Reactions to US *liberal* democratic decay

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Abstract

The United States, a long-established liberal democracy, is undergoing rapid and far-reaching liberal retrenchment. The liberal pillar of US democracy – the defense of civil liberties and minority rights – is crumbling. How do citizens around the world react to this retrenchment? We answer this question via two causal research strategies. First, we leverage a natural experiment using individual-level data (N=32,080) from thirty-five countries to causally identify how exposure to attacks on women's rights undermine the US' standing in the world among the citizens of core US allies. Second, we rely on a pre-registered vignette experiment in Britain (N=2,993) to show that exposure to news reporting about undermining civil liberties and minority rights, depresses the world's view of the US as a democracy. Our experimental results also demonstrate that liberal retrenchment, particularly attacks on *minority rights*, has downstream consequences: it undermines public willingness to engage in collaboration with the US. These findings underscore the global ramifications of liberal retrenchment in the US, revealing how liberal backsliding in a dominant democratic power can reshape respect around the world, undermine the perceived legitimacy of its democratic credentials and depress public support for collaboration. Attacks on liberal values and minority rights not only has costs for those subjected to these attacks, it costs the US as a whole.

Keywords: abortion, civil liberties, democracy, Dobbs, international spillover, liberal retrenchment, LGBTQ rights, minority rights, natural experiment, Trump, US Supreme Court

So this is how liberty dies... with thunderous applause.
- Senator Padmé Amidala for Naboo at the emergency session of the Galactic Senate

Introduction

The year is 1885. On the docks of New York Harbor, workers await an extraordinary gift from France: the composite pieces of the Statue of Liberty, drifting into port for later assembly. Conceived as a symbol of friendship between two aspiring liberal democracies, the statue celebrated the ideals of liberty that both nations came to embody. Today, it is 2025. The position of the United States (US) as the leader of the free world is waning. Although the country of Lady Liberty remains a democracy, the *liberal* core of US democracy is under assault. Once a country that advanced liberalism, the US is now a nation where previously established core liberal policies, rights, or institutions – especially those promoting equality, individual freedoms, or welfare – are rolled back or weakened (Carey et al., 2019; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2023; Mudde, 2017). The US is undergoing a period of liberal retrenchment.

The erosion of liberal policies, norms and institutions in the US has not happened overnight.[1] Instead, liberal retrenchment and the broader process of democratic decay or democratic backsliding unfold incrementally. Each act on its own may seem legally permissible and politically justifiable, but the sum of this "piecemeal erosion" (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018) is not without consequences. Elite-driven liberal retrenchment, along with the discursive justifications that accompany it, erodes public confidence in democratic institutions and weakens support for democratic norms (Clayton et al., 2021; Hall & Druckman, 2023), triggers partisan misperceptions about out-partisans' commitment to democracy (Braley et al., 2023; Eady

[1]Given the rapid events of the second Trump presidency, one might be forgiven for assuming the process has *almost* happened overnight. According to the American Presidency Project, during the first 100 days of the second Trump administration, the president signed 142 executive orders. This number has dwarfed that of the previous record which was held by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (99 executive orders).

et al., 2023; Pasek et al., 2022) and also carries domestic economic costs (Nelson & Witko, 2022).

Undermining the *liberal* component of democracy—that is, respect for minority rights, robust protections for personal freedoms, and a commitment to political pluralism (Brettschneider, 2010)—also has consequences beyond the confines of US borders. In this paper, we ask: *How does the world react to the US' illiberal turn and continued evidence of the country's liberal retrenchment?* Empirically, we rely on two independent studies to answer this question. In Study 1, we leverage the *as-good-as-random* exposure to the worldwide news about the US' revocation of a long-standing liberal right – access to abortion – to examine whether and how foreign publics update their views of the US in response to liberal retrenchment. The results of this well-powered natural experiment (N=32,080), which relies on data from thirty-five European countries, demonstrate that limiting women's rights and women's bodily autonomy significantly depresses European citizens' view of the US.

In Study 2, we fielded a pre-registered vignette experiment with a representative sample in Britain (N = 2,993). Respondents were randomly shown news articles describing liberal retrenchment in the US—either restrictions on civil liberties or attacks on minority rights—carried out by either the executive or the judicial branch. The results show that the ongoing process of liberal retrenchment in the US not only undermines the country's standing in the world, but also calls into question whether the US should still be considered a democracy. Importantly, Study 2 also shows that liberal retrenchment in the US has tangible consequences (Goldsmith & Horiuchi, 2012) that extend beyond reputational damage. Specifically, we find that such retrenchment –particularly attacks on minority rights – reduces public support for international collaboration with the US and, conversely, increases the willingness to prioritize cooperation with other democratic countries.

The contributions we advance in this paper are fivefold. First, we provide one of the clearest empirical demonstrations to date that liberal retrenchment in a leading

democracy like the US generates reputational and potential policy costs abroad. This empirical contribution boasts a strong two-pronged identification strategy that leverages two different types of experiment. Recent observational evidence demonstrates that the international standing of one of the world's founding democracies has been in decline over recent years (Bright Line Watch, 2021; Carey et al., 2019; Coi, 2025; Nyhan & Titiunik, 2024). Our empirical contribution demonstrates that these temporal trends are causally related to retrenchment of liberalism in the US.

Second, this paper contributes to a growing literature on democratic backsliding and its consequences. Whereas most existing work focuses on domestic responses to broader democratic transgressions (Carey et al., 2022; Eady et al., 2023; Graham & Svolik, 2020; Voelkel et al., 2024), we examine how foreign publics respond to attacks on the liberal component of democracy. In doing so, we capture the international consequences of rolling back liberal rights. By focusing on the narrower concept of liberal retrenchment—rather than the broader notion of democratic backsliding—we show that attacks on well-established liberal values, often treated as peripheral by scholars of democracy, are nonetheless sufficient to undermine a state's international reputation among leading democracies.

Third, the findings contribute to broader debates in comparative politics on soft power and the diffusion of international political norms. Prior research has shown that democratic norms often spread outward from dominant states through processes of 'soft power' (Nye, 2004). Our results suggest an inverse dynamic: liberal retrenchment within traditionally leading democracies can produce reputational spillovers, fostering disillusionment among publics in allied nations and conferring gains to to other nations. This has important implications for theories of soft power, normative hegemony, and regime legitimacy. While existing work typically captures these dynamics through electoral outcomes (see, for example, Bateson & Weintraub, 2022; Carreras et al., 2021; Goldsmith et al., 2025), our design isolates liberal retrenchment via specific policy changes. In doing so, this paper offers a novel and timely account of how the

internal erosion of liberal values in the US – long regarded as the cornerstone of the liberal international order – can diminish its perceived democratic credibility and alter the international normative landscape in ways that are both strategically impactful and normatively consequential.

Fourth, we contribute to emerging debates on the external impact of domestic political events within the global political ecosystem. Recent research has highlighted the potential for authoritarian spillovers (Cavari et al., 2024; Chan, 2024; Giani & Méon, 2021; Turnbull-Dugarte & Rama, 2022)—or, as we find here, thermostatic reactions *against* liberal retrenchment (Chan, 2025; Minkus et al., 2019). Our results demonstrate that, much like unexpected election outcomes (Delis et al., 2020), attempted *coups d'état* (Chan, 2025), or the outbreak of war (Balcells et al., 2024), globally salient judicial and policy decisions can also trigger transnational learning processes that shape the attitudes and beliefs of foreign publics.

Fifth, and finally, our multi-study analysis contributes to emerging scholarship on the political ramifications of attacks on women's rights and the rights of other minority groups. Specifically, Study 1 adds causal evidence to the growing body of work examining the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, which weakened access to abortion across the country. Existing research shows that Dobbs not only mobilized liberal voters (Paris & Cohn, 2022; Sommer et al., 2023), altered Democrats' campaign strategies (Meisels, 2025) and impacted electoral outcomes (Mutz & Mansfield, 2024), but also negatively affected long-term perceptions of judicial legitimacy among Americans (Gibson, 2025). While the focus on *Dobbs* in Study 1 is valuable in its own right, we also situate it within a broader literature on illiberal attacks on women's rights and gender equality (Abou-Chadi et al., 2021; Lombardo & and, 2025; Norris, 2023; Payne & de Souza Santos, 2020), as well as the consequences of these attacks (Clayton et al., 2023; Gardner et al., 2025).

Study 2 extends this focus by empirically assessing the global effects of attacks on minority rights—specifically, rollbacks of hard-won protections for the LGBTQ+ commu-

nity. These findings speak to ongoing debates about the consequences of anti-LGBTQ+ actions (Ayoub & Stoeckl, 2024; Bogatyrev & Bogusz, 2025; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017; López Ortega, 2024) and their broader political and societal implications (Haas et al., 2025; Kuroki, 2021). As we show in what follows, liberal retrenchment in the form of minority rights rollbacks – policies that were commonplace under the first Trump administration (Murib, 2018) and appear central to the Trump 2.0 agenda – undermine America's standing in the world.

The United States and *liberal* democratic decay

Over the past decade, the US has shown clear signs of democratic backsliding, undermining both the liberal and procedural pillars of its democracy (Bright Line Watch, 2021; Carey et al., 2019; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2023). Donald Trump's 2016 campaign openly attacked democratic norms, targeting political opponents, the media, and rights of social minorities (Mudde, 2017; Norris, 2020). During Trump's first term, scholars documented declining electoral integrity and increased executive overreach across multiple policy domains (Carey et al., 2019; Vanessa Williams, 2023). This democratic backsliding was not solely the result of one individual. Long-standing Republican priorities—such as rolling back abortion rights and LGBTQ+ protections—gained traction with little internal resistance (Bartels, 2023; Moreau, 2018; Wilson, 2020). Since 2014, the Republican Party has become increasingly anti-pluralistic, resembling autocratic actors abroad (Medzihorsky & Lindberg, 2024; Mudde, 2017; Norris, 2020), and Republican control at the state level has been linked to increased gerrymandering, voting restrictions, and widening gaps between public opinion and policy (Grumbach, 2023).

A central vehicle for this erosion, at least initially, has been the politicization of the judiciary. The Senate Republicans' refusal to consider Obama's Supreme Court nominee in 2016 marked a clear break from precedent (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018, p. 80),

and the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh, amid growing partisan polarization of justice appointments, further strained judicial norms of impartiality. Four years later, the Supreme Court overturned federal abortion rights in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, triggering near-immediate bans in conservative states and prompting dissenting justices to describe the ruling as a fundamental curtailment of women's rights (Breyer et al., 2022; Cahn, 2022). Since then, perceptions of the Supreme Court's legitimacy have become increasingly polarized along partisan lines (Clark et al., 2024; Davis & Hitt, 2025; Levendusky et al., 2024; Rogowski & Stone, 2021).

While there have been multiple instances of liberal retrenchment prior to the 2022 *Dobbs* decision, this ruling stands out as one of the most tangible and consequential illiberal policy shifts in recent US history—markedly weakening gender equality and signaling a broader erosion of liberal democratic norms. The Supreme Court's role in this reversal is particularly significant, as the judiciary is often regarded as the final bulwark against executive overreach and majoritarian encroachments on individual rights.

Democratic and liberal norms further unraveled following the 2020 election. Trump's refusal to concede and promotion of the *"big lie"* led to widespread Republican belief in electoral fraud (Arceneaux & Truex, 2023; Malka & Adelman, 2023) and culminated in the violent January 6th Capitol insurrection (Bright Line Watch, 2021). Rather than wholeheartedly rejecting the 'big steal' rhetoric, Republican politicians increasingly embraced election legitimacy denial as a partisan loyalty test (Bartels & Carnes, 2023; Malzahn & Hall, 2024).

Trump's return to office in 2025, now backed by a fully compliant Republican Party and a docile Republican-controlled Congress, has accelerated democratic backsliding in the US. In his first 100 days, Trump issued 142 executive orders, many of questionable legality, targeting democratic institutions, independent agencies, and minority rights (Nord et al., 2025). Orders banning transgender military service, restricting gender recognition on federal documents, and encouraging the prosecution of pro-

LGBTQ+ educators exemplify the administration's broader rollback of liberal protections (Dawson & Published, 2025; Rodriguez, 2025; Warbelow, 2025). With Congress abdicating its oversight role–at least temporarily–the erosion of checks and balances has deepened. As Adam Przeworski ominously observed: *"I grew up under a dictatorship but could never imagine I would die under one. Today I entertain this possibility"* (Przeworski, 2025).

While existing literature provides evidence that the US is undergoing democratic backsliding—through both the politicization of the judiciary and attacks on the liberal and procedural foundations of democracy—the study of its consequences remains in its infancy (but see, Goldsmith et al., 2025). In the remainder of this section, we review what is currently known and highlight the gaps that this study addresses through its multi-method experimental design.

Consequences of *liberal* democratic decay

How have recent developments in the US shaped public perceptions of democracy and democratic institutions? Existing research has largely focused on two domains: domestic political diffusion (how foreign publics perceive their *own* institutions) and international political diffusion (how foreign publics view the *US* and its democratic standing). Studies in both categories have primarily centered on Donald Trump's 2016 election and, to a lesser extent, his 2020 defeat.[2] Trump's 2016 victory fueled anti-American sentiment in Latin America (Bateson & Weintraub, 2022) and was associated with increased expressed racial bias in Europe (Giani & Méon, 2021). At the same time, it also provoked a liberal backlash in parts of Europe—strengthening support for the EU, globalization, and pro-immigration attitudes (Costa-Font & Ljunge, 2023; Minkus et al., 2019). Conversely, Trump's 2020 loss was linked to a decline in expressed support for comparable far-right parties (Turnbull-Dugarte & Rama, 2022).

[2]This review focuses specifically on US-based developments. There is a substantial literature on international spillover from the European Union, including Brexit, which lies beyond the scope of this paper (see, for example, Hobolt et al., 2022; Malet, 2022; Malet & Walter, 2024).

Taken together, these studies point towards mixed results.

While elections have dominated this literature as focal points of democratic signaling, they are only one type of information signal through which democratic norms are communicated and interpreted. Less attention has been paid to how specific illiberal events—such as court rulings or policy decisions—shape international perceptions. Notable exceptions include the quasi-experimental work of Chan (2025), who finds that the January 6th Capitol attack reduced expressed support for far-right parties in Germany and the Netherlands. Conversely, Cavari et al. (2024), who show that exposure to US democratic backsliding increased support for authoritarian governance in Israel. Similarly, Goldsmith et al. (2025) demonstrate that factual information about democratic erosion in the US lowers international favorability, although it does not consistently affect willingness to support specific US policy priorities.

Building on this work, we adopt the theoretical starting point that political events—whether elections, court decisions, or legislative acts—serve as informational signals. These cues help individuals infer (1) the political preferences of a population and (2) the social acceptability of particular positions (Valentim, 2021). Prior studies show that expansions of liberal rights—such as the legalization of same-sex marriage or abortion—can shift social norms (Abou-Chadi & Finnigan, 2019; Eisner et al., 2021; Jung & Tavits, 2021; Lane et al., 2023; Tankard & Paluck, 2017). Yet relatively little is known about how the rollback of such rights—what we refer to as *liberal retrenchment*—functions as an international signal. In this context, illiberal policy changes in the US may inform foreign publics about shifting American values and prompt recalibrations in how they view democracy at home and abroad.

Additional research has emphasized how perceptions of global powers influence political attitudes and behaviors across borders. For instance, Rhee et al. (2024) show that perceptions of Russian foreign aid motives shape US public support for sanctions. Likewise, Diamond (2021) argues that Trump's refusal to concede the 2020 election emboldened democratic erosion among political elites in other democracies. However,

these studies focus primarily on the broader phenomenon of democratic backsliding and tend to overlook liberal retrenchment specifically. This is a meaningful gap, given that the US's democratic decline has been defined not only by institutional weakening, but also by targeted rollbacks of rights and protections for marginalized groups.

