antidumping and countervailing duties—for 2 years on imports of certain solar cells and modules from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, and ease energy disruptions.

Safeguard Tariffs on Washing Machines End
February 7, 2023

After three years of tariffs and a two-year extension, the import protection on washing machines that President Trump initially announced in early 2018 expires.

BATTLE #2: STEEL AND ALUMINUM AS NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

National Security Investigations Commence
April 20, 2017

President Trump instructs Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to self-initiate two investigations into whether steel (April 20) and aluminum (April 27) imports threaten US national security under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

Read "Trump's Threat of Steel Tariffs Heralds Big Changes in Trade Policy" by Chad P. Bown (*Washington Post*).

National Security Investigation Results
February 16, 2018

The Department of Commerce releases its reports finding imports of steel and aluminum products threaten US national security under the rarely-used Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. Even though the investigations began in April 2017, this is the first time the public learns which steel and aluminum products could potentially be hit by new tariffs.

Read "Will Trump Invoke National Security to Start a Trade War?" by Chad P. Bown and Cathleen Cimino-Isaacs.

Tariff Announcement
March 1, 2018

Trump announces forthcoming tariffs on all trading partners of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum under national security grounds. These would go further than the Commerce Department recommendations, covering an estimated $48 billion of imports, mostly from allies such as Canada, the European Union, Mexico, and South Korea. Only 6 percent of the imports covered derive from China, due to prior US imposition of antidumping and countervailing duties.

Read "Trump's Steel and Aluminum Tariffs: How WTO Retaliation Typically Works" and "Trump's Steel and Aluminum Tariffs Are Counterproductive. Here Are 5 More Things You Need to Know" by Chad P. Bown.

EU Threatens to Rebalance in Response
March 7, 2018

The European Union announces its planned retaliatory response if it were to be hit with tariffs. This includes filing a formal World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute, safeguard restrictions of its own, and a "rebalancing" of trade with the United States through almost immediate imposition of its own 25 percent tariff on $3.4 billion of US exports such as cranberries, Harley Davidson motorcycles, blue jeans, and bourbon.

Read "Europe Is Pushing Back against Trump's Steel and Aluminum Tariffs. Here's How" by Chad P. Bown.

Steel and Aluminum NAFTA Tariff Exemptions
March 8, 2018

Trump issues formal steel and aluminum tariff proclamations effective March 23, but exempts Canada and Mexico, pending his view of the outcome of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) renegotiation talks. These exemptions exclude about one third—or $15.3 billion—of the imports announced a week earlier. He decides other partners can negotiate with US Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer to be excluded from the tariffs and companies can file petitions with Commerce Secretary Ross to have specific products excluded from the tariffs.

More Tariff Exemptions
March 22, 2018

Trump issues revised formal steel and aluminum tariff proclamations, further exempting the European Union, South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, and Australia—in addition to Canada and Mexico as previously announced—but only through May 1, 2018. This means another third of the originally covered imports on March 1 are temporarily exempt.

Read "Who Is Affected by Trump's Steel and Aluminum Tariffs?" by Chad P. Bown.

Tariffs Go Into Effect
March 23, 2018

Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs go into effect with exemptions for selected countries. His 25 percent steel tariff applies to countries that exported $10.2 billion of steel products to the United States in 2017, and his 10 percent aluminum tariff applies to countries that exported $7.7 billion. There is no timeline or explicit criterion for the removal of the restrictions.

Read "Trump's Long-awaited Steel and Aluminum Tariffs Are Just the Beginning" by Chad P. Bown.

Korea Receives Permanent Exemption for Steel, But Faces Quota
March 28, 2018

Korea agrees to reduce steel exports to the United States in return for a permanent exemption from the steel tariff. The steel quota of 2.68 million tons cuts its shipments by 21.2 percent from its 2017 volume.

Read "Korea Steel Deal Means More US Steel Barriers Lie Ahead" by Jeffrey J. Schott and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

China Retaliates
April 2, 2018

China imposes retaliatory tariffs on aluminum waste and scrap, pork, fruits and nuts, and other US products, worth $2.4 billion in export value in 2017. This compares to the US steel and aluminum tariffs covering Chinese exports worth $2.8 billion in 2017.

Read "How Is China Retaliating for US National Security Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum?" by Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu and Jeffrey J. Schott.

US Extends Tariff Exemptions
April 30, 2018

The Trump administration extends the steel and aluminum tariff exemptions provided to the European Union, Canada, and Mexico until June 1, 2018. Korea's aluminum tariff exemption ends. Argentina, Australia, and Brazil receive indefinite exemptions for steel and aluminum tariffs while finalizing details on "satisfactory alternative means to address the threatened impairment to the national security" by the imports.

US Ends Tariff Exemptions for EU, Canada, and Mexico
June 1, 2018

The United States moves forward with 25 percent tariffs on steel and 10 percent on aluminum for the European Union, Canada, and Mexico by ending their previously granted exemptions effective June 1. The three trading partners supplied almost half of US steel and aluminum imports in 2017. As of June 1, Argentina has quotas for steel and aluminum in return for permanent tariff exemptions for both metals. Brazil has quotas on steel, with differing amounts on semi-finished and finished steel products, and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum. Australia remains the only trading partner for steel and aluminum without trade restrictions.

