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Thomas Glauben and Tinoush Jamali Jaghdani*

Measuring the Stability of (Agricultural) Trade Flows in Unstable Times

The study investigates the challenges to stability in international (agricultural) trade flows, driven by escalating geopolitical and geoeconomic disruption. Against the backdrop of growing protectionist tendencies and the increasing securitisation of international trade, the article addresses the quantification of stability and reliability, synthesises existing empirical evidence and derives implications for the international (agricultural) trade governance and policy.

The world is facing challenging times and the global economy is under pressure. The economic structure that emerged after the Second World War and again after the fall of the Berlin Wall was largely built around an open global trading system, and it led to unprecedented prosperity. In particular, agricultural trade, which accounts for around 8% of global goods trade (FAO, 2024), has played a key role in reducing hunger and malnutrition, especially in the Global South (Glauben & Svanidze, 2023).

However, over the past two decades, geopolitical and geoeconomic upheavals and tensions among the world's major powers have chipped away at political support for open trade. Instead, countries are turning to protectionist or dirigiste policies, and trade flows are being regulated according to (geo)political whims (Mercurio, 2024). This is

having an effect on global trade, a key driver of globalisation. It is not surprising then that international trade growth, compared to global production growth, for example, is stalling (Statista, 2024). This phenomenon is known as slowbalisation or deglobalisation.

This appears to be the result of a global shift in perspective from a Ricardian positive-sum or Schumpeterian win-win logic to a win-lose or zero-sum logic (see e.g. Felbermayr, 2024; Mariotti, 2024). However, it is not just the case that individual countries or groups of countries, such as the European Union, are pursuing isolationist strategies purely in their own interests to develop their domestic economies and improve their terms of trade. Rather, there are indications that more antagonistic ambitions are (also) at play, as major powers in particular seek to weaken their geopolitical rivals on the global (economic) stage (Luo, 2022; Mariotti, 2022; Petricevic & Teece, 2019). This is highlighted by the US government's current erratic tariff policy, enacted by a presidential directive in April 2025.

In this, observers see increasing risks for international trade relations, including for agricultural trade, and there is concern that established trading structures will be unnecessarily restricted. Moreover, the increasing politicisation and polarisation of international markets is likely to severely undermine the core functions of a decentralised market, which include supply, price formation and innovation (see e.g. Glauben & Duric, 2024). Global trade, including global agricultural trade, could face even greater challenges with consequences that would be felt in particular by poorer nations and nations with higher levels of food insecurity in the Global South. Ultimately, well-functioning international agricultural markets provide a strong safety net against regional supply shortfalls caused by weather or other crises (Glauben, 2022).

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In with the old: Securitisation of the market

The recent prioritisation of (geo)political interests in global markets has been justified by the need to securitise trade and, ultimately, domestic economies. New geopolitical and geoeconomic groupings beyond the West, such as BRICS,¹ are being presented as exceptional threats to security that can only be overcome by moving away from open trade and adopting dirigiste policies.

As such, international trade and business relations are increasingly being shaped by societal values, ideological expectations, the need to guarantee supply of goods and services, and, more recently, external security concerns. The economy and trade are being used as tools not only of prosperity and economic progress but also to achieve economic, political and military security. Common labels such as sovereignty and de-risking are being used to justify dirigiste market interventions to reduce externalities of trade related to power and security, as private (trading) companies are supposedly unable to sufficiently internalise these (Felbermayr, 2023).

In essence, though well intentioned, this assumes global market failure and thus justifies political (re)actionism, while, on the other side of the coin, the eventuality that governments fail is accepted as par for the course. There is a certain nonchalant disregard for the established principles of regulatory economics (*Ordnungsökonomik*), which show that excessive state intervention in the global economy is not the solution, but rather the problem (e.g. Lashkaripour, 2021a; 2021b). These political market interventions are being arbitrarily imposed under the guise of national security, further adding to the complexity of the global market and eroding the rules of open trade. Uncertainty is growing and the true function of trade – to make goods and services available in the most efficient way – is being weakened.

The calls from advocates of (geo)politically motivated sovereignty or de-risking are as half-baked as they are contradictory, a jumble of symbolic political phrases. What unites them is the ardent desire to achieve greater independence and resilience through tighter control of the market, especially in the face of supposed rivals. Ultimately, they are driven by the belief that more stable and reliable supply chains will guarantee the availability of goods and services.