When considering the reputational effects of liberal retrenchment, it is also important to account for the US' historical role in shaping global democratic norms. US soft power – and the country's image as the leader of the "free world" – has long rested on perceptions of liberal democratic stability (Nye, 2004). This reputation has supported international cooperation in areas such as trade, security, education, and cultural exchange. But recent developments have begun to erode this foundation. Coverage of events like the January 6th insurrection often portrayed the US as hypocritical in its global democratic advocacy (Hinck, 2023), and scholars have warned that continued liberal retrenchment may further erode trust and reduce other countries' willingness to engage diplomatically and economically (Diamond, 2021).

Although some studies have begun to examine the reputational effects of democratic backsliding in the US, most have centered on electoral disruptions or broad declines in democratic performance (e.g., Goldsmith et al., 2025). Missing from this work is a systematic examination of how discrete illiberal policy actions – particularly those targeting women's rights and minority rights (prime targets under the US' recent authoritarian turn) – serve as reputational signals. Moreover, existing research has yet to fully explore whether such signals provoke backlash, disillusionment, or normative recalibration among foreign publics. This leaves important questions unanswered about how liberal retrenchment in hegemonic democracies shapes perceptions of regime legitimacy, international standing, and the diffusion of democratic norms across borders.

Study 1: Rolling back women's rights undermines the US' standing. Evidence from a natural experiment

In our first empirical study, we present evidence from a natural experiment showing that the revocation of abortion rights by the US Supreme Court undermined the standing of the US among citizens in other democratic nations. Our design leverages the fact that a large-scale data collection effort was underway in 35 European countries just as the Supreme Court issued its ruling in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* on June 24, 2022.[3] The decision overturned a 50-year precedent that had guaranteed nationwide access to abortion in the US.

Our identification strategy applies the unexpected-event design detailed by Muñoz et al. (2020) and uses data from wave 97.5 of the Eurobarometer, conducted by Kantar Public between June 17 and July 24, 2022 (European Commission, 2023). The coincidental timing of this large-scale data collection with a major judicial decision in the US produces a naturally exogenous source of variation. Respondents are quasi-randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (i) a control group consisting of individuals interviewed before the news of the ruling broke, and (ii) a treatment group consisting of individuals interviewed immediately afterward.

In addition to enabling a causal assessment of the impact of US liberal retrenchment on attitudes toward the US abroad—via *as-good-as-random* exposure to news about the *Dobbs* ruling—our quasi-experimental design also offers strong ecological validity. This is because treatment exposure occurs organically, in a real-world setting. Similar natural experiment designs have been used to causally identify the effects of terrorist

[3] A complication is that the Court's decision was leaked to the news outlet *Politico* on May 2, 2022—nearly two months prior to the official ruling. This likely biases our estimates downward, as some individuals in the sample may have been exposed to the leak in a non-random way—particularly politically engaged respondents. While this is an important caveat, public attention to the leak was vastly lower than to the official ruling. Twitter engagement with abortion-related content peaked at 114 million after the leak, compared to 78 *billion* engagements following the official ruling (Clark et al., 2024). This disparity is mirrored in our analysis of Google Trends data for our sample countries, presented in Appendix E.

attacks (Giani, 2020; Holman et al., 2022), the outbreak of war (Hernández & Ares, 2023; Unan & Klüver, 2024), electoral results and voting outcomes (Delis et al., 2020; Giani & Méon, 2021; Malet, 2022), and other political shocks (Frese, 2025a, 2025b; Unan et al., 2025).

Importantly, and directly relevant to our identification strategy, similar approaches have also been applied to identify information shocks triggered by court rulings (Bridgman et al., 2021; Padilla, 2025; Turnbull-Dugarte & Devine, 2022), as well as to the study of cross-national spillover effects from political events occurring abroad (Balcells et al., 2024; Chan, 2024, 2025; Giani & Méon, 2021; Malet, 2022; Turnbull-Dugarte & Rama, 2022). [4]

Front-page media coverage of the US Supreme Court ruling in popular print news media in Europe. From left to right: *Libération* (France), *Le Temps* (Switzerland), *El País* (Spain), *The Guardian* (UK).

Figure 1: International reporting on *Dobbs* ruling

A core assumption of the unexpected-event identification strategy (Muñoz et al., 2020) is that treatment assignment is likely to result in treatment compliance—that is, individuals with the potential to receive treatment were indeed likely to be exposed. This assumption is even more critical in designs like ours, which aim to identify cross-national spillover effects (Chan, 2024, 2025; Turnbull-Dugarte & Rama, 2022). As shown in Figure 1, the *Dobbs* ruling was a highly salient news story across Europe. Coverage of the decision appeared on front pages throughout the continent and trig-

[4] A potential limitation of this approach is the risk that the treatment and control groups may differ in composition due to time-related sampling imbalances (Muñoz et al., 2020). However, as shown in the supplementary material (Appendix Table A.3), there are no significant differences between treatment groups across key observable covariates.

gered specific political reactions from European leaders.

For example, then-Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz posted on *X* (formerly Twitter): "Women's rights are threatened. We must defend them resolutely. #RoeVsWade." French President Emmanuel Macron echoed this sentiment: "Abortion is a fundamental right for all women. It must be protected. I wish to express my solidarity with the women whose liberties are being undermined by the Supreme Court of the United States." Similarly, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez warned: "We can't take any right for granted. Social gains are always at risk of being reversed, and defending them must be our daily responsibility. Women should be able to freely decide about their lives." [5]

Empirically—beyond the salient media coverage and widespread commentary from European leaders—we also provide observational evidence to support treatment compliance. Specifically, we identify an immediate and substantial discontinuity in national-level interest in abortion following the *Dobbs* decision. As is standard in unexpected-event designs (Chan, 2025; Turnbull-Dugarte & Devine, 2022; Unan et al., 2025), we operationalize public attention using Google search trend data across Europe (Appendix E). Taken together, this evidence gives us confidence that respondents interviewed in the days immediately following the ruling were indeed likely to have been exposed to news of the decision.

Results – *Dobbs* reduced US standing in the world

Did the US Supreme Court's rollback of women's rights and shift toward liberal retrenchment damage the country's international standing? The answer appears to be yes. Results from this natural experiment are presented in Figure 2. The upper panel shows predicted outcomes for respondents in the control and treatment conditions;

[5] Olaf Scholz via *X* https://x.com/BundeskanzleraD/status/1540624994463617024
Emanuel Macros via *X* https://x.com/EmmanuelMacron/status/1540393817609740288
Pedro Sánchez via *X* https://x.com/sanchezcastejon/status/1540353673045299201

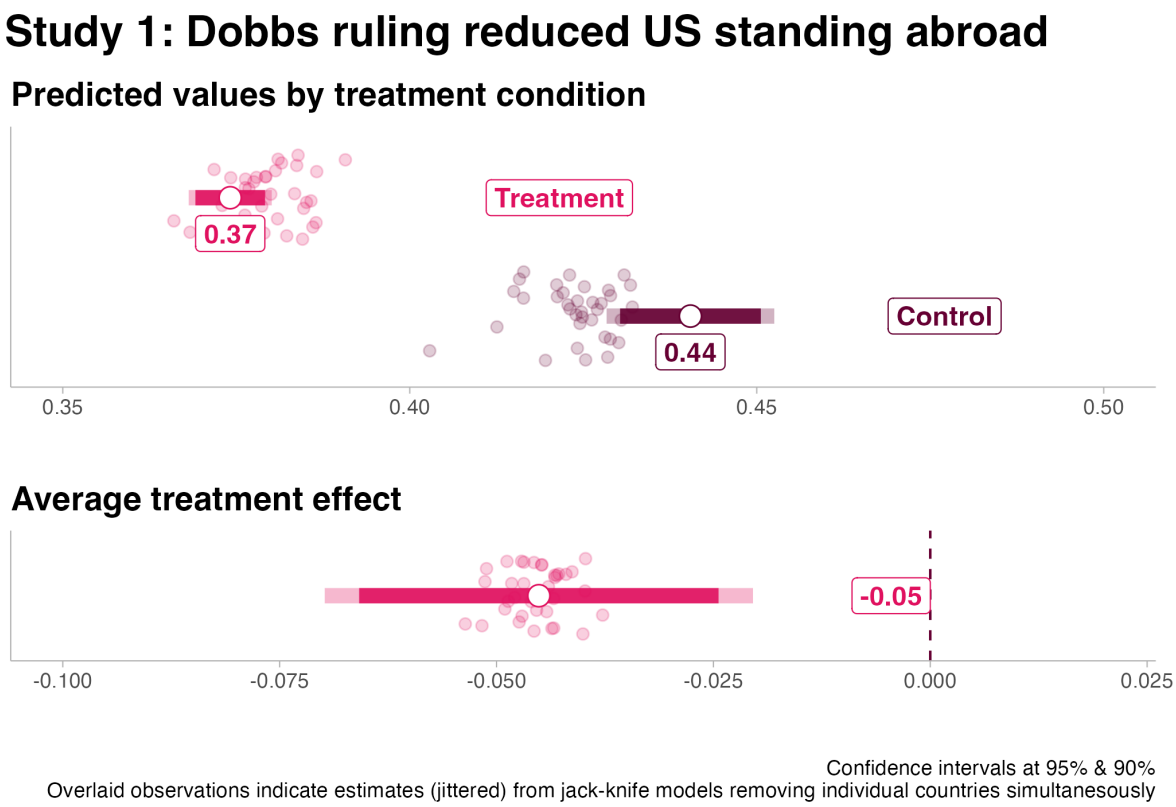
the lower panel reports the average treatment effect (ATE).[6] The underlying model is estimated using OLS regression and includes country fixed effects to account for between-country heterogeneity.

If exposure to the US's liberal retrenchment had no effect, we would expect no difference in predicted values between treatment and control groups, and an ATE indistinguishable from zero. This is clearly not the case. The results show that European views of the US declined significantly following the announcement of the *Dobbs* ruling. On average, individuals interviewed after the decision were five percentage-points less likely to view the US positively. Given a baseline approval rate of 44% in the control group, this corresponds to an 11.4% relative decline—a sizable effect. The identified effect of treatment is not driven by the presence of potentially influential country observations. As demonstrated by a jackknife analysis (Appendix Figure A.4) which re-estimates the effect of treatment via consecutive country exclusion, the result is robust across diverse country populations.

Given the nature of the *Dobbs* ruling—a globally salient event reversing a long-standing liberal norm—it is reasonable to expect heterogeneous responses across groups with different stakes in the outcome. Two such dimensions are gender and political ideology. The ruling not only signaled a broader illiberal turn but also represented a direct rollback of gender equality. As such, one might anticipate stronger negative reactions among women. Similarly, we expect ideological congruence to moderate responses: right-leaning individuals may view the ruling as ideologically aligned with their preferences and therefore respond less negatively—or not at all.

These subgroup effects are visualized in Figure 3. Contrary to expectations, men and

[6]Strictly speaking, the estimand of interest is the intent-to-treat (ITT) effect rather than the ATE, as we lack respondent-level measures of treatment compliance. The ITT reflects the modeled effect of treatment assuming full compliance (i.e., all treated individuals received the treatment). The complier average causal effect (CACE) estimates the effect among those who actually complied with treatment assignment and is calculated as: CACE = ITT / C, where C is the compliance rate. For illustrative purposes, if only 20% of the treatment group was exposed to the *Dobbs* ruling, a 4-point ITT would imply a 20-point CACE (4 / 0.2). A compliance rate of 80% would yield a 5-point CACE (4 / 0.8). In the absence of a compliance measure, our ATE values are interpreted as ITT = CACE under full compliance. This assumption likely leads to underestimation rather than overestimation of the true effects.



Outcome measure: *At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in the USA?*

Figure 2: Study 1: ATE on views of the US (Table A.4)

women reacted similarly to the ruling. While the estimated effect for women is slightly smaller (4 percentage-points) than for men (5 points), the difference is not statistically significant. Notably, baseline views of the US were already lower among women in the control group, which may account for the more muted shift. In contrast, ideology yields clear heterogeneity. Left-leaning respondents exhibit the strongest reaction, reducing their support for the US by 7 percentage-points—despite already holding lower baseline views. Among right-leaning respondents, the effect is smaller at 2 percentage-points, but still statistically significant ($p<.1$) and significantly different ($p<.05$) from that identified among left-wing respondents.[7]

[7]Ideology is measured using self-placement on a standard left–right scale. While this measure does not directly capture views on abortion or authoritarian predispositions, it serves as a reasonable proxy for broader liberal-authoritarian orientations.

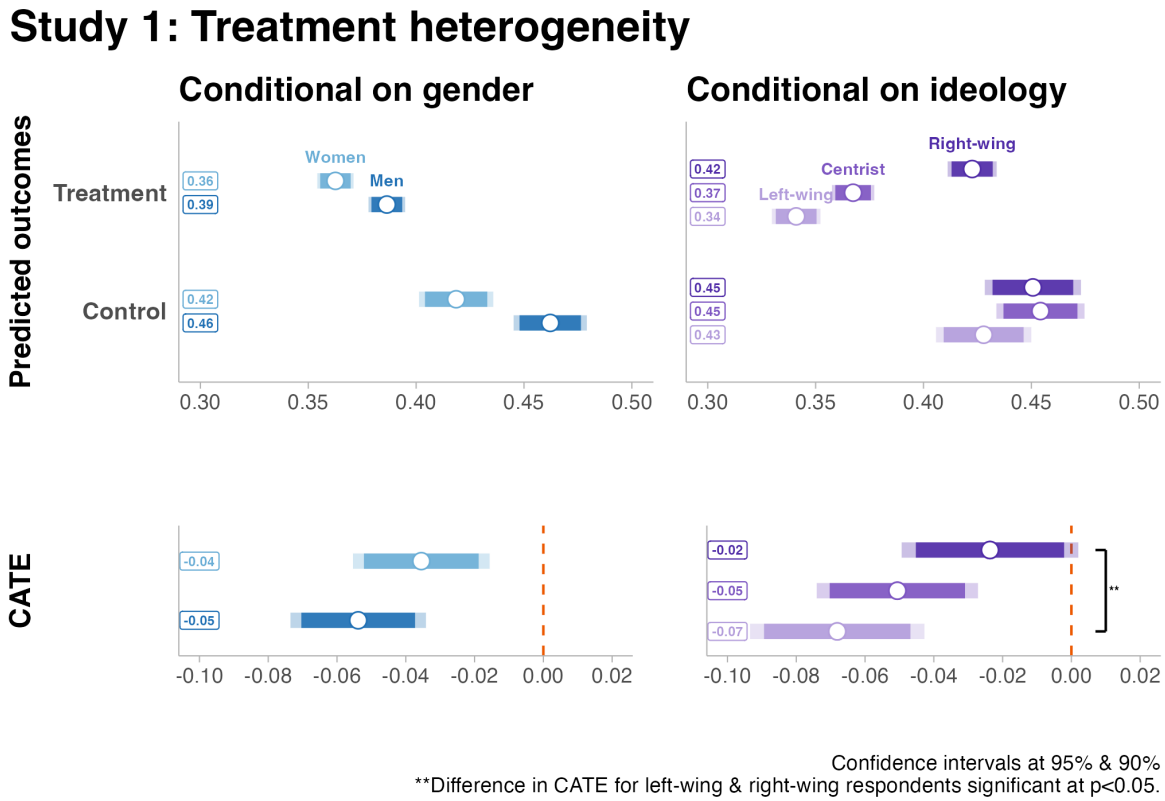


Figure 3: Study 1: Heterogeneous reactions to treatment (Table A.5)

Potential threats to inference

To strengthen and validate the causal identification strategy employed in Study 1, we empirically assess two key identification assumptions: conditional ignorability and excludability.