EU Retaliates on Iconic American Goods
June 22, 2018

The European Union activates its previous tariff threat on the United States, with an initial list covering $3.2 billion of US products in 2017. Steel and aluminum make up 34 percent of the affected products, while the rest are agricultural and food products, and other consumer goods. Specific items include bourbon whiskey, motor boats and yachts, motorcycles, blue jeans, corn, and peanut butter. Harley-Davidson announced on June 25 it was shifting additional motorcycle production outside the United States to avoid the retaliatory tariffs.

Read "Harley Is a Tariff Trend Setter—But Not in a Good Way" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

Canada Strikes Back

July 1, 2018

Canada imposes tariffs on US products totaling $12.8 billion in 2017. Half of the targeted goods are steel and aluminum. American agricultural and food products make up 19 percent, and 24 percent are other consumer goods. Steel products face a 25 percent tariff, while the remaining products are hit at a 10 percent rate.

Read "Canada Strikes Back! Here Is a Breakdown" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

Trump Administration Files WTO Challenges

July 16, 2018

The US Trade Representative files separate disputes at the World Trade Organization against Canada, China, the European Union, Mexico, and Turkey, challenging the tariffs each WTO member imposed in response to President Trump's aluminum and steel trade actions meant to protect US national security interests. Collectively, the five economies have retaliated with tariffs on US exports worth $24 billion in 2017.

Subsidies for American Farmers After Export Fallout

July 24, 2018

The US administration announces it will subsidize American farmers for up to $12 billion for their lost export sales resulting from all of the president's tariff actions (including other tariffs on Chinese goods) using a law that supported farmers during the Great Depression. A total of $27 billion of American agriculture exports are being affected, like soybeans, corn, nuts, fruit, and beef.

Read "First Tariffs, Then Subsidies: Soybeans Illustrate Trump's Wrongfooted Approach on Trade" by Chad P. Bown and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang.

Higher Rates for Turkey

August 10, 2018

President Trump announces he will increase the steel tariff rate imposed on Turkey from 25 percent to 50 percent in response the depreciation of the Turkish lira. In a tweet, he also states that the aluminum tariff rate for Turkey will be raised to 20 percent, up from 10 percent. Turkey supplied 4.2 percent of US steel imports and 0.3 percent of US aluminum imports in 2017. Turkey previously retaliated on $1.8 billion of US exports, including agricultural products.

Read "Trump's Long-awaited Steel and Aluminum Tariffs Are Just the Beginning" by Chad P. Bown and "First Tariffs, Then Subsidies: Soybeans Illustrate Trump's Wrongfooted Approach on Trade" by Chad P. Bown and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang.

Turkey Retaliates

August 14, 2018

Turkey announces new tariffs on imports from the United States, including cars, alcohol, and tobacco, in response to President Trump's August 10 doubling of US tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminum.

Steel Tariffs Have Hit Poor Countries the Hardest

November 15, 2018

In the first six months of steel tariffs, strong economic growth actually increased US imports of steel by 2.2 percent, but small and poor countries saw a 12 percent decline in steel export volumes to the United States and 15.5 percent less revenue, relative to the six months prior to the tariffs. There has been no stated policy objective for hurting developing country exporters.

Read "Trump's Steel Tariffs Have Hit Smaller and Poorer Countries the Hardest" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang.

Steel Jobs Come at a High Cost
December 20, 2018

A PIIE study finds that Trump's steel tariffs have raised the price of steel products by almost 9 percent, creating 8,700 jobs in the US steel industry. However, steel users pay an extra $650,000 for each job created.

Read "Steel Profits Gain, but Steel Users Pay, under Trump's Protectionism" by Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Euijin Jung.

US Lifts Tariffs on Canada and Mexico
May 17, 2019

The United States agreed to remove steel and aluminum tariffs on Canada and Mexico on May 21, a move that could boost the chances of all three countries ratifying the pending US-Canada-Mexico Agreement (USMCA). Canada and Mexico will remove their retaliatory tariffs on US goods, which include agricultural and consumer products.

Read "Canada Strikes Back! Here Is a Breakdown" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

India Retaliates after Losing Special Trade Status
June 15, 2019

India implements retaliatory tariffs against US exports in response to Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs of March 2018. India had announced the tariffs in mid-2018. Reports tie India's action to the Trump administration's decision on June 5, 2019, to increase tariffs on India by removing the country from the US Generalized System of Preferences program for developing countries.

Read "Trump's Mini-Trade War with India" and listen to Trade Talks Episode 76: "Trump versus India: Fighting over Which Poor Countries Are Special" by Chad P. Bown.

Trump Broadens Tariffs
January 24, 2020

Trump imposes new tariffs on almost $450 million of steel and aluminum products to help industries suffering from his previous tariffs. They mostly hit imports from allies such as Taiwan, Japan, and the European Union, as well as China.

Read "Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs are cascading out of control" by Chad P. Bown.

Trump Reimposes Tariffs on Some Canadian Aluminum; Canada Retaliates
August 6, 2020

Trump announces the return of 10 percent tariffs on primary aluminum products from Canada, going into effect on August 16. The Canadian government plans to retaliate on a proportionate amount of US exports to Canada of products containing aluminum.

Trump Ends Duties on Canadian Aluminum but Wants Export Quotas
September 15, 2020

US resumes tariff-free treatment of non-alloyed, unwrought aluminum from Canada retroactive to September 1, 2020, provided Canada restricts exports of those products. Canada withdraws its planned retaliation but denies it agreed to export quotas.

Biden Reinstates Duties on Aluminum from the UAE
February 1, 2021

On January 19, the day before Trump left office, his administration lifted the Section 232 tariffs on aluminum from the United Arab Emirates. On February 1, the Biden administration reverses course and announces the 10 percent duties will continue to apply to the UAE.

