CFR Resources

This interactive tool rigorously illustrates the concept of comparative advantage.


A backgrounder that explores why some U.S. policymakers are worried about Chinese foreign investment and what policy options are available to limit it. (1,900 words)


A backgrounder on what a trade deficit is and why some observers worry about it and others do not. (2,800 words)


Written in the wake of the failure of the Doha Development Round and in light of the Donald J. Trump administration’s trade policies, a backgrounder that examines the challenges faced by the World Trade Organization and what its future might be. (2,100 words)


An explanation of the TPP and its future after the Trump administration decided to withdraw from it. (2,100 words).

Articles
A story about increasing Chinese foreign investment in Europe. (3,300 words)


A fairly advanced summary of mercantilism, the economic theory of trade that prevailed until the eighteenth century. (1,300 words)

Szu Ping Chan, “When’s a Van a Van and When’s It a Car?” BBC, October 18, 2018.

A story about a tariff dispute involving Ford vans that illustrates how tariffs work. (1,200 words)


A story about negotiations to create a regional trade agreement for Africa that includes background on the current state of African trade and the potential benefits of growing intra-continental trade. (600 words)


A story about iPhone manufacturing that demonstrates specialization and supply chains in action. (1,600 words)


A story, with some excellent graphs, about how the WTO has changed since China joined it. (2,900 words)


An explanation of how tariffs work, in response to a tweet from Trump. (1,000 words)

A story about industrial espionage that puts recent Chinese efforts into historical perspective. (900 words)


A story about how one outerwear company designs its products in response to tariff regulations. (1,700 words)

Books

An amusing exploration of an incident at sea that leads the author to explore the mechanics of global manufacturing and trade, as well as ocean currents and environmental science. (416 pages)


A book that provides a clear, comprehensive, and evenhanded (albeit out of date) introduction to what the WTO is and what it does. (168 pages)


An updated edition of Stiglitz’s best-selling 2002 book that adds a hundred pages on globalization in the wake of Brexit and the election of President Donald J. Trump to a thoughtful discussion of how the choices of international organizations and the governments of wealthy countries have often harmed developing countries. (528 pages)
Classroom Reading List: Trade


An extraordinarily accessible introduction to basic economic concepts that uses lively stories to illustrate ideas and is perfect for someone with little to no background in economics. (384 pages)

Research


An excellent visualization that uses 2015 trade data with a few simplifications to show which countries trade with each other and in what amount.

Alexander Simoes, “The Observatory of Economic Complexity.”

A comprehensive website that provides a variety of visualizations of trade, sortable by country and product.

Multimedia


This brief video explains comparative advantage and why countries trade with each other. (4 minutes)


A short story about, in part, the details of how tariffs work. (17 minutes)


A conversation with economist Douglas Irwin, who discusses
the Smoot-Hawley tariffs and trade wars in general. (27 minutes)


An evenhanded documentary about the 1999 protests in Seattle during the WTO’s ministerial meeting. (26 minutes)


An exploration of 240 years of trade history, told in the run-up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election and a few months after the Brexit vote. (23 minutes)