Conditional ignorability requires that, conditional on observed covariates, treatment assignment is effectively *as-good-as-random*. To evaluate this, we conduct covariate balance tests to assess whether pre-treatment characteristics predict treatment status. We find no systematic imbalances (Appendix Table A.3). We also test for differential attrition by examining whether treatment assignment predicts non-response on the primary dependent variable. Again, we find no evidence of systematic attrition (Appendix Table A.6).

Excludability—the assumption that no other factors change discontinuously at the treatment threshold—is also addressed. Following recommendations from Muñoz et

al. (2020), we implement two diagnostic strategies: (i) a placebo test using the median pre-treatment interview date as a faux treatment threshold, and (ii) sensitivity analyses using alternative bandwidths around the treatment cutoff. These robustness checks (Appendix Figure A.2) show no evidence of pre-treatment trends and confirm that our results are not driven by arbitrary bandwidth selection. Finally, we show that our findings are robust to alternative model specifications, including different covariate sets and the inclusion of country fixed effects. A specification curve (or *multiverse* analysis) is presented in Appendix Figure A.3.

Taken together, the results from Study 1 offer robust quasi-experimental evidence that exposure to news about liberal retrenchment in the US—specifically, the revocation of abortion rights via the *Dobbs* ruling—negatively affected the US's standing among citizens of European partner countries. However, the findings also raise several theoretical and empirical questions.

First, while the *Dobbs* ruling is a clear case of liberal retrenchment and the rollback of a long-standing individual liberty, it also constitutes a direct attack on gender equality. As such, the negative response observed may reflect outrage at gender-specific injustice rather than liberal retrenchment more broadly. Our theoretical expectation is the latter—but the quasi-experimental design of Study 1 cannot definitively rule out this alternative explanation. Second, the illiberal turn in Study 1 was driven by the judiciary rather than by representative democratic institutions. It is plausible that the observed effects are due, in part, to European respondents reacting to a politicized and increasingly conservative court.[8] Third, the negative reaction may reflect fears of domestic political contagion. Respondents might not be concerned solely with the state of US democracy, but rather with the possibility that similar illiberal policies could emerge in their own national contexts, threatening their personal rights or well-being. Fourth and finally, while we might theorize that negative public opinion abroad could

[8]Extensive domestic evidence supports the view that the US Supreme Court has become more politicized and ideologically conservative in recent years (Clark et al., 2024; Davis & Hitt, 2025; Jessee et al., 2022; Levendusky et al., 2024; Rogowski & Stone, 2021).

influence foreign policy – by making governments less inclined to engage with a country that their citizens disapprove of (Goldsmith & Horiuchi, 2012) – Study 1 can only gesture toward this as a possible implication. The natural experiment design does not allow us to directly test this downstream effect.

To address these unresolved questions, we turn to an original vignette experiment in Study 2.

Study 2: Attacks on civil liberties & minority rights undermine the US' international democratic legitimacy. Evidence from a survey experiment

In Study 2, we fielded an original vignette experiment with a representative sample of online survey respondents in the United Kingdom (N = 2,993). We employed a quota-based sampling strategy to ensure representativeness across gender, age, race, and educational attainment, in line with the demographic composition of the UK population. The vignettes presented in the experiment consisted of fictitious stylized news articles informing respondents about two distinct instances of liberal retrenchment: either the curtailment of minority rights or the restriction of civil liberties. The design of the factorial experiment is summarized in Figure 4.

Our pre-registered primary estimand is the ATE of assignment to any treatment condition versus the control. However, the treatment conditions varied along two dimensions: the type of retrenchment (civil liberties vs. minority rights) and the institutional source of the policy (US president vs. US Supreme Court). This variation was introduced strategically to assess whether negative reactions to liberal retrenchment in the US are conditioned by the nature of the rights being rolled back or by the institution responsible. Our results indicate that the primary driver of negative reactions is

retrenchment targeting minority rights.[9]

The added value of Study 2 is fourfold. First, it replicates the ecologically valid, naturally occurring *as-good-as-random* intervention from Study 1 in a controlled setting, while allowing for systematic variation in the type of liberal retrenchment. Second, it incorporates survey instruments that assess not only general views of the US but also perceptions of the quality of US democracy. Third, it includes auxiliary measures that allow us to empirically test mechanisms underlying the observed negative reactions. Finally, it enables an assessment of whether liberal retrenchment affects support for future international collaboration with the US.

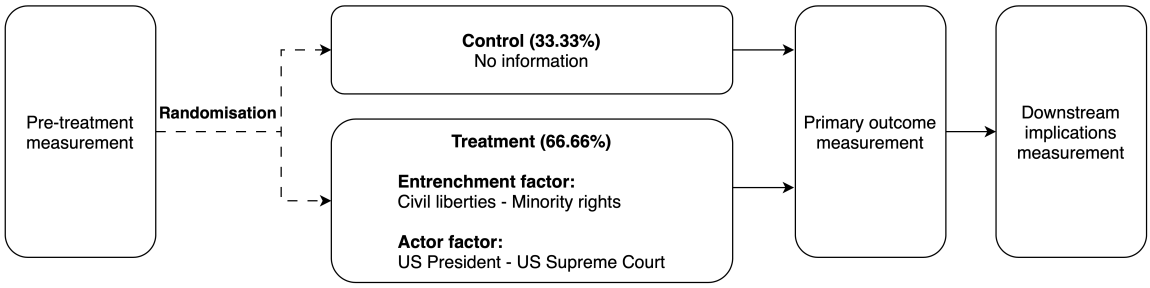


Figure 4: Experimental set-up of Study 2

Examples of Treatment 1 and Treatment 3 are reproduced in Figure 5. As shown, the treatments take the form of stylized news articles. We prioritized the use of visual stimuli that closely mirror real-world reporting to maximize external validity and approximate the media environment respondents were likely exposed to in the aftermath of the *Dobbs* ruling leveraged in Study 1. In both examples displayed in Figure 5, the retrenchment is attributed to the US president. Treatment 1 describes a restriction of civil liberties, with the National Guard deployed to suppress protests, while Treatment 3 describes the rollback of minority rights through the repeal of same-sex marriage.[10]

[9]The overall ATE is pre-registered as Equation 1 in the pre-analysis plan. Effects by individual treatment arms are pre-registered as Equation 2.

[10]Conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas explicitly called for revisiting *Obergefell v. Hodges*—the 2015 Supreme Court decision that federally legalized same-sex marriage—as part of his opinion in *Dobbs* (Forgey & Gerstein, 2022). Some Republican lawmakers have also advanced motions urging the Court to overturn *Obergefell* (Alfonseca, 2025). Thus, the repeal of same-sex marriage is not a purely hypothetical scenario but one with real-world plausibility. Importantly, our post-survey debrief revealed that respondents across all four treatment arms generally believed the news article they read

Treatments 2 and 4 (reproduced in the Appendix) are identical in content to Treatments 1 and 3, respectively, but attribute the illiberal policy shifts to judicial decisions made by the US Supreme Court rather than executive action. Manipulation checks (Appendix E) confirm that respondents correctly identified both the institutional source and the policy target in the different treatment conditions.

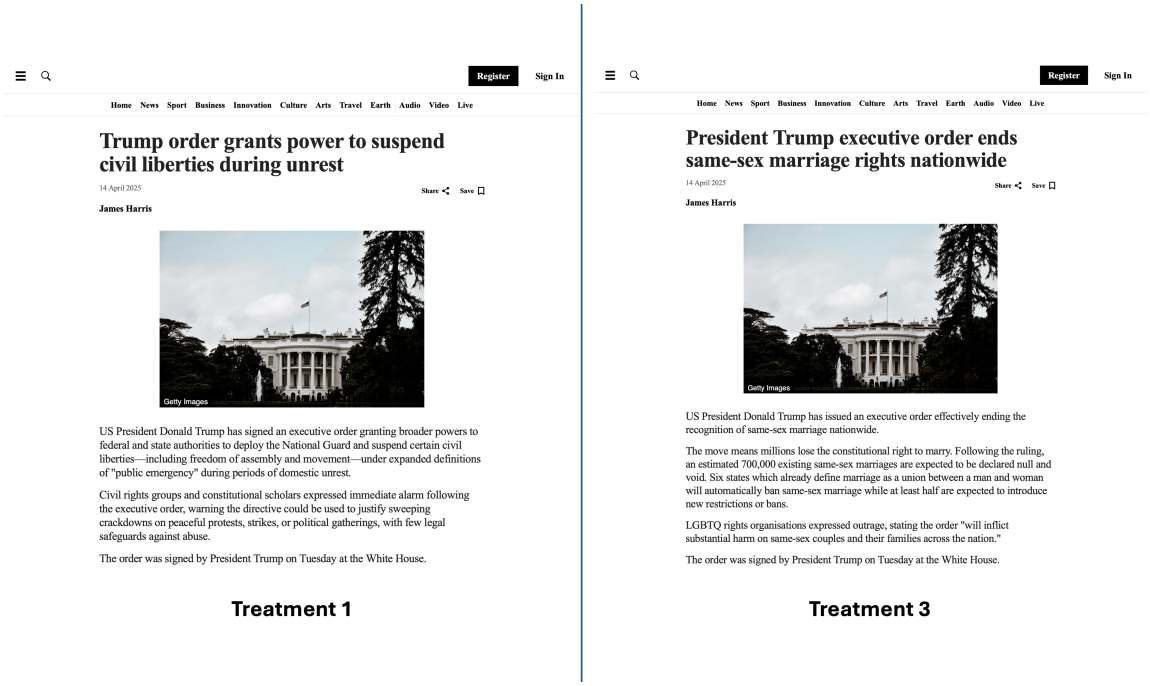


Figure 5: Example of stylized news reports used for Study 2 treatment stimuli

Results – liberal retrenchment reduces perception of US democracy

Does US liberal retrenchment impact the international community's view of the US as a democracy? Yes. Experimentally manipulating exposure to news of illiberal policy turns in the US causes individuals to update their views about the direction the US is heading, depresses perceptions regarding the quality of US democracy, and undermines respondents' belief that the US remains a force for good in the world.

We begin our discussion of the results from Study 2 in Figure 6, which displays both the predicted levels of our distinct outcome measures by treatment assignment and

was credible, even after being informed that it was fictitious. See Appendix E.

the average treatment effects (ATEs). The ATEs are estimated using OLS regression models without covariate adjustment. Covariate-adjusted models—including a comprehensive multiverse analysis spanning 511 different model specifications—are reported in the appendix (see Figure A.14). Covariate adjustment does not meaningfully affect the estimates or alter our conclusions.

Presenting the predicted outcomes alongside the ATEs adds value by illustrating the notably low baseline levels in the control condition. Consider, for example, the proportion of respondents who believe the US is going in the right direction: 0.19. Despite this already pessimistic baseline, exposure to news of liberal retrenchment induces a further three percentage-point decrease ($p < .05$). In short, citizens' views of the US are already highly negative—and even in this context, treatment further depresses perceptions. This effect is sizable, representing a 16% relative decline, and is slightly larger in magnitude than the effect observed in Study 1. A 16% change induced by a single brief treatment is not a small effect.

The negative effect of liberal retrenchment on general perceptions of the US is replicated when considering views of US democracy. Whether we assess democracy perceptions in absolute terms, in comparison to other democracies (benchmark), through a combined index (factor), or via the belief that the US is a force for good in the world, the results are consistent: US engagement in liberal retrenchment—via attacks on minority rights and civil liberties—substantially and negatively depresses international perceptions of the US as a leading democracy.

As with the "right direction" measure, baseline evaluations of US democracy—while not *as* negative—are relatively low, typically hovering around the 0.5 midpoint. The ATE across these outcomes reflects non-trivial shifts in aggregate opinion. For instance, in the case of our combined democracy index, an ATE of 0.03 corresponds to a 7% reduction from the control group baseline.

As specified in our pre-analysis plan, we pre-registered tests of treatment heterogene-

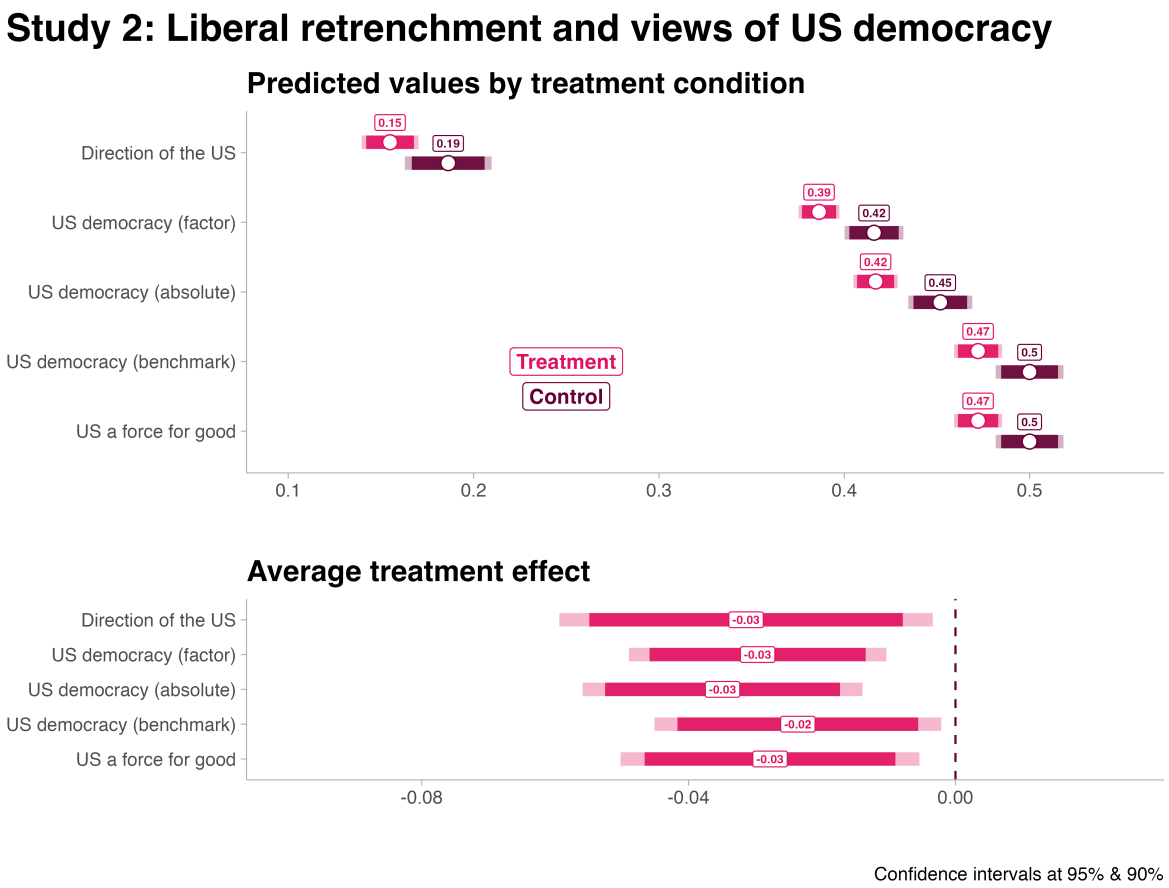


Figure 6: Study 2 ATE on view of the US & US democracy (Table A.9)

ity based on ideological self-placement, affect toward US President Donald Trump, prejudice toward the US, and general support for democracy. All moderators were measured pre-treatment. Results from these analyses, reported in the online supplementary material (Appendix D), show no observable or statistically significant variation in treatment effects conditional on these variables. In addition, replicating the gender analysis from Study 1, we again find no evidence of gendered treatment effects. However, consistent with earlier findings, baseline views of US democracy are significantly more negative among women than among men.