US and EU Will Discuss Excess Steel and Aluminum Capacity

May 17, 2021

Global excess capacity threatens the US and EU steel and aluminum industries. The EU announces it will temporarily suspend a scheduled round of retaliatory tariffs on US exports, and the US and EU agree to discuss how to address shared concerns and hold countries like China that support subsidies and other trade-distorting policies to account.

US Lifts Tariffs on Some Steel and Aluminum Imports from the EU

October 31, 2021

US President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announce a deal that removes US tariffs on EU metal exports—but only at a volume in line with 2015 to 2017 levels. Imports exceeding the quota are still subject to duties. In return, the EU removes tariffs on iconic US-made goods and staves off an additional round of retaliatory tariffs.

US Rolls Back Some Tariffs on Japanese Steel

February 7, 2022

As of April 11, 2022, up to 1.25 million metric tons of Japanese steel can enter the US duty-free each year. Volumes above that level are still subject to the 25 percent tariff the Trump administration imposed in March 2018. US steel imports from Japan averaged 1.25 million metric tons in volume in 2018 and 2019.

US Eases Tariffs on UK Steel

March 22, 2022

As of June 1, 2022, the UK will be allowed to export duty free a limited amount of steel and aluminum to the United States, in line with 2018–19 levels. In exchange, the UK will suspend retaliatory tariffs on US exports. Any UK steel company owned by a Chinese entity must be audited for Chinese subsidies with results shared with the United States.

US Suspends Tariffs on Ukrainian steel

May 9, 2022

In response to the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine, the Biden administration temporarily suspends Section 232 tariffs on Ukrainian steel for one year.

Read "Russia's war on Ukraine: A sanctions timeline" by Chad P. Bown.

WTO Rules on Trump's Tariffs

December 9, 2022

The WTO dispute panel finds US tariffs on steel and aluminum are inconsistent with WTO rules, in part because the national security tariffs were not "taken in time of war or other emergency in international relations." The US says it will not comply with the ruling.

Listen to Trade Talks episode 175, "The dreaded WTO ruling on Trump's national security tariffs"

US Appeals WTO Ruling

January 27, 2023

The US appeals the WTO's ruling from December as "damaging and erroneous." But because the US has been blocking appointments to the WTO's Appellate Body, effectively ending the formal dispute settlement process without a legal recourse for complaining countries, the US action is an "appeal into the void."

US Raises Russian Steel and Aluminum Tariffs

February 24, 2023

As part of an additional round of sanctions marking the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the US further raises tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum products from Russia from 35 to 70 percent, implemented under the Suspending Normal Trade Relations with Russia and Belarus Act.

EU prolongs tariff suspension for US products

December 19, 2023

The EU extends the suspension of its rebalancing tariffs on US products related to the steel and aluminum dispute, a response to the US Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum, until March 31, 2025.

US Extends Steel and Aluminum Tariff Rate Quota for EU

December 28, 2023

The US extends its Steel and Aluminum Tariff Rate Quota policy toward the EU for two years (until December 31, 2025). The extension, combined with the EU's continued suspension of tariffs on US goods, will give additional time to negotiate a global arrangement on carbon intensity and non-market capacity in the steel and aluminum industries.

BATTLE #3: UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGY, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

USTR Self-Initiates Investigation of China
August 18, 2017

US Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer self-initiates an investigation of China under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, after President Trump's memorandum of August 14, 2017, instructing him to consider whether to investigate any of China's laws, policies, practices, or actions that may be unreasonable or discriminatory and that may be harming American intellectual property rights, innovation, or technology development.

Read "Rogue 301: Trump to Dust Off another Outdated US Trade Law?" by Chad P. Bown.

Unfair Trade Practices Investigation Results
March 22, 2018

The Trump administration releases its report finding China is conducting unfair trade practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. Trump indicates forthcoming remedies of tariffs on up to $60 billion of Chinese products, a World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute, and new rules on investment.

US Threatens Tariffs
April 3, 2018

The Trump administration releases its $50 billion list of 1,333 Chinese products under consideration for 25 percent tariffs, which covers $46.2 billion of US imports. The top sectors hit are machinery, mechanical appliances, and electrical equipment. Roughly 85 percent of the imports targeted by the tariffs are in intermediate inputs and capital goods, which would raise costs within American companies' supply chains.

Read "More than Soybeans: Trump's Section 301 Tariffs and China's Response" by Chad P. Bown and "The Element of Surprise Is a Bad Strategy for a Trade War" by Chad P. Bown (*Harvard Business Review*).

China Threatens Retaliation on Autos, Aircraft, and Agriculture
April 4, 2018

China publishes its list of 106 products subject to forthcoming 25 percent tariffs as retaliation for Trump's Section 301 tariffs, covering $50 billion of China's imports from the United States. They mostly affect US transportation (vehicles, aircraft, and vessels) and vegetable products (largely soybeans).

US Considers Additional Tariffs on $100 Billion
April 5, 2018

Trump instructs trade officials to consider whether an additional $100 billion of US imports from China should be subject to new tariffs.

White House Plans Tariffs After Brief "Hold"
May 29, 2018

After Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the tariffs were "on hold" on May 20, the White House releases a statement that it would impose tariffs on $50 billion of goods from China shortly after announcing the final list of covered imports on June 15, 2018.