Backshoring, nearshoring and friendshoring are ultimately about isolationism or restricting trade to suppos-

edly reliable trading partners. In other words, they aim to artificially shrink the global marketplace. This is contrary to the idea of politically forcing diversification of trade by adding new or different trading partners. It is questionable whether the politically motivated diversification or reduction (through a form of shoring) of the global marketplace can really lead to the reliability and stability of international trade relations and guarantee the availability of goods and services.

The pitfalls of dirigiste market interventions

As discussed at the outset, politically driven strategies such as isolationism, a form of shoring or diversification, are not only used defensively by a country to improve its terms of trade. Rather, it seems – or we can at least speculate – that a substantial arsenal of protectionist and interventionist state measures is now being used confrontationally to curb the activities of supposed rival states or economic blocs in global markets.

Sometimes, by choice or not, basic economic theory is applied to bring a rational touch to an irrational regulatory situation. At the very least, we can attempt to reproduce it (somewhat) rationally. When it comes to more defensive strategies, we can apply more static concepts like optimal tariffs, Nash-in-Nash tariffs (Bagwell et al., 2020) or development tariffs to justify a country's choice to favour its own terms of trade and domestic economy. However, these concepts all tend to emphasise the drawbacks of tariff policy. Numerous studies demonstrate how tariffs can often create situations in which there are no winners – not even the tariff-imposing country and its consumers – and trade policy disputes can escalate into damaging tariff wars (Fajgelbaum et al., 2020; Lashkaripour, 2021a, 2021b).

There are likewise unpromising strategies, which seem to borrow elements from dynamic non-cooperative game theory, that are based on the principle of reciprocity and rely primarily on punitive or retaliatory measures (Lange, 2024). This could be done in the spirit of political de-risking ambitions to weed out suspicious, seemingly unreliable trading partners or, with good intentions, to curb a rise in protectionism. For example, there are certain arguments, likely exaggerated, that trade policy should be weaponised to create a “balance of terror”, which would ultimately lead to free trade or a cooperative equilibrium.

However, even in abstract theory, non-cooperative practices such as tit for tat (Axelrod, 2006) do not leave much room (only under very strict assumptions) to exit confrontational spirals (Nowak & Sigmund, 1993). It seems more

¹ Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

likely that, much like the well-known security dilemma (see Herz, 1950), weaponising trade policy will only lead to a race to implement interventionist measures. For example, a recent study (ifo Institute, 2025) shows that the countermeasures implemented in response to new tariffs imposed by the US will only speed up export losses in the US as well as in the countries affected (Mexico, Canada and China).

It is clear that more cooperative policies that do not necessarily reciprocate every defection, such as win-stay, lose-shift strategies (Nowak & Sigmund, 1993), trade talks, or negotiations with cooperative tariffs (Lashkaripour, 2021b) that aim to responsibly shape world trade in a win-win manner, offer more convincing ways to avoid escalation spirals.

The regulatory frenzy in numbers

A range of recent studies and statistics, while using different methods, all highlight the pervasiveness of the shift towards protectionism that has taken place over the last decade and a half. While it first took root in the major G20 countries, it is now spreading worldwide. Between 2009 and 2025, the 30 most protectionist countries alone implemented around 70,000 discriminatory interventions against foreign competitors (statista, 2025). There has also been a considerable increase in direct interventions in foreign trade in the form of import and export restrictions as well as export subsidies. These have increased significantly from around 300 interventions in 2010 to close to 10,000 interventions in the past 15 years (Bolhuis et al., 2023). In the last five years alone, around 3,000 new trade barriers were implemented (IMF, 2023). According to the World Trade Organization (WTO, 2024), over 10% of the value of world merchandise imports is currently affected by import restrictions.

Global agrifood markets have also been affected, mainly due to restrictions on exports. In 2023, there were around 800 export restrictions on agrifood products. This represented around 8% of all trade interventions and particularly affected grains, oilseeds and vegetable oils (Felbermayr, 2024). However, according to the WTO, there was a smaller number of interventions in agricultural trade (WTO, 2024). Nevertheless, in the past almost two decades, most export restrictions have been imposed for no longer than one year, especially for staple crops (OECD, 2024).