Within our factorial design, respondents assigned to treatment were randomly exposed to news about attacks on either minority rights or civil liberties, along with variation in the institutional source of the retrenchment—either the US President or the US Supreme Court. As pre-registered, we explore whether perceptions of liberal democratic decay differ depending on these treatment variations. While treatment

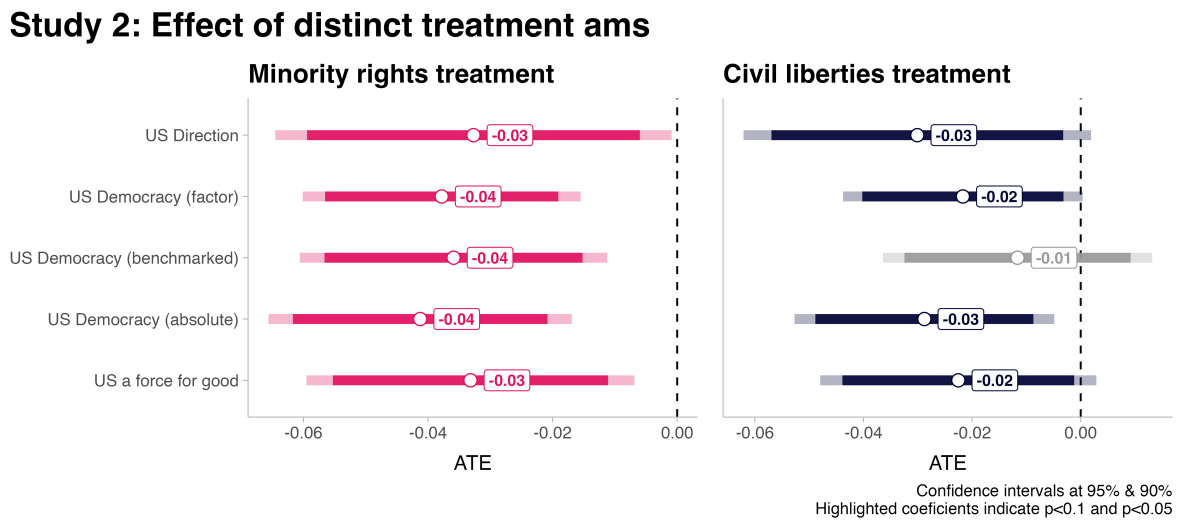


Figure 7: Study 2 comparing ATE of minority rights & civil liberties (Table A.11)

effects on views of US democracy do not significantly differ based on whether the retrenchment is attributed to the President or the Court (Appendix C), effects associated with attacks on minority rights appear more robust.

Although there is *no* statistically significant difference between the minority rights and civil liberties treatment arms—that is, their effects are symmetrical to one another—the effect of the minority rights condition is consistently distinguishable from zero, while this is not the case for the civil liberties condition. In an *exploratory*[11] analysis of respondents' emotional reactions to the treatments, we also find that those in the minority rights condition were 5.7 percentage-points ($p < .001$) more likely to report an emotional reaction compared to those in the civil liberties condition (Appendix F). These results suggest that citizen responses to attacks on minority rights—frequently pursued under the Trump 2.0 administration—elicit a more visceral reaction than comparable attacks on civil liberties. This finding prompts an update to our prior expectations. While we initially hypothesized that both types of liberal retrenchment would yield equally negative shifts in public opinion toward the US, the data indicate that this is not fully supported.

[11] Analyses labeled as exploratory were *not* included in the pre-analysis plan.

Explanations – liberal values v. contagion

As theorized above, several mechanisms may explain why liberal retrenchment in the US elicits negative international reactions. First, while the *Dobbs* ruling is a clear example of liberal retrenchment, it also represents a direct assault on gender equality—raising the possibility that the observed backlash reflects concern over gender-specific injustice rather than illiberalism more broadly. However, the results from Study 2 suggest this is not the case, as the treatments presented to respondents pertain to other domains of rights, such as minority protections and civil liberties. Second, international publics may react out of concern for political contagion; that is, fear that illiberal developments in the US could spill over into their own domestic contexts. Alternatively, citizens may update their perceptions of the US not because of perceived spillover risks, but because these developments signal a weakening of shared liberal democratic values. This latter mechanism is particularly important in light of theories of soft power and normative hegemony, which emphasize that shared values underpin international trust and support for diplomatic cooperation.

In this section, we investigate whether the effects observed in Study 2 are primarily driven by concerns about domestic spillover or by shifting views of the US as a trusted democratic ally with shared values. In Table 1 and Table 2, we model the effect of treatment on several key perceptions: whether respondents believe the US shares the liberal values of the UK; whether they view political developments in the US as having a significant impact on their everyday lives; and whether they believe restrictions on minority rights, civil liberties, or press freedom are likely to occur *in the UK*. The response item on shared values serves as a measure of normative difference whereas the other items all serve as indicators of political contagion broadly as well as specifically in relation to individual instances of liberal retrenchment (e.g. minority rights).

Table 1 presents the overall effect of assignment to any treatment condition. Given

the between-treatment variation observed in the main analysis (e.g., Figure 7), Table 2 disaggregates the effects by treatment type, distinguishing between the minority rights and civil liberties conditions.

Table 1: Overall effect of on ancillary outcomes

	Shared values	US contagion	MR spillover	CL spillover	Press spillover
Treatment	−0.021*	−0.010	−0.006	−0.010	−0.008
	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Constant	0.615***	0.753***	0.208***	0.550***	0.467***
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)
N	2907	2470	2914	2886	2836

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001
CL: Civil liberties. MR: Minority rights

Whether we compare individuals in the control group to those assigned to any treatment, or contrast the control group specifically with the civil liberties and minority rights conditions, the results are consistent: there is no evidence to suggest that individuals become more concerned about democratic backsliding or political contagion in their own country as a result of US liberal retrenchment. In fact, respondents exposed to the civil liberties treatment are significantly *less* likely than those in the control group to believe that liberal retrenchment is likely in the UK.

Consistent with the expectation that negative shifts in perceptions of US democracy reflect informational signals about the erosion of shared liberal values, we find that

Table 2: Civil liberties v. minority rights on ancillary outcomes

	Shared values	US contagion	MR spillover	CL spillover	Press spillover
Minority rights	−0.033**	−0.019	0.014	0.003	−0.013
	(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Civil liberties	−0.009	−0.002	−0.024*	−0.023+	−0.004
	(0.012)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Constant	0.615***	0.753***	0.208***	0.550***	0.467***
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)
N	2907	2470	2914	2886	2836

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001
CL: Civil liberties. MR: Minority rights

individuals in the treatment condition are two percentage-points less likely ($p < .05$) to view the US as sharing the same values as the UK. As shown in Table 2, this overall effect is driven entirely by those exposed to news highlighting the rollback of minority rights. Compared to the control group, the minority rights condition lowers perceptions of shared values by three percentage-points ($p < .01$), while the civil liberties treatment produces no statistically significant or substantively meaningful effect.

Taken together, these findings help clarify the mechanisms driving the strong negative reactions observed across both studies. Rather than stemming from fear of democratic backsliding at home, international responses to US liberal retrenchment appear primarily motivated by updates regarding the US' compliance with shared liberal norms and values. This has important implications for the US's standing in the world: it suggests that violations of liberal democratic principles erode not only the country's reputation, but also the foundational 'soft power' the country has boasted for several decades.

Implications: the downstream effects of liberal retrenchment on policy preferences

So far, the results from Study 1 and Study 2 demonstrate that liberal retrenchment in the US undermines its global standing and weakens perceptions of the US as a democracy. As shown in the ancillary analyses reported in Table 1, these effects are not accompanied by a heightened sense of authoritarian contagion. They *are*, however, accompanied by a significant reduction in the perceived normative similarity between the US and the UK.

Do these shifts in perception have downstream consequences? Normatively speaking, it may be desirable that citizens update their views of US democracy in response to elite-driven illiberalism – citizen responsiveness to elite actions is a cornerstone of democratic accountability. But beyond this, do such shifts influence the types of collab-

orative agreements citizens want their own governments to pursue? In other words, despite the economic and geopolitical benefits of close ties with the US, does exposure to news of liberal retrenchment reduce support for collaboration with the US—and perhaps increase support for alignment with other democratic partners?

As shown in Figure 4, we included a downstream policy measure after assessing our primary outcomes. Respondents assigned to either the treatment or control condition were presented with the following question:

> *Imagine the UK government is negotiating new international trade deals. These deals would allow for the free movement of goods, services, and tourists between countries. The government is asking the public which countries they should prioritize for these future agreements. Please rank the following countries in order of preference.* ***Only the top three*** *countries in your ranking will be considered as potential future partners.*

Respondents were asked to rank eight countries: the US, Canada, Australia, Norway, Switzerland, Japan, India, and China. By forcing respondents to select only their top three preferences, we capture both rank-order preference and threshold-based prioritization—allowing us to detect whether the US falls above or below the "priority" cutoff.

Figure 8 visualizes the results. The top panel shows the distribution of US rankings among control and treatment groups. The middle panel reports the average treatment effect (ATE) of any treatment assignment on rankings (rescaled 0–1) for each country. The bottom panel isolates the ATEs for the minority rights and civil liberties treatment arms on the US ranking specifically.

Respondents in the control condition exhibit strong baseline support for collaboration with the US: 28% rank the US first, and 48% place it within their top three. This pro-US orientation is notable given the geopolitical context—at the time of the survey, the US

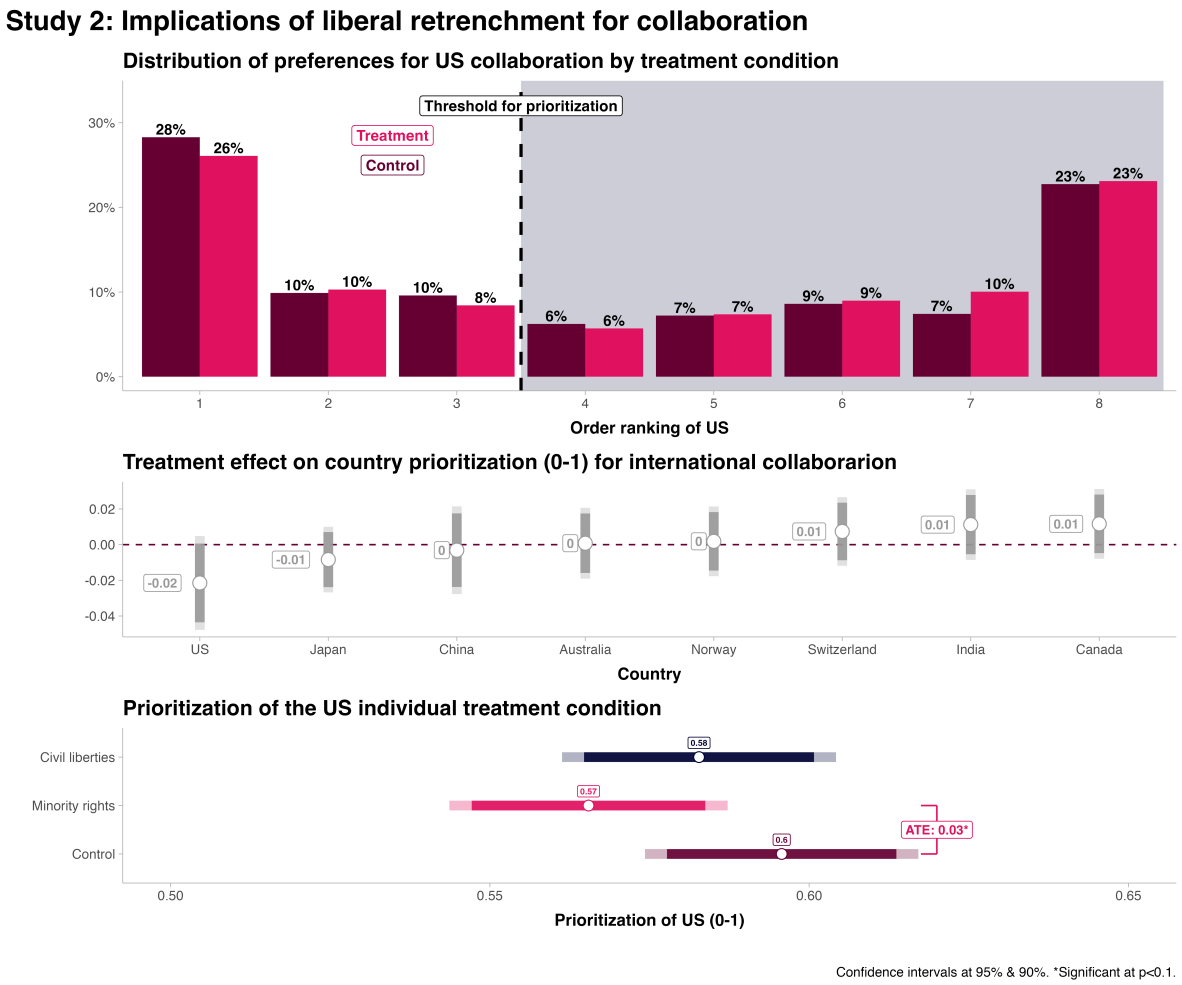


Figure 8: Downstream consequences of liberal retrenchment (Tables A.10 & A.12)

under Donald Trump had engaged in a trade war with multiple countries, including the UK. Despite these tensions, preferences for collaboration with the US remained high among the control group.

Exposure to news of US liberal retrenchment modestly reduces this collaborative support. While the modal ranking of the US remains first among treated respondents (26%), the overall proportion ranking the US in the top three falls to 44%. The average treatment effect across all conditions is in the expected negative direction (-0.02), though not statistically significant ($p = 0.109$). However, as shown in the bottom panel, respondents exposed to the minority rights treatment exhibit a significantly reduced likelihood of prioritizing the US ($p = 0.052$).

As reported in Appendix Table A.12, this decline in support for the US is accompa-

nied by increased support for alternative partners—specifically, Canada and India. In this way, the consequences of US liberal retrenchment are not limited to reputational damage: they appear to reconfigure citizens' policy preferences in ways that generate both losses and gains in international alignment.

Discussion

The United States' long-standing reputation as a beacon of liberal democracy is increasingly in question. By coalescing a two-study empirical strategy, this paper provides new causal evidence that liberal retrenchment within the US – specifically, the rollback of women's rights and egalitarian treatment for minority groups – undermines the country's international standing. Leveraging a natural experiment coinciding with the *Dobbs* ruling during the extensive cross-country data collection of the Eurobarometer as well as a pre-registered vignette experiment in Britain, we show that recent developments in the US not only diminish perceptions of American democracy but also produce reputational and strategic costs in the international arena.

Our findings speak directly to the global ramifications of liberal democratic decay in long-standing democracies which are increasingly commonplace (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), particularly in those democracies were far-right parties have experienced political success (Bartels, 2023; Jacob, 2025). In Study 1, we demonstrate that the judicial revocation of abortion rights – a clear act of liberal retrenchment that undermines a fifty-year precedent guaranteeing women's bodily autonomy in the US – triggered a substantive and significant decline in European public opinion of the United States. This continent-wide backlash was not trivial in nature but resulted in a decline in excessive of 11%. In Study 2, we corroborate and extend these findings by showing that exposure to news about further illiberal policies – such as attacks on civil liberties or minority rights – reduces US democratic legitimacy and depresses mass support for future collaboration. It is worth re-iterating that the large

effects identified in Study 2 (a 16% decrease perceptions in US democracy) are observed in a context where baseline level evaluations of US democracy and favourability are remarkably low. In a significant advancement compared to the existing literature, the experimental design leveraged in Study 2 allowed us to probe two distinct mechanisms. Empirically, our results demonstrate that it is *not* fears of democratic contagion ("what happens there could happen here") but rather a perceived erosion of shared liberal values that drives the observed effects. Moreover, we find that attacks on minority rights rather than attacks on civil liberties operate as a more potent signal of liberal decay. Not only do the results of our minority rights treatment entirely drive negative shifts in support for international collaboration, but (as demonstrated in exploratory analysis) this treatment also induces a more emotionally charged reaction from respondents. Overall, the robust findings from our multi-study design convincingly demonstrate that the costs of liberal retrenchment travel far beyond domestic borders and reshape how publics around the world perceive and engage with democratic actors engaged in illiberal authoritarian turns.