US Revises $50 Billion Tariff List
June 15, 2018

The US Trade Representative releases a revised list of products on which it plans to impose 25 percent tariffs, in two phases starting July 6, 2018. Compared with the original list proposed on April 3, 2018, the new $50 billion list targets even more intermediate inputs—95 percent of the products hit are now intermediate inputs or capital equipment used largely by American-based companies dependent on imports from China. The updated list still mostly misses imports from Chinese companies, based on 2017 data.

Read "Trump, China, and Tariffs: From Soybeans to Semiconductors" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) and "Revised Tariffs Against China Hit Non-Chinese Supply Chains Even Harder" by Mary E. Lovely and Yang Liang.

China's Revised Retaliation List

June 15, 2018

China issues an updated $50 billion retaliation list of 25 percent tariffs. It targets roughly $45 billion of US exports to China in 2017, including a lot of agricultural and food products. China also plans a two-phase approach for this list, covering $34 billion of US goods starting July 6, 2018, including soybeans and vehicles. The remaining $16 billion of products would be covered later, likely pending the Trump administration's proposed second phase of tariffs released June 15. Compared with China's April 4 list, the country adds mineral fuels, some consumption goods, and medical equipment. Aircraft are taken off the list.

Read "China's Retaliation to Trump's Tariffs" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

Trump Asks for More Tariffs

June 18, 2018

In response to China's retaliatory tariffs announced June 15, 2018, President Trump directs the US Trade Representative to identify an additional $200 billion worth of Chinese goods for additional tariffs at a rate of 10 percent. This is on top of the $50 billion list of June 15. He also threatens another $200 billion of tariffs if China retaliates again.

US and China Impose First Phase of June 15 Tariff Lists

July 6, 2018

US tariffs on $34 billion of Chinese imports go into effect, the first phase of its June 15 $50 billion list. In parallel with President Trump's tariffs, China's tariffs on the first $34 billion of its $50 billion list of US imports also go into effect.

USTR Announces $200 Billion Tariffs on China

July 10, 2018

Following up on the June 18 request, the US Trade Representative releases a list of $200 billion of imports from China to be subjected to new 10 percent tariffs after public hearings in August. Intermediate goods, like computer and auto parts, make up 47 percent of the list. Consumer goods are more heavily targeted than in the previous June 15 list—including telephones, computers, furniture, lamps, and luggage. This list combined with the $50 billion list of June 15 would cover $250 billion of the roughly $504 billion of goods imported from China in 2017.

Read "Trump's Latest $200 Billion Tariffs on China Threaten a Big Blow to American Consumers" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

Trump Threatens Tariffs on All Imports from China

July 20, 2018

In an interview, Trump says he is ready to impose tariffs on all US imports from China, which totaled $504 billion in 2017. The threat covers the remaining $262 billion of imports not already under previous tariffs or being investigated as previously announced under the Section 301 investigation. Capital goods and consumer products would be the primary targets, since intermediate inputs were already previously targeted, and include mobile phones, laptops, and clothing.

Read "Trump's $262 Billion China Tariff Threat Plays with the Bank's Money" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

Subsidies for American Farmers After Export Fallout

July 24, 2018

The US administration announces it will subsidize American farmers for up to $12 billion for their lost export sales resulting from all of the president's tariffs (including steel and aluminum) using a law that supported farmers during the Great Depression. A total of $27 billion of US agriculture exports are being affected, like soybeans, corn, nuts, fruit, and beef.

Read "First Tariffs, Then Subsidies: Soybeans Illustrate Trump's Wrongfooted Approach on Trade" by Chad P. Bown and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang.

Trump Wants 25 Percent Tariffs, Not 10 Percent

August 1, 2018

Following Trump's direction, the US Trade Representative considers a 25 percent tariff rate rather than the 10 percent rate on the list of $200 billion of imports released July 10.

China Threatens $60 Billion Tariffs

August 3, 2018

China warns it could add duties of 5 to 25 percent on $60 billion of US goods following Trump's threat to raise proposed tariff rates on $200 billion of Chinese goods from 10 to 25 percent as well as potentially cover all $500 billion of imports from China with tariffs. The list targets mostly intermediate inputs, followed by capital goods and consumption goods. Combining this new list with the June 15 list leaves only $53 billion of Chinese imports from the United States that are not yet subject to Chinese retaliatory tariff lists.

Read "China's $60 Billion Tariff Announcement" by Chad P. Bown, Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu, and Jeffrey J. Schott.

USTR Finalizes Second Tranche of Tariffs

August 7, 2018

The Trump administration releases a revision to the second phase of its $50 billion list, announcing that $16 billion of imports from China will be subject to a higher 25 percent tariff rate, going into effect on August 23. After public hearings, the US Trade Representative removed only 5 of the 284 products subject to the list published on June 15. Those products include alginic acid, splitting machines, containers, floating docks, and microtomes—imports worth $400 million in 2017.

Read "Trump, China, and Tariffs: From Soybeans to Semiconductors" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

China Revises Its $50 Billion Tariff List, Removing Crude Oil

August 8, 2018

China revises the second tranche of its June 15 list of $50 billion of imports from the United States with which it planned to impose 25 percent tariffs. Crude oil was removed and replaced with a number of other products. The tariffs on the revised list, covering $16 billion of imports from the United States, are expected to go into effect as soon as the Trump administration's second tranche of its June 15 tariff list is imposed on August 23.

US Passes Law on Trade and National Security

August 13, 2018

Trump signs the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 2019 into law, which contains two key provisions on monitoring some foreign investments in the United States (FIRRMA) and outbound transfers of technology (ECRA).