It is also interesting to note that major exporters used trade interventions competitively as a defensive strategy to stabilise domestic food price levels, particularly in the wake of international (price) crises, such as the global food crisis, which reached its height in 2008-09;

the COVID-19 pandemic; and the war in Ukraine (Götz et al., 2013; Glauben, 2023; Glauber et al., 2023). As a result of the war in Ukraine, around two dozen countries have implemented measures to restrict international food trade, especially in staple foods such as wheat, rice and maize, including export bans, taxes and quotas (Glauber et al., 2023). This has affected around 15% of the calories traded globally and contributed to world hunger, at least in the short term. It is also of note that over the past two decades the use of non-tariff trade barriers, such as price and quantity controls as well as technical standards, has increased substantially in agricultural trade, with an annual growth rate of almost 7% (Mao et al., 2023).

The massive increase in the number of sanctions is also a cause for concern (Glauben & Duric, 2024; Felbermayr, 2023). The Global Sanctions Data Base shows that there have been around 600 active sanctions regimes since the beginning of the decade. This has more than tripled compared to the same period in the previous decade. Since the beginning of the 1990s, around 50% of sanctions have been implemented by the US alone, followed by the EU and the United Nations, each with between 10% and 20%. The share of trade sanctions, at around a fifth of sanctions, is (consistently) high, together with financial sanctions, which also affect global trade. For example, around 15% of international trade has been directly affected by trade sanctions (Yalcin et al., 2024). Larch et al. (2024) and Felbermayr (2024) estimate that complete trade sanctions (affecting all sectors of the economy) have reduced bilateral agricultural trade between sanctioning and sanctioned countries by around 70%. Partial trade sanctions (affecting only certain sectors of the economy) have reduced affected agricultural trade flows through second order disruptions by only around 10%.

Overall, further fragmentation of global trade or the emergence of rival blocs can be expected, given the increasing state interventions and confrontational geoeconomic win-lose strategies. Competition will be curbed, advantages of specialisation or scale will be reduced and the transfer of knowledge across borders will be limited (Gopinath, 2024). According to worst-case estimates from the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2023), global economic output could fall by up to 7% or around US \$7.4 trillion. To give an idea of the scale, that would be equal to the combined economic output of France and Germany or triple the economic output of sub-Saharan Africa. Of course, and this is also shown in the mild-case forecasts of the IMF, adaptation and trade diversion can counteract the loss of output (Yalcin et al., 2024). This affects, in particular, lower-income countries, which on average will suffer a four times higher per capita loss of income compared to higher-in-

come countries. According to the IMF, most of the losses will be due to trade restrictions on agricultural raw materials. Poorer countries are more dependent on agricultural imports to feed their populations. This again creates concerns for food security in lower-income countries.

Measuring the reliability of trade relations

As discussed above, the pursuit of reliable or durable international trade flows and business relationships is used to justify geopolitical gambling in the global market. The argument in favour of de-risking and sovereignty also applies here: it is intended to ensure the availability of goods and services and, paradoxically, to act against geopolitical market risks. If the market is not up to it, the state needs to step in. This has opened a new can of worms with a new set of magic words. Reliability and stability, in the sense of longevity, are playing a more important role in the way governments evaluate and shape global trade relations. There is also a clear willingness to prioritise reliability over central market functions that rely on flexibility, such as efficiently allocating resources, managing risk and fostering competition and innovation, or to leave the balance to political discretion.

In any case, there are at least three questions that require further exploration. First, what exactly do we mean when we talk about stable and reliable trade relations, and (how) can these be operationalised? Second, (how) can reliability be measured? And third, can state intervention really ensure reliability?

The first two questions can essentially be answered in the affirmative. In econometrics, duration, survival or hazard analyses (Kalbfleisch & Prentice, 2002; Klein et al., 2014) look at the dynamics and in particular the longevity of trade flows. These can estimate the likelihood that existing trade relations between countries and/or companies continue. This is referred to as the survival rate. They can also show how this likelihood relates to the duration and/or frequency of past trade relations. In other words, these approaches use information on the existing relationship between trading partners to predict the likelihood that the relationship continues. They can be an indicator of the reliability of trade flows or interdependencies.