A central empirical contribution of this paper is to center attention on the *liberal* pillar of democracy: those rights, protections, and normative commitments that uphold individual autonomy and liberty as well as safeguarding minority groups. In practice, many of the most common and visible acts of democratic decline target the liberal core: reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ protections, freedom of expression, and academic or cultural freedoms. By isolating the consequences of liberal retrenchment rather than democratic erosion more broadly, our approach sheds important empirical light on a mode of backsliding that is both substantively consequential and increasingly prevalent. This is true both of the Trump administration(s) and the Republican Party of the last decade (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2023; Mudde, 2017), as well as of other authoritarian actors operating in Europe (Bogatyrev & Bogusz, 2025; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017) or indeed the Global South (Payne & de Souza Santos, 2020).

This matters as attacks on the liberal component of democracy are often undertaken

within formal democratic frameworks – carried out by elected executives, representative institutions, or constitutional courts – and, as a result, tend to enjoy a degree of legal legitimacy (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Our results show that these attacks nonetheless function as potent information signals to foreign publics which undermine a state's democratic credentials, trigger skepticism about a state's compliance with shared values and have downstream negative effects on mass support for international collaboration. As such, a focus on liberal retrenchment enhances both the empirical precision and external validity of democratic backsliding research. The policies examined here – abortion bans, LGBTQ+ rollbacks, and restrictions on protest – are not idiosyncratic anomalies, but emblematic of the direction taken by many democracies around the world engaged in liberal retrenchment, not least the United States. Gender equality, women's rights and LGBTQ+ protections are under threat and being rolled back (Bogatyrev & Bogusz, 2025; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017; Lombardo & and, 2025; López Ortega, 2024; Norris, 2023; Payne & de Souza Santos, 2020) – understanding the reputational damage of these illiberal turns is essential. Not only because understanding reactions to the decline of liberalism is important in its own right but because, as we show in Study 2, these actions are not without strategic consequence.

What should we make of these findings? On the one hand, one might take a a *glass-half-empty* view. The results clearly signal that the United States' international standing is in decline and this decline can be explained, in part, by the steady erosion of liberal rights and protections. This reputational damage has real-world consequences: it undermines the credibility of the US as a democratic leader, weakens its soft power, and may limit its capacity to build or sustain international alliances. At a time of growing geopolitical uncertainty, diminished trust in one of the world's most powerful democracies has far-reaching strategic and normative implications. Elite-driven assaults on minority rights, however domestically justifiable or institutionally sanctioned, risk undermining US international capital. On the other hand, however, one might interpret these results with a *glass-half-full* reading. Citizens abroad are paying attention and

they are updating their views in response to information about liberal retrenchment. In this sense, our findings reveal a form of democratic accountability operating across borders. Liberal retrenchment does not occur in a vacuum. Foreign publics are not passive observers but rather they are responsive to violations of liberal norms and willing to re-evaluate partnerships accordingly. This responsiveness opens the door to transnational pressure and norm reinforcement: when rights are eroded in one democracy, others may act at the level of public opinion to push back. In this way, our results offer not only a warning, but a reminder of the willingness of the masses to respond when attacks on liberalism are observed.

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Appendix

Appendix

A Study 1: Natural experiment

A Study 1: Summary statistics

Table A.1: Descriptive statistics of eurobarometer sample

		N	%
Direction US	US right direction	10991	34.3
	US wrong direction	17397	54.2
	NA	3692	11.5
Direction Country	Country right direction	11659	36.3
	Country wrong direction	19287	60.1
	NA	1134	3.5
Direction EU	EU right direction	13808	43.0
	EU wrong direction	16143	50.3
	NA	2129	6.6
Direction Life	My life right direction	23182	72.3
	My life wrong direction	7667	23.9
	NA	1231	3.8
Gender	Man	15471	48.2
	Woman	16587	51.7
	Missing	22	0.1
Age (categorical)	15-24	3133	9.8
	25-34	4718	14.7
	35-44	5447	17.0
	45-54	5583	17.4
	55-64	5749	17.9
	65+	7445	23.2
	Refusal	5	0.0
Location	Large town	10095	31.5
	Rural area or village	10379	32.4
	Small/middle town	11600	36.2
	Don't know	6	0.0
Social class	Middle class	16540	51.6
	Lower middle class	5213	16.2
	Working class	6992	21.8
	Upper middle class	2638	8.2
	Upper class	284	0.9
	Other/missing	413	1.3
Employment status	Employed	15756	49.1
	Self-employed	2657	8.3
	Not working	13667	42.6
Ideology (categorical)	Centrist	11825	36.9
	Left-wing	8757	27.3
	Right-wing	8664	27.0
	Missing	2834	8.8

Table A.2: Treatment assignment by country

Country	Control	Treatment
FR - France	6.1% (62)	93.9% (948)
BE - Belgium	15.0% (151)	85.0% (858)
NL - The Netherlands	14.3% (145)	85.7% (868)
DE-W - Germany - West	25.0% (257)	75.0% (769)
IT - Italy	12.9% (132)	87.1% (890)
LU - Luxembourg	10.1% (51)	89.9% (454)
DK - Denmark	30.6% (317)	69.4% (720)
GB-UKM - United Kingdom	5.0% (52)	95.0% (981)
GR - Greece	11.4% (115)	88.6% (895)
ES -Spain	10.4% (105)	89.6% (904)
DE-E Germany East	11.9% (57)	88.1% (424)
FI - Finland	29.2% (305)	70.8% (740)
SE - Sweden	42.6% (441)	57.4% (594)
AT - Austria	31.0% (312)	69.0% (694)
CY - Cyprus (Republic)	35.3% (177)	64.7% (325)
CZ - Czech Republic	10.4% (106)	89.6% (909)
HU - Hungary	40.2% (412)	59.8% (614)
LV - Latvia	10.9% (112)	89.1% (915)
LT - Lithuania	14.7% (147)	85.3% (854)
MT - Malta	4.2% (21)	95.8% (481)
PL - Poland	3.5% (36)	96.5% (980)
SK - Slovakia	14.9% (154)	85.1% (879)
SI - Slovenia	13.8% (138)	86.2% (862)
BG - Bulgaria	27.6% (287)	72.4% (751)
RO - Romania	10.3% (107)	89.7% (934)
TR - Turkey	3.4% (34)	96.6% (971)
HR - Croatia	11.8% (118)	88.2% (880)
CY-TCC - Cyprus TCC	34.0% (170)	66.0% (330)
MK - North Macedonia	14.5% (150)	85.5% (886)
ME - Montenegro	18.5% (93)	81.5% (410)
RS - Serbia	39.2% (401)	60.8% (622)
AL - Albania	61.6% (623)	38.4% (389)
CH - Switzerland	13.3% (139)	86.7% (908)
IS - Iceland	41.4% (208)	58.6% (295)
BA - Bosnia and Herzegovina	7.3% (74)	92.7% (937)

B Study 1: Balance test

Table A.3: Study 1 - Balance test

Model predicting treatment assignment as function of observables	
Gender	0.005
	(0.005)
Age 25-34	−0.022
	(0.015)
Age 35-44	−0.025
	(0.016)
Age 45-54	−0.017
	(0.014)
Age 55-64	−0.021
	(0.015)
Age 65+	−0.020
	(0.016)
Age Refusal	−0.060
	(0.134)
Rural area or village	0.024
	(0.014)
Small/middle town	−0.006
	(0.011)
Location: (Dont know)	0.259**
	(0.091)
Class: Lower middle class	0.005
	(0.017)
Class: Working class	0.002
	(0.011)
Class: Upper middle class	0.003
	(0.008)
Class: Upper class	−0.015
	(0.026)
Class: Other/missing	−0.012
	(0.045)
Employment status: Self-employed	0.027+
	(0.014)
Employment status: Not working	−0.006
	(0.006)
Left-right: Centrist	−0.002
	(0.012)
Left-right: Right-wing	0.004
	(0.007)
N	32 007
R2 Adj.	0.140
Std.Errors	by: country
FE: country	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

C Study 1: Regression output

Table A.4: Study 1 - Average treatment effect (Figure 2

	Unadjusted	Covariate-adjusted 1	Covariate-adjusted 2
Treatment	−0.045***	−0.045***	−0.048***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Gender (woman)		−0.029***	−0.028***
		(0.006)	(0.006)
Age 25-34		−0.023	−0.013
		(0.017)	(0.017)
Age 35-44		−0.036+	−0.023
		(0.018)	(0.018)
Age 45-54		−0.048*	−0.038*
		(0.018)	(0.018)
Age 55-64		−0.034+	−0.021
		(0.018)	(0.018)
Age 65+		−0.006	0.011
		(0.021)	(0.021)
Age Refusal		−0.165	−0.167
		(0.221)	(0.219)
Rural area or village		0.014	0.012
		(0.014)	(0.014)
Small/middle town		−0.009	−0.009
		(0.013)	(0.013)
Location (Dont know)		−0.146	0.194
		(0.155)	(0.188)
Class: Lower middle class		−0.055***	−0.052***
		(0.013)	(0.013)
Class: Working class		−0.077***	−0.073***
		(0.017)	(0.018)
Class: Upper middle class		0.023	0.018
		(0.014)	(0.014)
Class: Upper class		0.057	0.045
		(0.039)	(0.040)
Class: Other/missing		−0.006	−0.011
		(0.028)	(0.041)
Employment status: Self-employed		0.018	0.019
		(0.014)	(0.016)
Employment status: Not working		−0.017*	−0.020*
		(0.008)	(0.008)
Left-right: Centrist			0.013
			(0.013)
Left-right: Right-wing			0.051*
			(0.019)
N	30 905	30 881	28 642
R2 Adj.	0.121	0.128	0.133
Std.Errors	by: country	by: country	by: country
FE: country	X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.5: Study 1 - Interaction models

	Gender interaction	Ideology interaction
Treatment	−0.054***	−0.068***
	(0.011)	(0.018)
Gender	−0.048***	
	(0.013)	
Treatment*Gender	0.018	
	(0.014)	
Left-wing		-
Centrist		0.000
		(0.023)
Right-wing		0.022
		(0.029)
Treatment*Centrist		0.017
		(0.021)
Treatment*Right-wing		0.044+
		(0.022)
N	28 366	26 326
R2	0.108	0.114
R2 Adj.	0.107	0.112
R2 Within	0.003	0.004
R2 Within Adj.	0.003	0.004
AIC	36 528.9	33 799.9
BIC	36 842.6	34 127.0
RMSE	0.46	0.46
Std.Errors	by: country	by: country
FE: country	X	X

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

D Study 1: Robustness checks

Table A.6: Testing for attrition conditional on treatment and covariates

	Unadjusted	Covariate-adjusted 1	Covariate-adjusted 2
Treatment	−0.006	−0.006	−0.003
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Gender		0.043***	0.036***
		(0.005)	(0.005)
Age 25-34		0.012	0.016*
		(0.008)	(0.008)
Age 35-44		0.004	0.006
		(0.010)	(0.010)
Age 45-54		0.008	0.011
		(0.008)	(0.009)
Age 55-64		0.015	0.018+
		(0.010)	(0.010)
Age 65+		0.036**	0.041***
		(0.011)	(0.010)
Age Refusal		0.025	0.033
		(0.162)	(0.163)
Rural area or village		0.025**	0.017*
		(0.009)	(0.007)
Small/middle town		0.013+	0.010
		(0.007)	(0.007)
Location: Dont Know		−0.006	−0.122
		(0.116)	(0.077)
Class: Lower middle class		0.009	0.008
		(0.010)	(0.010)
Class: Working class		0.051***	0.045***
		(0.010)	(0.009)
Class: Upper middle class		−0.028**	−0.022**
		(0.008)	(0.007)
Class: Upper class		−0.042***	−0.034**
		(0.011)	(0.010)
Class: Other/missing		0.168***	0.109*
		(0.040)	(0.044)
Employment status: Self-employed		0.006	0.008
		(0.008)	(0.008)
Employment status: Not working		0.017*	0.013+
		(0.006)	(0.006)
Left-right: Centrist			0.033***
			(0.007)
Left-right: Right-wing			0.008
			(0.005)
N	35 181	35 157	32 007
R2 Adj.	0.057	0.074	0.065
Std.Errors	by: country	by: country	by: country
FE: country	X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