Read "Worst Case Averted on Foreign Investment Reviews" by Martin Chorzempa.

US and China Impose Second Phase of $50 Billion Tariffs
August 23, 2018

The Trump administration followed through with imposing tariffs on $16 billion of imports from China, the second phase of the revised $50 billion list released June 15. China immediately responded with its own revised tariffs on $16 billion of US exports, also announced on June 15. These actions complete each country's first $50 billion of tariffs originally announced in April.

Read "Trump, China, and Tariffs: From Soybeans to Semiconductors" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu and "More than Soybeans: Trump's Section 301 Tariffs and China's Response" by Chad P. Bown.

Trump Finalizes $200 Billion Tariff List
September 17, 2018

President Trump finalizes the list of products on $200 billion of imports from China that will be subject to a 10 percent tariff that goes into effect on September 24. Trump also announced the rate will increase to 25 percent on January 1, 2019. Of the newly targeted imports, 50 percent are intermediate goods, like computer and auto parts, but 24 percent are consumer goods, up from the 1 percent of consumer goods targeted in the previous tariff phase. Products dropped from the original July 10 proposed list include bedsheets and gloves, along with, reportedly, smartwatches.

Read "Trump and China Formalize Tariffs on $260 Billion of Imports and Look Ahead to Next Phase" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

China Finalizes Tariffs on $60 Billion of US Goods
September 18, 2018

China announced its plan to place tariffs on $60 billion of US exports if Trump goes ahead with his recently finalized tariffs on $200 billion of Chinese exports. These tariffs are mainly on intermediate inputs and capital equipment, and range from 5 to 10 percent, down from the 5 to 25 percent originally announced.

Read "Trump and China Formalize Tariffs on $260 Billion of Imports and Look Ahead to Next Phase" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

Next Phase of Tariffs Goes into Effect
September 24, 2018

US tariffs on $200 billion of Chinese imports announced on September 17 take effect, along with retaliatory tariffs by China on $60 billion of US imports announced on September 18. The United States now has tariffs on 12 percent of its total imports during 2018, while the combined trading partner retaliation covers of total US exports.

Read "Trump and China Formalize Tariffs on $260 Billion of Imports and Look Ahead to Next Phase" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

US-China Tariff Truce
December 1, 2018

After the G-20 meeting in Buenos Aires, Presidents Trump and Xi announce a deal to halt the escalation of tariffs that were expected in January while they negotiate over trade concerns. However, because there is no joint statement, and some disagreement between the statements of the White House and Chinese state media, details remain murky. The US statement says that if no agreement is reached by March 1, 2019, the 10 percent tariffs will be raised to 25 percent.

Almost 15 Percent of US Imports Are Now Protected
February 15, 2019

In 2018, Trump's actions combined with already existing tariffs have resulted in 14.9 percent of US goods imports covered by some form of trade protection, based on 2017 import data. Trump's actions alone covered $303.7 billion, or 12.6 percent. Some products are being hit by multiple tariffs. China, Canada, the European Union, South Korea, and Mexico are the biggest targets.

Tariff Increase Delayed
February 24, 2019

President Trump announces via Twitter that he will delay the tariff increase on $200 billion of imports from China that had been scheduled to go into effect on March 1, 2019. The 10 percent tariffs would have been raised to 25 percent.

Concerns Emerge over Possible Deal
April 2019

In the weeks leading up to a potential deal with China, the media reports that the US-China tariffs will not be lifted by any agreement. Statements from US business interests and labor unions also indicate the potential deal may contain few Chinese commitments to curb industrial subsidies, a key request by the Trump administration.

Read "Will a US-China Trade Deal Remove or Just Restructure the Massive 2018 Tariffs?" by Chad P. Bown and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang and "Five Things to Look for in Any Trump-China Deal on Subsidies" by Chad P. Bown.

Trump Renews Tariff Threats
May 5, 2019

In a sudden reversal during the US-China trade negotiations, President Trump tweets (later officially confirmed) that the United States will increase the 10 percent tariff on $200 billion of imports from China to 25 percent on May 10, 2019. He also indicates he will "shortly" impose 25 percent tariffs on the rest of US imports from China not yet targeted with his Section 301 tariffs, which he states are "325 Billions Dollars" and would mostly hit final consumer products such as toys, footwear, clothing, and electronics.

US Raises Tariff Rate on Previous List
May 10, 2019

Imports from China that were previously hit by a 10 percent tariff under the September 2018 action are now subject to a 25 percent rate.

Read "Trump and China Formalize Tariffs on $260 Billion of Imports and Look Ahead to Next Phase" by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

China Plans to Hike Tariff Rate
May 13, 2019

In retaliation for President Trump's tariff rate increase on May 10, China announced that on June 1, it intends to increase the tariff rate covering some of the $60 billion of US exports it had already hit in September.

Read "China's $60 Billion Tariff Announcement" by Chad P. Bown, Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu, and Jeffrey J. Schott.

China Raises Retaliatory Tariffs
June 1, 2019

China's tariff rate hike on US exports goes in effect, covering $36 billion of the $60 billion list from September 2018. Given that China has also lowered tariffs on US competitors since the start of the trade war, there is now a 14 percentage point difference in China's average tariff on US goods versus the rest of the world's goods.

Read "Trump Has Gotten China to Lower Its Tariffs. Just Toward Everyone Else." by Chad P. Bown, Euijin Jung, and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang.