Duration models can be used to understand the dynamics of trade relations at an aggregated level between countries and regions or at a disaggregated level between individual companies. As such, comparisons can be made between trading partners on various markets or at various market levels. Data used for modelling typically consists of annually recorded information on bilateral and multilateral trade flows, indicating whether and when

trade in goods (exports/imports) occurred during specific periods within a specific timeframe. Different variations can be used. Duration models can use non-parametric (Kaplan–Meier), semi-parametric (Cox proportional) and parametric methods, each with varying assumptions of the probability distributions (e.g. exponential, Weibull or log-normal) for modelling the continuity and interruptions of trade flows. These models can use discrete or continuous data and be single period or multi-period.

The basic duration model can be introduced using a discrete-time framework. It consists of two central and closely related elements. The hazard function can be expressed as $h_{ijk} = h(t|x) = P(T_{ij} < t_{k+1} | T_{ij} \geq t_k, x_{ijk}) = F(y_k + x'_{ijk}\beta)$ and the survival function can be expressed as $S(t|x=0) = P(T > t|x=0) = \prod_{j=1}^t (1 - h(j|x=0))$ or simply $S(t) = P(T > t) = \prod_{j=1}^t (1 - h(j|x=0))$.

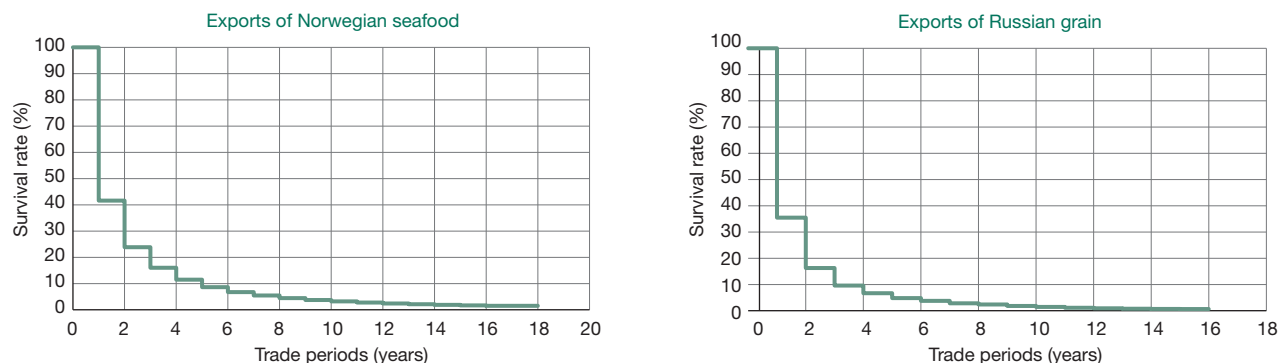
The hazard function (h_{ijk}) represents the exit rate from a trade relation as a function of time (t) and a vector of other covariates (x) that may influence the continuation or termination of trade. It describes the conditional likelihood $P(\cdot)$ that bilateral or multilateral trade flows will end at a specific point in time, following an uninterrupted period of trade (trade spell) for a pair of countries ($i, l = 1, \dots, n; i \neq l$) within the time interval $[t_k, t_{k+1})$. The length of each period or trade spell (T_{ij}) represents the number of consecutive years of trade between the partners. y_k is the decisive size, which calculates the baseline hazard as a function of time, allowing the exit rate to vary over the course of the observation period. This means that the likelihood of a trade relation ending or continuing depends on the stability of existing trade relations. This makes it a useful indicator of the strength of the relationship between the trading partners. x_{ijk} is a vector of time-independent covariates, β is the vector of the parameters to be estimated and $F(\cdot)$ is the corresponding likelihood distribution function that ensures $0 \leq h_{ijk} \leq 1$. While the exit rate must always be positive, the hazard function can increase or decrease and does not need to be either monotonic or constant.

Based on the estimated (baseline) hazard function, the survival function $S(t)$ can be determined, which estimates the cumulative probability $P(\cdot)$, i.e. the likelihood that a trade relation will continue with the same partner beyond the observation period. It depends on the durability or frequency of the respective trade flows between the partners in the past (throughout the entire study period) and can be interpreted as an indicator of the reliability of trade relations. The survival function is monotonically decreasing, meaning that the likelihood that the trade relationship continues steadily decreases over time or remains constant, provided there are no exits, but never increases.