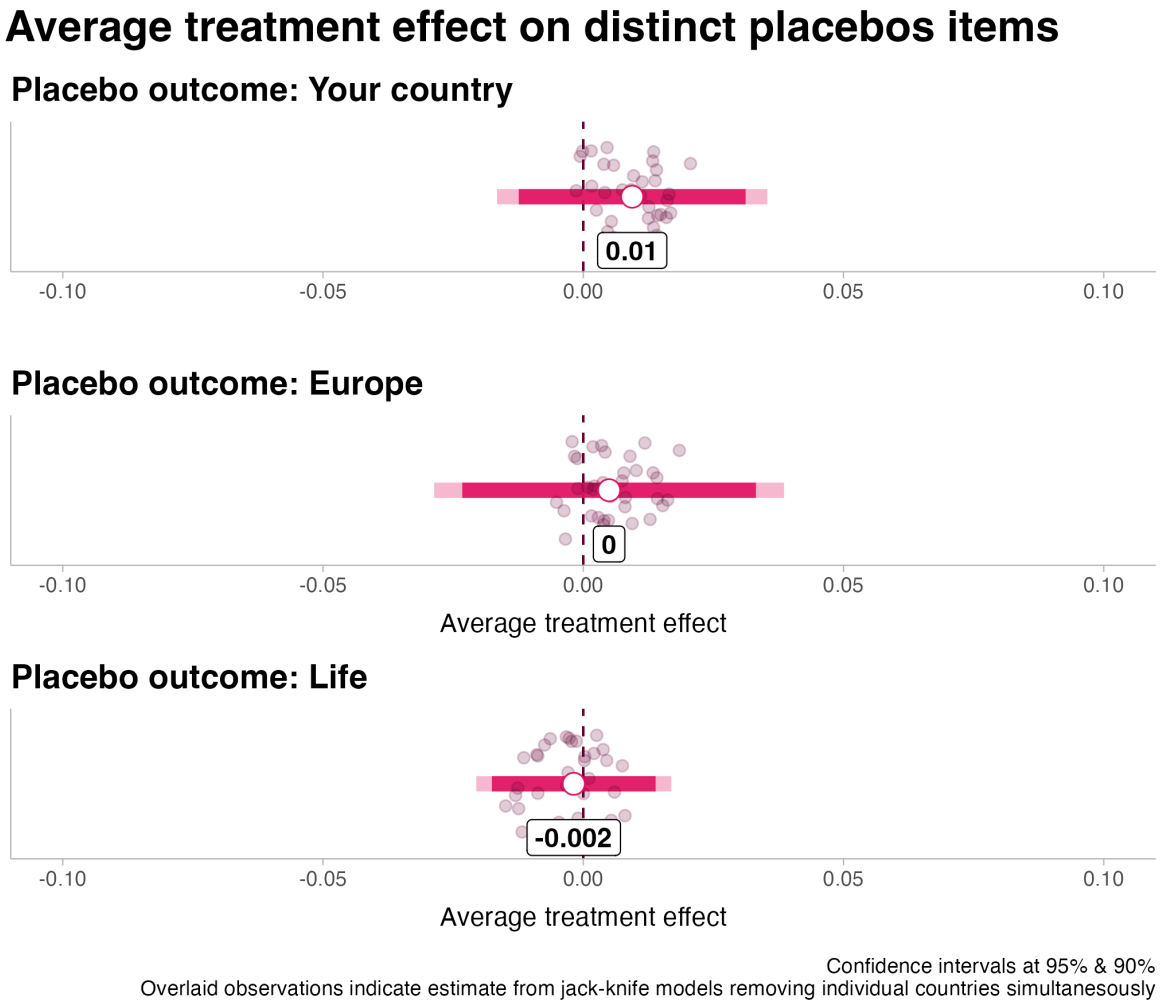

Figure A.1: (Null) effects on placebo outcomes

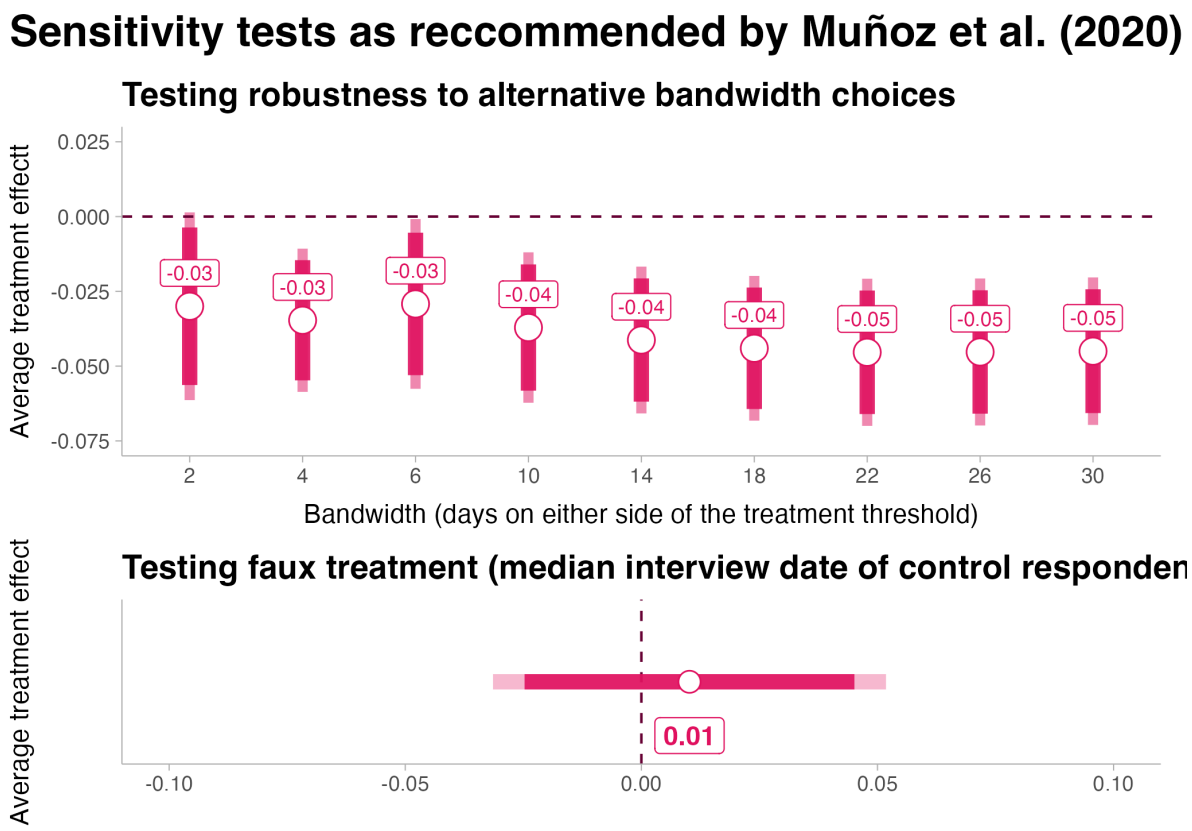

Figure A.2: Assessing sensitivity to i) bandwidth & ii) placebo treatment threshold

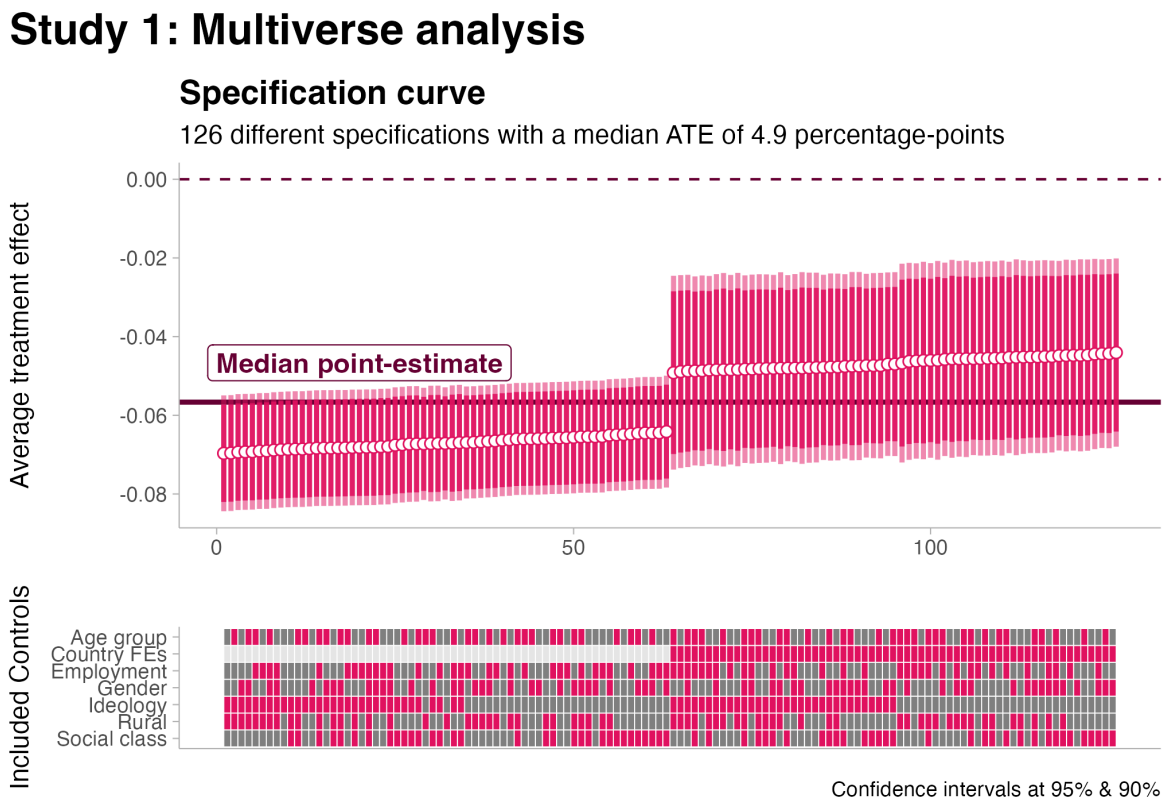

Figure A.3: Specification curve showing robustness across adjustment for different controls

Sensitivity to country inclusions & exclusion

Figure A.4 reports estimates from models excluding each of the individual countries included in our analysis one by one. Note that the given the historical variation between East and West Germany, the Eurobarometer codes these regions as two separate country samples.

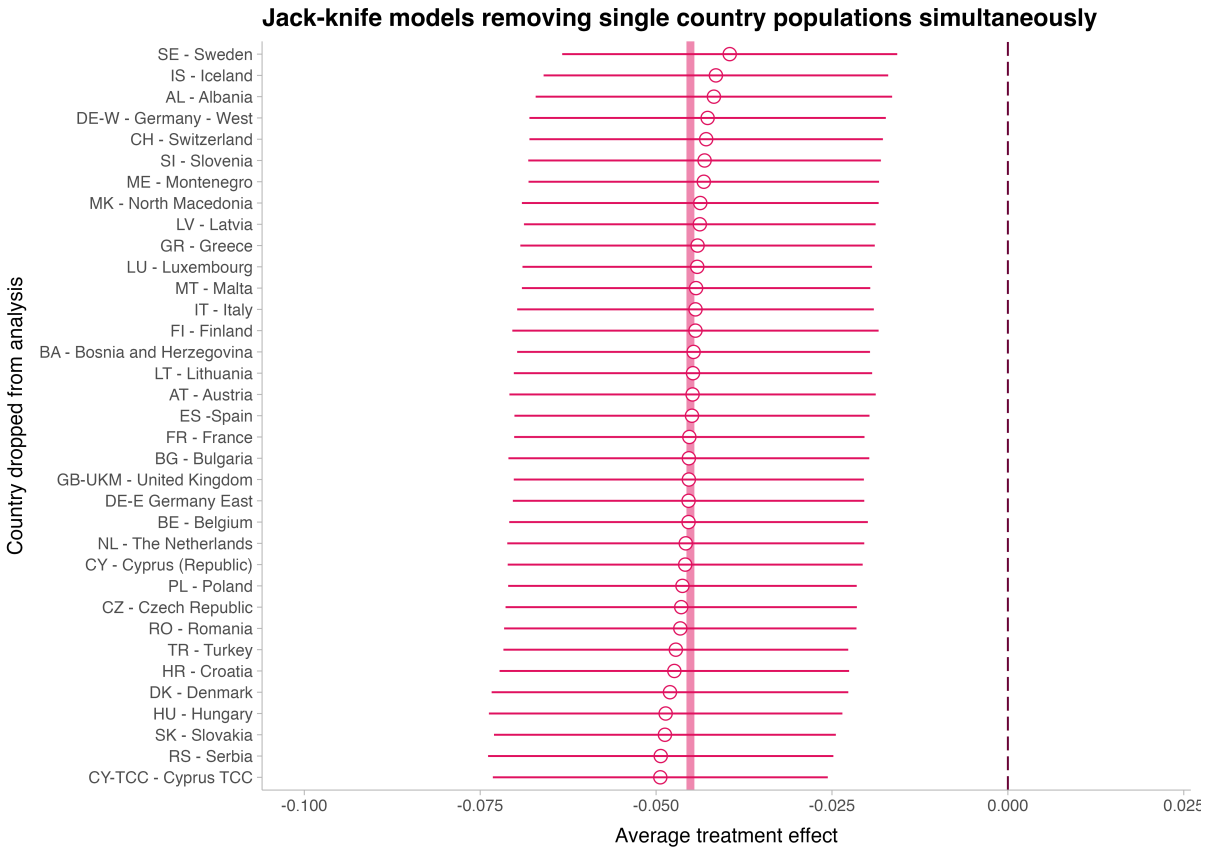

Figure A.4: Specification curve showing robustness across different country-based exclusions

E Study 1: Event salience & treatment exposure

In Figure A.6 and Figure A.7 Google Trends data for topic "Abortion" and "Heat Wave" are plotted from April 1st, 2022 to August 1st, 2022. This period covers both the leak of the *Dobbs* decision and the date of the official court ruling. For comparison, the topic "Heat Wave" is plotted, as Europe was facing a severe heat wave during the Summer of 2022.

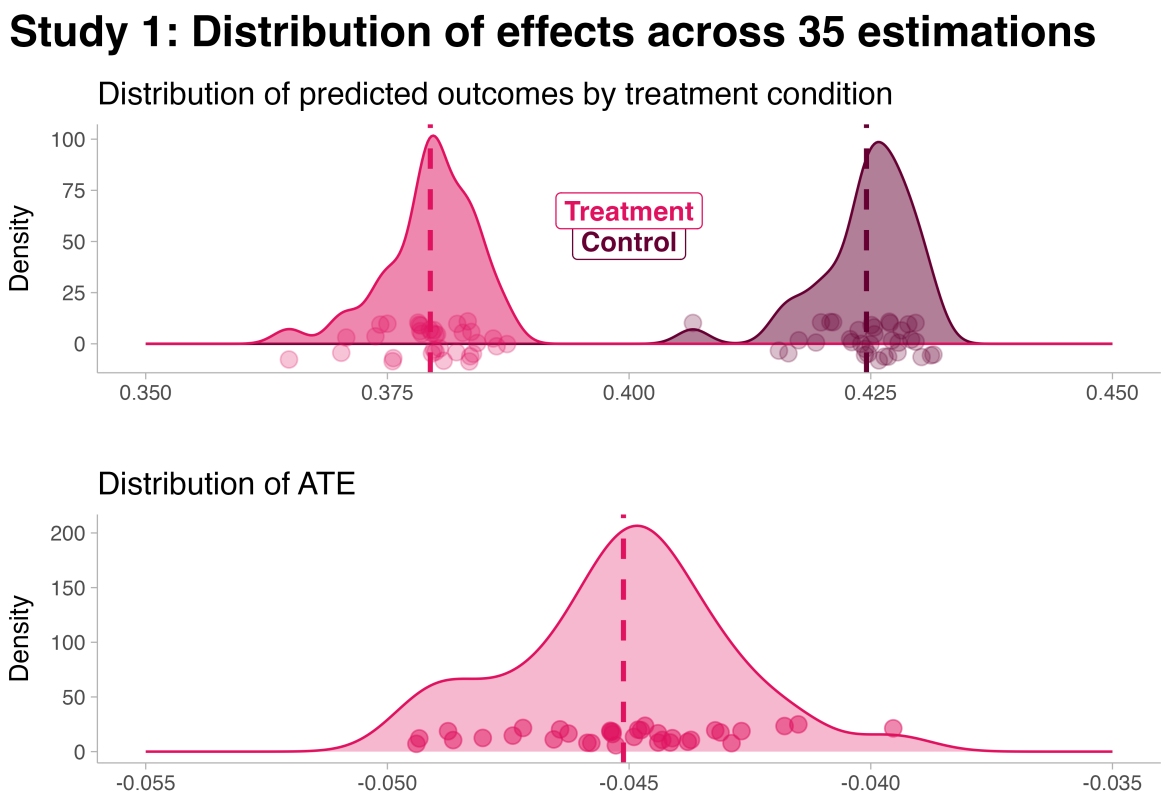

Figure A.5: Distribution of predicted outcomes and treatment effects from Figure A.4

The values run from 0 to 100 with 100 being the peak popularity of that term. After the *Politico* leak of the *Dobbs* decision the average interest in Abortion was 17 while after the the formal SCOTUS decision was announced, it was 95.