US Announces Tariffs on Almost All Remaining Imports from China
August 1, 2019

Immediately following another round of US-China trade talks, President Trump said the United States would impose a 10 percent tariff (not 25 percent as earlier threatened) on an additional $300 billion of imports from China, going into effect September 1, 2019. The list covers final consumer goods, such as toys, footwear, and clothing.

Read "Trump's 2019 Protection Could Push China Back to Smoot-Hawley Tariff Levels" by Chad P. Bown and Eva (Yiwen) Zhang.

Trump Plans Two Major Rollouts of Fall 2019 Tariffs
August 13, 2019

The Trump administration plans to impose the new 10 percent tariff on $112 billion of imports from China starting September 1, 2019, then $160 billion on December 15, 2019. The September 1 tariffs hit a lot of clothing and shoes, and the December 15 tariffs hit toys and consumer electronics. The timing helps importers avoid tariffs on goods typically bought for back-to-school and winter holiday shopping.

Read "Trump's Fall 2019 China Tariff Plan: Five Things You Need to Know. Delaying the rollout of new tariffs to avoid peak retail shopping seasons may be a sign that President Trump is planning for his tariffs to stay." by Chad P. Bown.

China Retaliates and Trump Announces More Tariffs
August 23, 2019

China releases its plan to retaliate on $75 billion of US exports, effective September 1 and December 15, 2019, in response to Trump's forthcoming tariffs on $300 billion of Chinese goods. The most significant change is that China will increase its average tariff on US autos from 12.6 to 42.6 percent. Later the same day, Trump said he would apply a 15 percent tariff, not 10 percent, on the $112 billion list on September 1 (includes clothing, shoes, other back-to-school items) and the $160 billion list on December 15 (includes toys, consumer electronics). He also said the current 25 percent tariff on $250 billion of Chinese goods will increase to 30 percent, starting October 1.

Read "US-China Trade War: The Guns of August" by Chad P. Bown.

China Removes a Few Tariffs, Trump Moves Date
September 11, 2019

China announces it will exclude 16 products (less than $2 billion of US exports) from its retaliatory tariffs imposed in 2018, such as some animal feeds, chemicals, and petroleum products. President Trump plans to delay his tariff increase on $250 billion of Chinese imports from 25 to 30 percent, originally set out on August 23, 2019, from October 1 to October 15.

Read "US-China Trade War: The Guns of August" and "The Trade War Is Suddenly Getting Worse" by Chad P. Bown.

Trump Cancels October Tariffs, Points to "Phase One" of Deal with China
October 11, 2019

Trump announces the October 15 tariff increase on $250 billion of US imports from China (25 percent raised to 30 percent) will not go ahead as planned. He also states negotiations had resulted in a forthcoming "substantial phase one deal" with China, "subject to getting it written."

Read "US-China Trade War Tariffs: An Up-to-Date Chart" by Chad P. Bown.

Trump Calls Off December Tariffs in Anticipation of Deal
December 13, 2019

Trump calls off the scheduled December 15 tariff increase and indicates his administration and China have reached agreement on the legal text of an 86-page deal that will be signed in January 2020.

Read "US-China Trade War Tariffs: An Up-to-Date Chart" by Chad P. Bown; and "Phase One China Deal: Steep Tariffs Are the New Normal" by Chad P. Bown.

Leaders Sign Phase One Deal
January 15, 2020

Under the agreement, China agrees to purchase the extraordinary amount of an additional $200 billion worth of US exports. Most tariffs remain in effect, and China does not address subsidies or state-owned enterprises—major issues that prompted the trade war.

Read "Unappreciated hazards of the US-China phase one deal" by Chad P. Bown.

Phase One Deal Goes into Effect
February 14, 2020

Average US tariffs on imports from China remain more than six times higher than before the trade war began in 2018. Average Chinese tariffs on down only slightly from when the deal was announced in December 2019. Chinese commitments to buy an additional $200 billion of US exports will likely rely heavily on purchases by state-owned enterprises.

Read "US-China Trade War Tariffs: An Up-to-Date Chart" and "Trump's phase one deal relies on China's state-owned enterprises" by Chad P. Bown.

Tariffs Leave US Underprepared for COVID-19
March 13, 2020

The trade war has forced US buyers to reduce purchases from China, threatening shortages of medical products used to treat coronavirus (COVID-19). Analysis shows US purchases of medical products from China subject to 25 percent tariffs declined by 16 percent between 2017 and 2019. Purchases from other countries did not grow at a faster rate to offset the Chinese losses. Potential global supply shortages and existing tariffs put access to critical medical products in doubt when US healthcare providers need them most.

Read "Trump's trade policy is hampering the US fight against COVID-19" by Chad P. Bown.

China's Phase One Purchases are Falling Short
December 4, 2020

As of October 2020, China imported just 57 percent of its 2020 year-to-date target of US goods under the phase one agreement, according to US export data or 55 percent based on Chinese import data. China committed to purchase an additional $200 billion of certain goods and services from the United States over 2020 and 2021 from 2017 levels.

Read "US-China phase one tracker: China's purchases of US goods" by Chad P. Bown.

China Misses Its Phase One Purchase Targets
February 8, 2021

Chinese imports of US goods covered under the phase one agreement fall considerably short of 2020 targets. Purchases reached $94 billion in 2020, just 59 percent of the $159 billion legal commitment, according to US export data.

Read "Anatomy of a flop: Why Trump's US-China phase one trade deal fell short" by Chad P. Bown.