Figure 1

The survival rates for Norwegian seafood exports and Russian grain exports on international markets

Kaplan–Meier survival function



Source: Jaghdani, Fugger, et al. (2025).

What further insights can empirical duration studies offer us when it comes to the stability and reliability of international trade flows, in particular with regard to the de-risking strategies discussed above? Below we take a look at recent studies, with a special emphasis on the trade flows of key agrifood trading countries.

First, on average, at an aggregated national level, trade relations between countries are short lived. For example, Hess and Persson (2011, 2019) look at imports from 140 countries to the EU15 from 1962 to 2006 and find that the average trade spell was three years. Three quarters of trade spells were no longer than two years, and 60% were only one year. Gullstrand and Persson (2015) reach a similar conclusion for goods traded by Swedish companies from 1997 to 2007. Almost 70% of trade spells were no longer than one year. Kostevc and Zajc Kejžar (2020) find similar results. According to them, trade spells for around 80% of Slovenian goods exports to the same import partners from 2002 to 2011 were no longer than two years.

Agricultural trade, at an aggregated national level, exhibits short- to medium-term trends. Bojnec and Fertő (2017) find that, from 2000 to 2011, the average trade duration of 23 major agrifood trading nations was between four and eight years. Luo et al. (2023) estimate that, for New Zealand fruit and vegetable imports, close to 90% of uninterrupted trade relationships lasted only two years.

Other recent research also finds similar results, at least partially, for the last two decades. For exports from major exporting nations of agricultural products including cheese, milk, grains, salmon and seafood, the average trading spells range from one to eight years. Between 40% and 80% of these trade relationships are terminated after just two years. At the level of individual company relationships, Norwegian salmon and Russian grain ex-

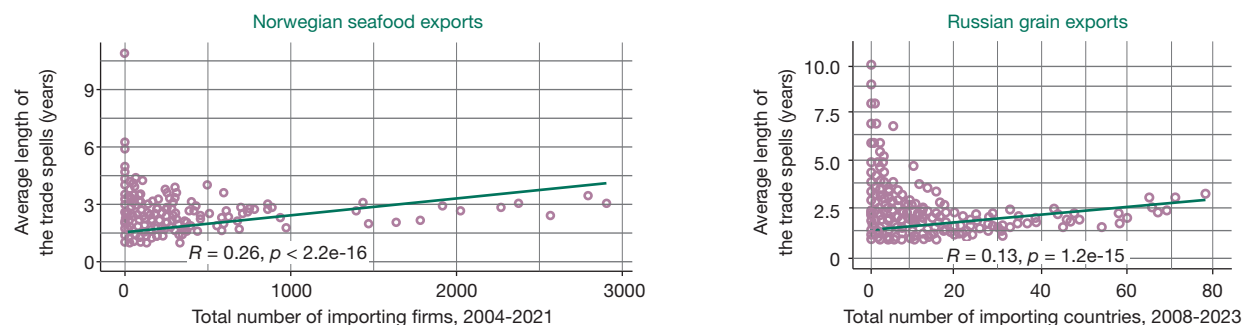
ports, for example, show significantly longer trade durations (Jaghdani et al., 2020; Jaghdani, Fugger, & Glauben, 2024; Jaghdani, Fugger, Aponte et al., 2024; Jaghdani, Fugger et al., 2025; Jaghdani, Glauben et al., 2025; Jaghdani, Johansen et al., 2024).

Second, despite the comparatively short trading periods, there are certainly opportunities to maintain trading relationships. However, studies show a rather heterogeneous picture, at least for agricultural trade. For example, Jaghdani et al. (2020) use aggregated country-level data from 2001 to 2019 to show that the survival rate for wheat, milk and cheese trade from various European countries, after approximately 20 years of trade relations, is between 20% and 40%.