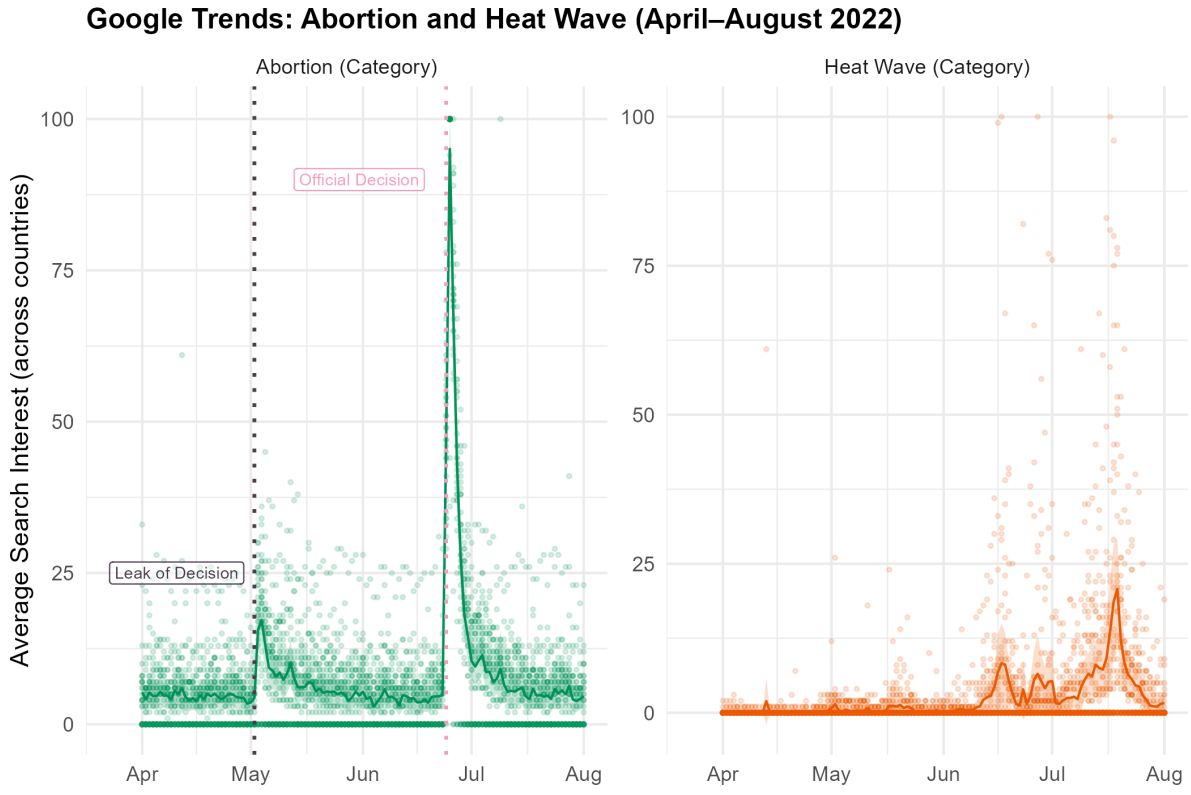

Figure A.6: Average Abortion and Heatwave Interest

Figure A.7: Abortion and Heatwave Interest by Country

B Study 2: Original experiment

The author(s) affirm that this article adheres to the principles concerning research with human participants laid out in APSA's Principles and Guidance on Human Subject Research (2020).

Ethical approval for the original data collection and experimental research design of Study 2 was approved the Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics Review Committee at the University of [blinded]. Ethical approval number: 104232. Proof of ethical approval has been provided on submission. Respondents were provided full details of the research project and who to contact in case of concerns.

Study 2 was pre-registered on April 14th, 2025. An anonymous version of the pre-analysis plan is available for the Open Science Framework (OSF) here: https://osf.io/a54q3/?view_only=4e7d31ebc8134e1f96d3a01b0c2bb708

Data collection for Study 2 was carried out by Prolific. Our sample of respondents (N= 2993) were selected based on quota-based sampling that reflects the gender, age, and educational composition of the British population. Data collection took place between May 7th and May 8th 2025.

A Study 2: Summary statistics

Table A.7: Study 2: Descriptive statistics (categorical variables)

		N	%
Gender	Man	1448	48.4
	Woman	1529	51.1
	Non-binary/third gender	8	0.3
	Other	3	0.1
Age	18–24	254	8.5
	25–34	543	18.1
	35–44	578	19.3
	45–54	688	23.0
	55–64	615	20.5
	65+	308	10.3
LGBT	Not LGBT	2647	88.4
	LGBT	286	9.6
Education	No degree	1955	65.3
	Degree or higher	1026	34.3
Ideology	Left-wing	1244	41.6
	Centrist	682	22.8
	Right-wing	952	31.8
	Missing	115	3.8
Party ID	Conservative	572	19.1
	Labour	728	24.3
	Liberal Democrats	625	20.9
	Green	389	13.0
	SNP	94	3.1
	Plaid Cymru	18	0.6
	Reform UK	567	18.9
	None	0	0.0
Treatment	Control	1011	33.8
	Treated	1982	66.2
Individual treatment arm	Control	1011	33.8
	Minority rights	976	32.6
	Civil liberties	1006	33.6

Table A.8: Study 2: Descriptive statistics (numerical variables)

	Unique	Missing (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
US direction	4	6	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.0
UK direction	3	4	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.0
EU direction	3	22	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.0
Life direction	3	4	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0	1.0
US democracy (absolute)	12	9	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.4	1.0
US vs avg. democracy (benchmark)	6	9	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.2	1.0
US is a force for good	6	3	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.5	1.0
EU is a force for good	6	2	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.8	1.0
China is a force for good	6	5	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.5	1.0
UK-US shared values	6	3	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.8	1.0
UK-EU shared values	6	3	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.8	1.0
UK-China shared values	6	7	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.5	1.0
Trade rank: US	8	0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.6	1.0
Trade rank: Canada	8	0	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.8	1.0
Trade rank: Norway	8	0	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.5	1.0
Trade rank: Switzerland	8	0	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.5	1.0
Trade rank: Australia	8	0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.6	1.0
Trade rank: India	8	0	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.4	1.0
Trade rank: China	8	0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.5	1.0
Dem. better than other govts	5	10	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.7	1.0
Limit speech to protect	5	7	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.7	1.0
Justify hostility	5	3	0.8	0.3	0.0	1.0	1.0
Strong leader	5	7	0.8	0.3	0.0	0.7	1.0
Social distance: USA	6	2	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.8	1.0
Feeling thermometer: Trump	11	0	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.0

Table A.9: Average treatment effects (Results from Figure 6)

	Direction	Democracy (factor)	Democracy (absolute)	Democracy (benchmark)	US force for Good
Treatment	−0.031*	−0.030**	−0.035**	−0.024*	−0.028*
	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Constant	0.186***	0.416***	0.452***	0.373***	0.500***
	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
N	2801	2829	2725	2712	2909
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.003	0.004	0.001	0.002
AIC	2031.1	72.0	424.9	553.9	1069.7
BIC	2048.9	89.9	442.6	571.6	1087.6
RMSE	0.35	0.24	0.26	0.27	0.29

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

B Study 2: Regression tables for primary outcomes

Table A.10: Effect on collaboration preferences (Figure 8)

	US	Canada	Australia	Norway	Switzerland	Japan	India	China
Treatment	−0.021	0.012	0.001	0.002	0.007	−0.008	0.011	−0.003
	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.013)
Constant	0.596***	0.687***	0.612***	0.520***	0.491***	0.579***	0.453***	0.562***
	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)
N	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
AIC	2165.7	400.2	528.7	357.3	280.1	42.6	458.2	1748.8
BIC	2183.7	418.2	546.7	375.4	298.1	60.6	476.2	1766.8
RMSE	0.35	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.24	0.26	0.32

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

C Study 2: Effects of individual treatment arms

Figure A.8 visualizes the predicted outcomes conditional on each of the treatment arms (minority rights or civil liberties v. control) for the different dependent variables of interest in Study 2. This includes: view of the direction of the US, multiple measures of US democracy, indications of whether the US is a force for good or shares our values, and whether the government should prioritize collaboration with the the US.

The models visualized in Figure A.8 are based on unadjusted OLS models. The full regression output corresponding to the figure is reproduced in Table A.11 and Table A.12. As visualized in the figure and demonstrated by the results detailed in the accompanying table there are significant between-treatment differences. In other words, the negative effect of exposure to news on liberal retrenchment is driven in large part by the minority rights treatment rather than the civil liberties treatment.

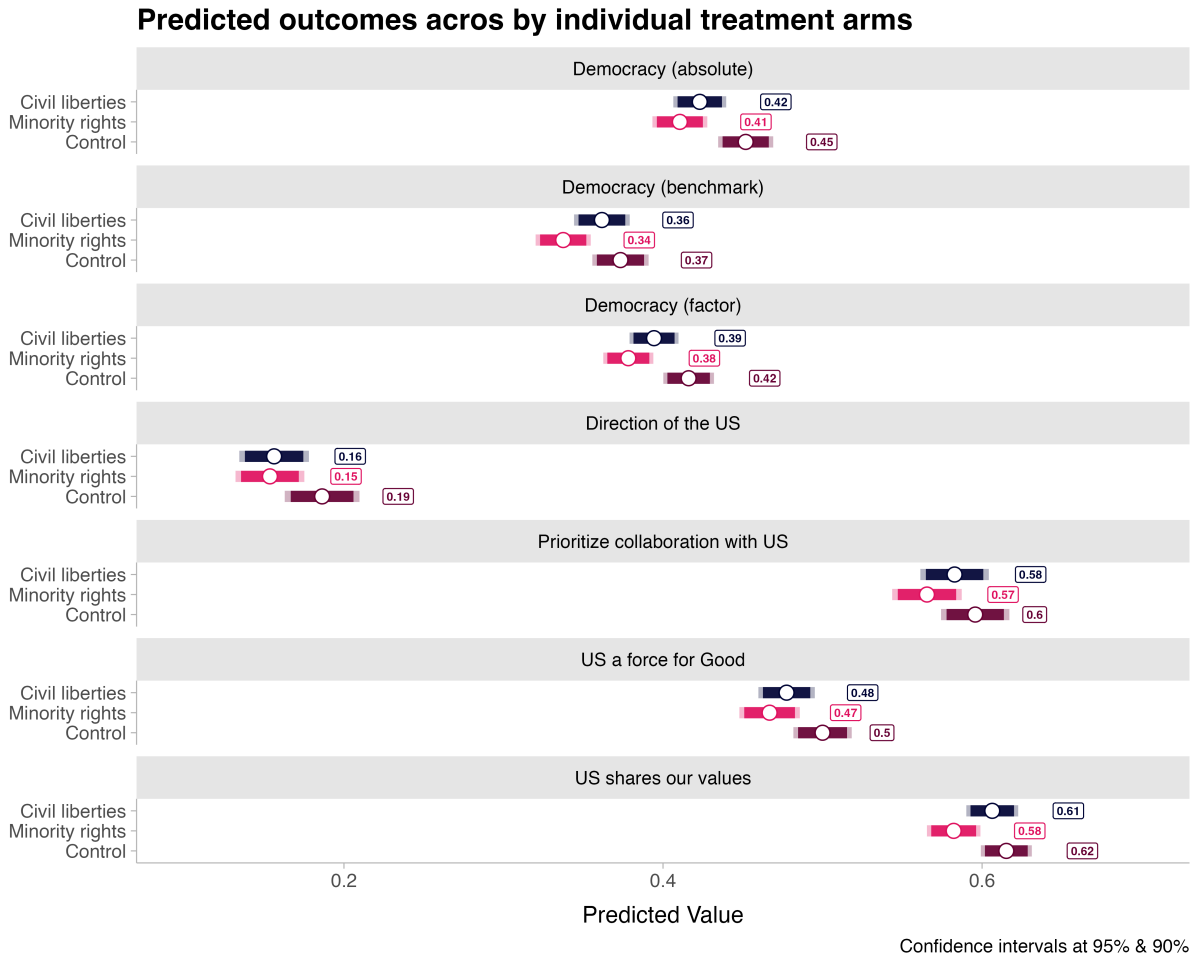

Figure A.8: ATE of individual treatment arms

Table A.11: Average treatment effects (categorical treatment arms)

	Direction	Democracy (factor)	Democracy (absolute)	Democracy (benchmark)	US force for Good
Minority rights treatment	−0.033*	−0.038***	−0.041***	−0.036**	−0.033*
	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Civil liberties treatment	−0.030+	−0.022+	−0.029*	−0.012	−0.023+
	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Constant	0.186***	0.416***	0.452***	0.373***	0.500***
	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
N	2801	2829	2725	2712	2909
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.003	0.004	0.002	0.002
AIC	2033.1	72.0	425.9	552.1	1071.1
BIC	2056.9	95.8	449.5	575.7	1095.0
RMSE	0.35	0.24	0.26	0.27	0.29

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table A.12: Effect on collaboration preferences (categorical treatment)

	US	Canada	Australia	Norway	Switzerland	Japan	India	China
Minority rights treatment	−0.030+	0.024*	0.002	−0.006	−0.002	−0.009	0.022+	−0.001
	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.015)
Civil liberties treatment	−0.013	0.000	−0.001	0.010	0.016	−0.007	0.001	−0.005
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.014)
Constant	0.596***	0.687***	0.612***	0.520***	0.491***	0.579***	0.453***	0.562***
	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)
N	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.001	−0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	−0.001
AIC	2166.4	398.1	530.6	357.5	279.5	44.6	456.8	1750.6
BIC	2190.5	422.1	554.7	381.5	303.6	68.6	480.8	1774.7
RMSE	0.35	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.24	0.26	0.32

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

	Churchill Q	Free Press	Hostility to minorities	Strong leader
Treatment: Minority rights	−0.103*	−0.075**	−0.037	−0.015
	(0.044)	(0.024)	(0.036)	(0.034)
Treatment: Civil liberties	−0.079+	−0.028	−0.029	−0.036
	(0.043)	(0.023)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Democracy best alternative	−0.100**			
	(0.038)			
Treatment: Minority rights × Democracy best alternative	0.084			
	(0.054)			
Treatment: Civil liberties × Democracy best alternative	0.074			
	(0.053)			
Free press		−0.194***		
		(0.029)		
Treatment: Minority rights × Free press		0.072+		
		(0.042)		
Treatment: Civil liberties × Free press		0.013		
		(0.041)		
Hostility toward minorities			−0.220***	
			(0.030)	
Treatment: Minority rights × Hostility toward minorities			0.007	
			(0.043)	
Treatment: Civil liberties × Hostility toward minorities			0.012	
			(0.042)	
Strong Democratic leader				−0.185***
				(0.030)
Treatment: Minority rights × Strong Democratic leader				−0.031
				(0.042)
Treatment: Civil liberties × Strong Democratic leader				0.021
				(0.042)
Constant	0.489***	0.514***	0.587***	0.555***
	(0.031)	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.024)
N	2601	2658	2754	2683
R2	0.007	0.045	0.052	0.050
R2 Adj.	0.005	0.043	0.051	0.049
AIC	−23.9	−12.3	−66.2	−43.8
BIC	17.2	28.9	−24.8	−2.6
RMSE	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