USTR Tai Describes Initial Trade Policy Toward China
October 4, 2021

In a speech, USTR Katherine Tai says the Biden administration will enforce the phase one agreement, including the $200 billion purchase commitments. It will also begin a new "targeted tariff exclusion process" to provide selective relief to US importers adversely affected by the US tariffs that remain on nearly two-thirds (roughly $335 billion) of US imports from China.

China Fails to Fulfill Phase One Deal Purchases
December 31, 2021

In 2020, China agreed to buy $200 billion of additional US exports before December 31, 2021. In the end, it bought none of that extra $200 billion, purchasing only 57 percent of its total commitments over 2020–21, not even enough to match its import levels from before the trade war.

USTR reinstates some tariff exclusions

March 28, 2022

The Biden administration reinstates 352 product exclusions from the US Section 301 tariffs imposed under the Trump administration. Following through on its October 2021 announcement, the exclusions apply retroactively, from October 12, 2021, and extend through December 31, 2022.

BATTLE #4: AUTOS AS NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

Another National Security Investigation
May 23, 2018

The Commerce Department initiates the third national security investigation under Trump into imported autos and parts, following the steel and aluminum cases. Public hearings are scheduled for July 19–20, 2018. Trump is reportedly considering raising tariffs to 25 percent on these products, which a PIIE analysis finds could cost 195,000 American jobs, assuming no exemptions. That number could more than triple if other countries retaliate in-kind. The tariffs would affect $208 billion of imports, not counting auto parts, nearly all from key US allies.

Listen to Trade Talks Episode 39: “Car Crash—Trump Sees More National Security Threats” and read “Trump’s Proposed Auto Tariffs Would Throw US Automakers and Workers Under the Bus” by Sherman Robinson, Karen Thierfelder, Jeffrey J. Schott, Euijin Jung, and Zhiyao (Lucy) Lu.

“Side Letter” on Autos Reportedly in New US-Mexico Trade Deal to Replace NAFTA
August 27, 2018

President Trump and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico announce a preliminary US-Mexico trade agreement that would potentially replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). News sources report that a side deal accompanies the trade agreement to give Mexico “insurance” against future potential US national security tariffs on autos. Mexico would still have duty-free access for cars that comply with new rules of origin by voluntarily limiting its auto exports to the United States. During the Oval Office announcement, Trump also threatens to impose tariffs on Canada’s cars.

Read “Sweating the Auto Details of Trump’s Trade Deal with Mexico” by Chad P. Bown.

USMCA Is Signed with Side Letters
November 30, 2018

All three countries sign the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) to replace NAFTA. Canada and Mexico sign side letters aimed at preventing threatened auto tariffs. The deal still needs to be ratified by legislators to take effect.

Commerce Department Submits National Security Report to White House
February 17, 2019

President Trump has 90 days (until May 18, 2019) to agree or disagree with the findings. He has 15 days after accepting findings of a threat to restrict imports, or he may pursue negotiations and defer new trade actions for up to 180 days while talks proceed. Auto tariffs would mainly target allies such as Japan, Germany, and South Korea.

Read “Next Up in the Trade Wars: Autos” by Jeffrey J. Schott.

Trump Delays Auto Tariff Decision
May 17, 2019

President Trump delays a decision on whether to impose auto tariffs after the US Department of Commerce report recommended “actions to adjust automotive imports” to protect national security. The US Trade Representative has until November 13 to negotiate agreements with the EU, Japan, and other countries the USTR “deems appropriate,” or else Trump may decide to impose tariffs.

Listen to Trade Talks Episode 87: “Trump Shifts His National Security Threats (Again)”

BATTLE #5: ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM MEXICO

Tariffs on Mexico to Deter Migrants

May 30, 2019

On the same day the Trump administration submits a letter to Congress to initiate the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) approval process, President Trump announces 5 percent tariffs on all US imports from Mexico to "address the emergency at the Southern Border," invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The tariffs would go in effect on June 10, 2019, with subsequent rate increases over coming months if Mexico does not dramatically reduce or eliminate the number of migrants crossing the border illegally.

Listen to Trade Talks Episode 88: "Trump-Mexico Trade War Cheat Sheet" and Episode 89: "The Migration Crisis Behind Trump's Mexico Tariff Threat"; and read "Tariffs on Mexican Products Will Not Curb Migration from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador; Prosperity Will" by Anabel González.

Tariffs on Mexico Called Off

June 7, 2019

Trump says he is suspending the scheduled tariffs against Mexico after reaching a signed agreement with the country to reduce or eliminate illegal immigration. Mexico has agreed to increase enforcement against "irregular migration" and hold asylum seekers in Mexico while they wait for their claims to be processed.

BATTLE #6: SAFEGUARDING US SEMICONDUCTOR SUPREMACY

ZTE Added to Entity List
March 7, 2016

The US Department of Commerce sanctions Chinese telecommunications equipment manufacturer ZTE by adding it to the Entity List, which means American companies cannot sells goods or services to ZTE without a license.

ZTE Agrees to Settlement
March 7, 2017

China's ZTE reaches a settlement with the US government for failing to abide by US sanctions prohibiting the sale of certain technologies to Iran and North Korea. The $1.19 billion penalty is the largest to date imposed by the US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security.

US Enacts Denial Order Against ZTE
April 16, 2018

The seven-year denial order is for violating the terms of the March 2017 settlement, and it results in export controls that prevent ZTE from buying American components.