Some of the studies mentioned above point to noticeably lower and more heterogeneous survival rates. For example, for the top 11 global wheat exporters, these rates were between 2% and 20%, according to aggregated data from 2001 to 2021 (Jaghdani, Glauben et al., 2025). Finally, a recent study by Jaghdani, Fugger et al. (2025) uses company-level data from nearly 1,200 Norwegian salmon and seafood traders, as well as 3,600 exporters of Russian grains and oilseeds, and shows that the survival rates of approximately two-decades-long trade spells are around 2%. However, this is just the average. There are individual companies in both sectors that maintained continuous trade relations during the study period and as such have survival rates close to 100%.

A closer look at the evolution of survival rates over the past nearly two decades provides an interesting picture. Figure 1 shows that, due to the predominantly short-lived nature of trade spells, the survival rates for exports of Norwegian seafood and Russian grains and oilseeds roughly halve by the second year. After 10 years, survival

Figure 2
Relationship between export duration and number of trading partners



Source: Jaghdani, Fugger et al. (2025).

rates are only a fraction of what they were in the first year and, as such, converge towards zero. This means that the odds of maintaining trade relations that last longer than 10 or 15 years are extremely low.

To avoid any misunderstanding, we must point out that survival rates only show the probability that an existing trade relation continues with the same partners, not, for example, that it continues with new or different partners. Norway currently has a trading volume of around 1.5 million tonnes of salmon in whole fish equivalent (WFE), and Russia has a trading volume of around 55 million tonnes of wheat (USDA/FAS). This means that both countries continue to sufficiently supply global markets. Largely constant or increasing trade volumes in spite of low survival rates indicate the ability to adapt to changing market conditions and different partners.

Third, the picture is less clear with regard to de-risking ambitions through shoring (fewer trading partners) and/or diversification (more trading partners). Lawless et al. (2019) and Lawless and Studnicka (2023, 2024) use company data for all goods flows from Irish exporters to show that greater diversification of trading partners can reduce the longevity of trade relations. Hess and Persson (2011), however, reach contrasting conclusions for goods imports from the EU15, showing a positive influence of partner diversification on the stability of trade flows. Jaghdani, Glauben et al. (2025) use aggregated data from the 11 major wheat exporters to find, at best, a moderate connection between the diversification of trading partners and the longevity of trade relations.

When it comes to company-level data on exporters of Norwegian seafood and Russian grains, there are no significant correlations between the longevity of trading periods and the number of trading partners (Figure 2). Moreover, the strength of a trading relationship is tenuously re-

lated to the number of partners. Therefore, having more or fewer trading partners in a market will not necessarily result in longer or more stable relationships.

In contrast, a number of studies indicate that increasing the quantity traded and/or the number of products traded with existing trading partners can promote more durable trading relationships (Jaghdani et al., 2020; Jaghdani, Johansen et al., 2024).

Fourth, there is no clear relation between regional blocs and the stability of trade flows. For example, for Norwegian salmon exports, there is no difference between the survival rate of exports to countries in the EU and the survival rate of exports to countries outside the EU (Jaghdani, Johansen et al., 2024). There are also no significant differences in trade stability between the major traditional wheat exporters in the West (USA, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, UK and Argentina) and exporters from the former Soviet bloc (Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Romania), which have experienced a boom since the early 2000s (Jaghdani, Glauben et al., 2025). This is certainly an interesting finding when it comes to global food security. However, earlier results from Jaghdani et al. (2020) indicate that France, the EU's largest wheat exporter, has more stable trade relations with its EU partners than with countries outside the EU.

Finally, it should be noted that trade flows are not necessarily prone to crises. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020s had no noticeable effects on seafood trade in Norway (Jaghdani, Fugger & Glauben, 2024). Further, protectionist measures, such as non-tariff trade barriers or anti-dumping measures, can disrupt stable trade relationships (Peterson et al., 2018; Besedeš & Prusa, 2017). On the other hand, integrated global value chains exhibit comparatively longer lasting bilateral or plurilateral trade relations (Díaz-Mora et al., 2018).

What can we conclude from these empirical insights? Stable trade relations should not be the gold standard in real-world economics. There is no sweet spot when it comes to reliability, whether at country level or at company level. This is suggested by the relatively short trading periods at regional level, the highly variable trading periods at company level, the diverse likelihoods that established trading relations continue (survival rates), and rather clear geographical patterns of stability. Specifically, it is evident that the stability of trade flows is not necessarily linked to the degree of partner diversification. No form of shoring or diversification appears to be the secret recipe for reliable trade relationships.