Trump Overrules ZTE Denial Order
May 13, 2018

President Trump tweets "President Xi of China, and I, are working together to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast. Too many jobs in China lost. Commerce Department has been instructed to get it done!"

ZTE Settlement Announced
June 7, 2018

The US Department of Commerce announces the denial order will be lifted once ZTE pays a $1 billion fine and $400 million in suspended penalty money. ZTE agrees to allow the Bureau of Industry and Security to monitor its compliance with US export controls for 10 years.

ZTE Denial Order Lifted
July 13, 2018

The US government lifts the order under the terms of the June 7 settlement.

Export Control Reform Act Becomes Law
August 13, 2018

The new law, among other things, calls for the US government to identify "emerging and foundational technologies" that are essential to US national security and should be, but are not yet, subject to export controls.

US Proposes Criteria for Essential Technologies
November 19, 2018

The US Department of Commerce proposes criteria to identify emerging and foundational technologies that are essential to the national security of the United States and that would be subject to export controls.

Department of Justice Indicts Huawei
January 28, 2019

The US Department of Justice accuses Chinese telecom giant Huawei of financial fraud, money laundering, conspiracy to defraud the United States, obstruction of justice, and sanctions violations.

Huawei Added to Entity List

May 15, 2019

Concerns laid out in the indictment lead the US Department of Commerce to restrict Huawei's access to items produced in the United States. American companies cannot sell goods or services to Huawei without a license.

Huawei Affiliates Added to Entity List

August 19, 2019

The US Department of Commerce adds dozens of Huawei affiliates to the Entity List, including subsidiaries in the UK, Germany, France, and Singapore, making it even more difficult for Huawei to obtain items from American suppliers.

US Tightens Technology Export Restrictions

April 27, 2020

The US Department of Commerce expands export controls to prevent entities in China, Russia, and Venezuela from purchasing US technology that could be used in weapons development, military aircraft, or surveillance technology.

US Extends Huawei Export Ban to Foreign Users of US Technology

May 15, 2020

The US Department of Commerce amends its foreign-produced direct product (FDP) rule and the Entity List to target Huawei's acquisition of American software and technology used in semiconductor manufacturing from foreign companies.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Announces US Facility

May 15, 2020

TSMC announces the construction of a second US manufacturing site. The fabrication facility in Arizona is subject to receipt of subsidies from the federal and state governments.

US Announces Exemptions for Developing International Standards

June 15, 2020

The US Department of Commerce announces technology not normally subject to export controls can be disclosed to Huawei for the purpose of developing international standards in sectors such as 5G networks.

US Adjusts the Foreign-Produced Direct Product Rule

August 17, 2020

The US Department of Commerce again modifies the foreign-produced direct product rule to further limit Huawei's access to chips. It applies the same licensing restrictions to semiconductors developed outside the US that use American software or technology as chips manufactured within the United States itself.

Export Restrictions Will Hurt US Tech Firms

September 28, 2020

Increasingly expansive export controls on semiconductors, software, and semiconductor manufacturing equipment damage US industries through lost sales and foreign buyers switching to alternative suppliers.

Read "How Trump's export curbs on semiconductors and equipment hurt the US technology sector" by Chad P. Bown.

SMIC Added to Entity List

December 18, 2020

The Department of Commerce limits US sales to the Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC), a major Chinese semiconductor producer. The listing further restricts American exports of semiconductor designs, software, and equipment to one of the industry's largest buyers.

Read "How the United States marched the semiconductor industry into its trade war with China" by Chad P. Bown.

SMIC Achieves a Chipmaking Breakthrough

July 26, 2022

Researchers conclude SMIC has likely developed advanced node chips, despite the US Entity Listing of December 2020.

Pelosi Visits Taiwan

August 2, 2022

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visits Taipei. In response China stages unprecedented military drills around Taiwan and cuts off military and climate dialogues with the US government.

US Passes the CHIPS Act

August 9, 2022

President Biden signs the CHIPS and Science Act into law, which includes billions of dollars of tax credits to incentivize semiconductor manufacturing in the United States.

US Imposes New Controls on Advanced Chip Exports

August 31, 2022

US semiconductor companies like Nvidia and AMD reveal the US government has imposed new export control licensing requirements for sales to China of their advanced chips linked to artificial intelligence and advanced computing.

US Redefines National Security

September 16, 2022

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan gives a speech at the SCSP Global Emerging Technology Summit signaling a change in US policy. He says that "given the foundational nature of certain technologies, such as advanced logic and memory chips, we have to maintain as large of a lead as possible."

Biden Administration Adopts New Export Controls

October 7, 2022

The Bureau of Industry and Security in the US Department of Commerce implements new controls on advanced computing and semiconductor manufacturing exports to China (updated on October 28).

Netherlands Joins US Export Controls

March 8, 2023

The Netherlands government announces new export controls on semiconductor manufacturing technology that complement US restrictions. The Dutch Foreign Trade Minister argues the decision is needed to protect national security, echoing the United States.

Japan Restricts Chipmaking Equipment Exports
March 31, 2023

Japan announces export restrictions on 23 types of semiconductor manufacturing equipment. All three countries that are home to current manufacturers of advanced chipmaking machines have now announced export controls.

China Bans Some Chips from US-Based Micron
May 21, 2023

Beijing retaliates by banning chip purchases from US firm Micron for use in "critical information infrastructure"—including in the telecommunications, transportation, and defense sectors—citing cybersecurity concerns.

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