(Geo)political de-risking unlikely to build reliable trading structures

To put it bluntly, the state cannot standardise or orchestrate reliable trade flows or business relations. While it might make sense to some, it is questionable whether political strategies aimed at de-risking or achieving sovereignty through market intervention and/or the dirigiste selection of reliable trading partners could actually lead to more stable trade.

These strategies have two shortcomings. First, as the above analysis demonstrates, predicting reliable trade flows between countries is challenging. This is because trade flows are influenced by the decisions of many individual entrepreneurs, each responding to market signals. Controlling these decisions centrally would be an overly complex bureaucratic task, even for individual markets such as the grain or seafood markets, as discussed above. Which regulatory body could carry out such a task?

This becomes even more complex if we consider trade in goods as a whole at an aggregated level. To put this into perspective, according to the HS6 classification of the World Customs Organization, a large trading bloc such as the EU would have over one million trade flows of goods and over 100,000 agricultural trade relationships. This does not account for triangular trade and intra-industry trade or regional trade diversions. When broken down to the relevant individual business relationships at the company level, which can number in the tens of thousands for individual markets on both the import and the export sides, trade flows can easily reach into the billions. A wide range of interdependencies in global supply chains, such as in the trade of strategically important goods like semiconductors (Hillrichs & Wölfl, 2025) and food, would also have to be included. For example, in 2022 the level of foreign value added in the food exports of key European agricultural exporters is between 20% and 70%. For the USA, China and Brazil, it is lower, at between 10% and

20% (WTO, 2025). Incidentally, five global corporations alone account for a significant portion of trade in agricultural commodities.

Second, reducing or standardising the market to prioritise long(er)-term relationships in the name of reliability would not necessarily ensure stability of supply, either at the national level or within corporate supply chains. The varied empirical results discussed earlier support this. On the contrary, trading companies, which are often affected by protectionist market interventions, must remain adaptable to rapidly changing market conditions. They must be able to respond to shifts in market signals, trends, sales and procurement opportunities, price and currency risks, technological advances, and crises. This adaptability is crucial to staying competitive, meeting demand at the lowest possible cost and contributing to supply security. It may even involve developing new markets with new partners or ending longstanding relationships. This is at the heart of a market economy. In short, flexibility is key. While long-lasting business relationships can help reduce market risks, the decision ultimately lies with the trading parties. They must determine whether to enter into longer-term contracts or to engage in shorter-term spot or futures markets, which can often be observed in agricultural commodity trading. The decision is in their hands, and that is how it should stay.

While it is understandable that countries would place emphasis on ensuring the continued supply of goods and services, current de-risking strategies involving the securitisation of global economic activity are questionable and half-baked. Such planned-economy style interventions risk greatly weakening the core functions of a decentralised market, which include supply, price formation and innovation. In addition, agriculture is particularly vulnerable to climate and environmental factors. Currently, shortfalls caused by weather, crises or politics can be mitigated by imports from other regions. Weakening these systems would weaken the safety net of global agricultural trade (Glauben et al., 2022; Glauben & Svanidze, 2023).

There is of course some political leeway, and this does not contradict the points and arguments made above. Bilateral or plurilateral (free) trade agreements negotiated between governments, as opposed to unilateral approaches like the EU's sustainable development chapters (Rudloff, 2025), can foster reliable trade relations. Duration analyses can provide valuable insights for political negotiations and can be equally important in improving the functions of international bodies such as the WTO.

What is needed above all is geopolitical stability. Avoiding wars and conflicts will ultimately depend on the political

will and diplomatic skills of the governments involved. It is important not to resign ourselves to the increasing rivalry, especially between the major powers, in the political and geopolitical context, but rather to work more intensively with renewed political energy and the possibility of a prudent balancing of interests on resolving key conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine or the Taiwan issue, or increasing trade conflicts. In this sense, a strategic connection between geoeconomics and geopolitics is therefore necessary, as both have repercussions. Cooperation rather than confrontation will ensure that we have the strong and sustainable global economic and trading structures needed to support growth and prosperity. This is paramount when it comes to fighting hunger and poverty in the Global South.

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