D Study 2: Pre-registered moderation tests

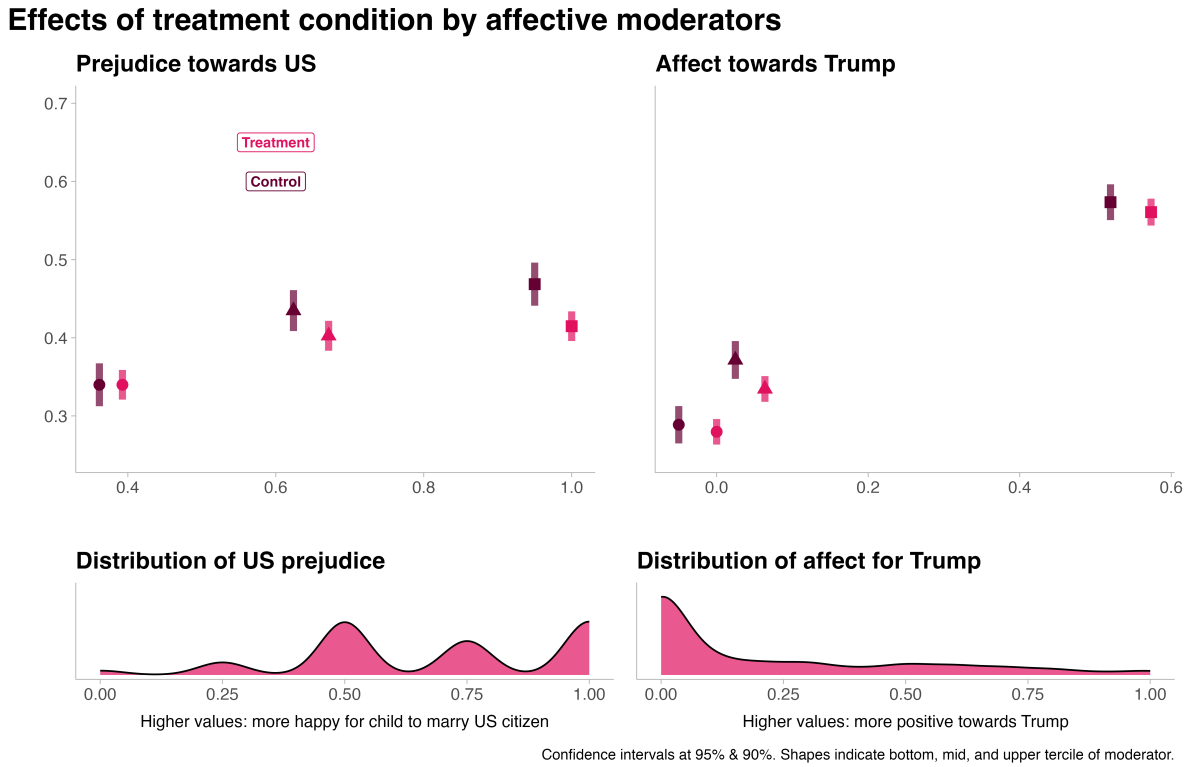

Figure A.9: Moderation effect based on US prejudice affect for Trump

E Study 2: Manipulation checks

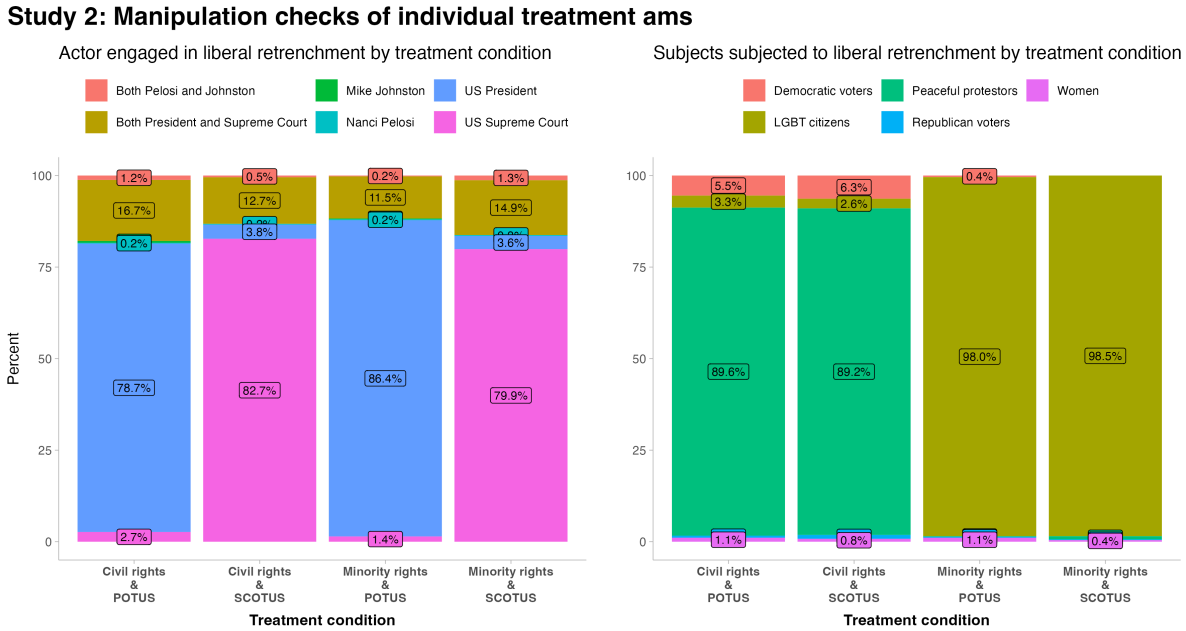

Figure A.10: Manipulation checks

As part of our post-experimental debrief, individuals exposed to one of the treatment conditions were presented with the following prompt:

The news article we shared with you earlier on in the survey was ***not real but fictitious****. Neither the US Supreme Court or the US President have moved to i) prohibit same-sex marriage, or ii) criminalize protests. That news post, like many others that you can find online, was* ***an example of misinformation*** *or fake news. Thinking about the news article you saw and what you know about what is going on in US politics today, do you think this fake news story was* ***very credible or not at all credible?*** (emphasis in original).

In Figure A.11, we demonstrate the proportion of respondents that self-reported that they views the treatment message to be either very credible/credible (1) or not credible/not at at all credible (0). A sizable majority of respondents across all treatment conditions identified the vignettes are credible

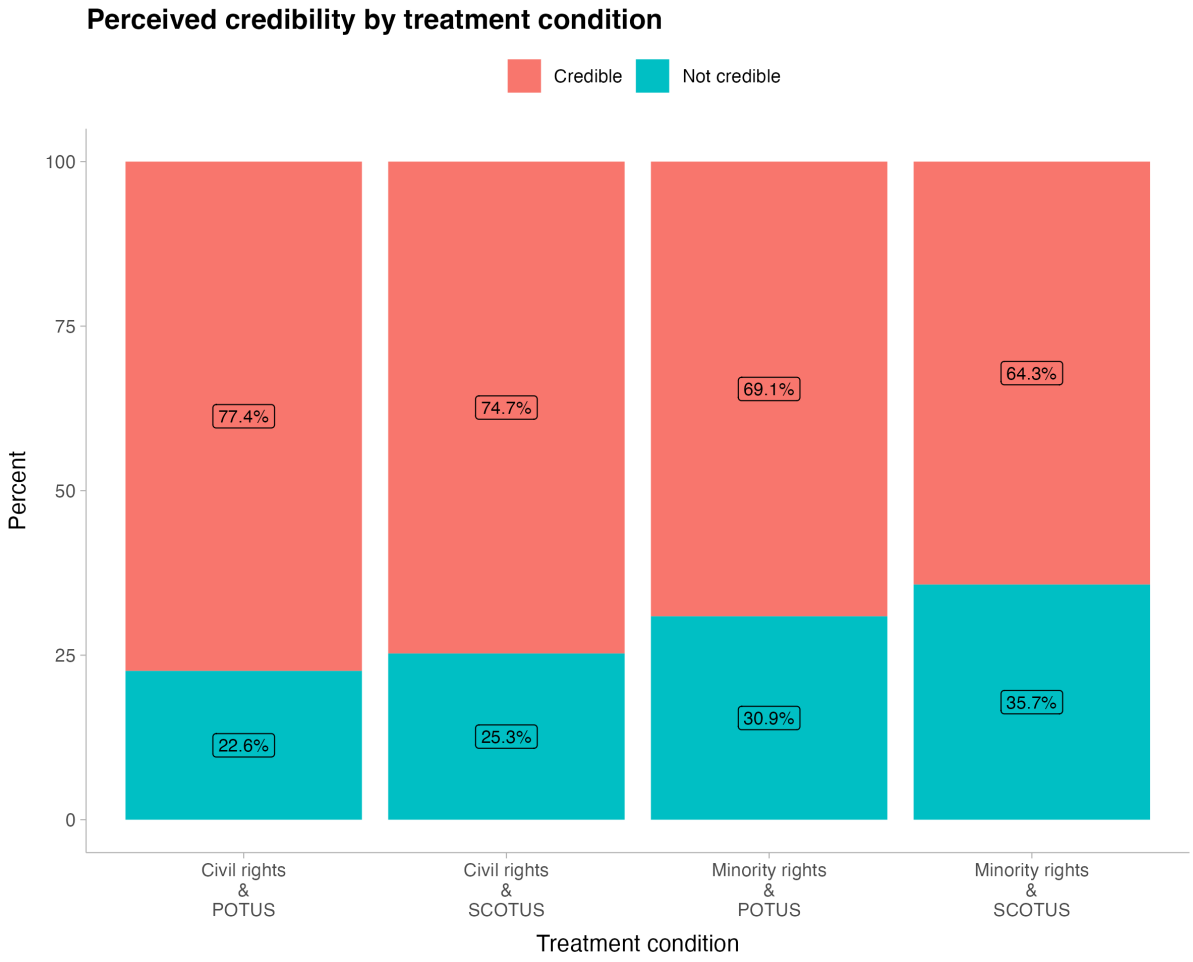

Figure A.11: Self-reported credibility of treatment messages

F Study 2: Emotional reactions

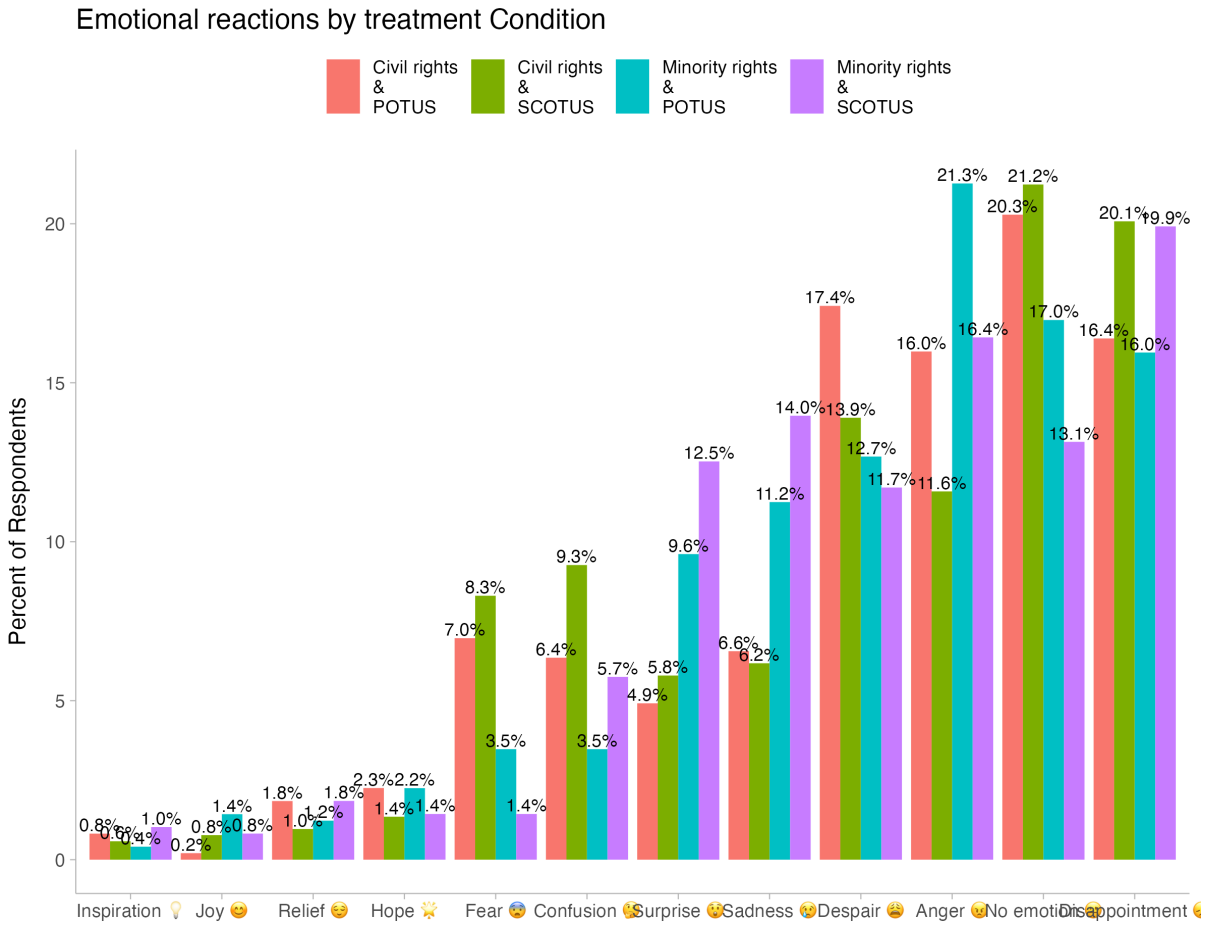

Figure A.12: Self-reported emotional reactions (treatment vs control)

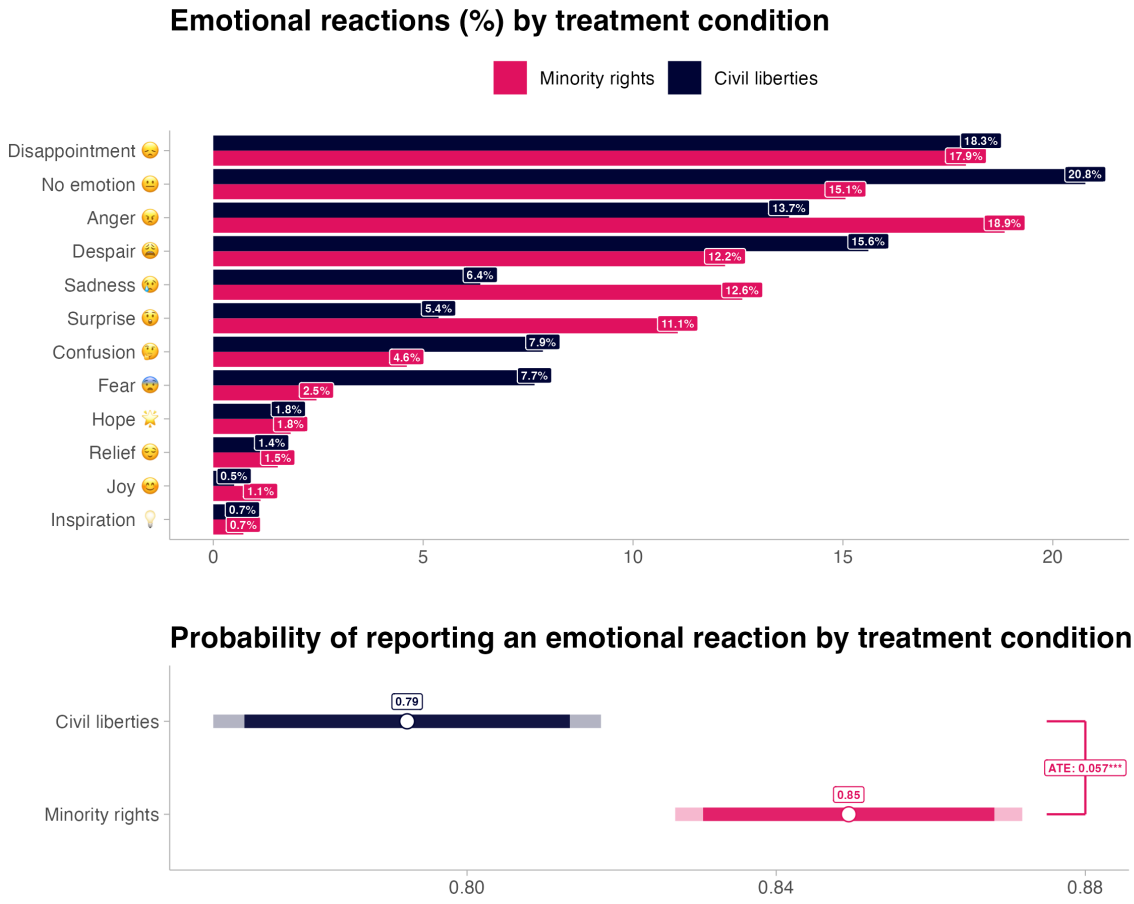

Figure A.13: Self-reported emotional reactions (individual treatment arms)

Table A.13: Study 2 - Models with and without attention check-failers

	All respondents	Those who failed check
Treatment	−0.030**	−0.033**
	(0.010)	(0.010)
Constant	0.416***	0.418***
	(0.008)	(0.008)
N	2829	2740
R2 Adj.	0.003	0.004
AIC	72.0	51.8
BIC	89.9	69.5
RMSE	0.24	0.24

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

G Study 2: Robustness & sensitivity tests

In Table A.13 we examine if the overall ATE identified is sensitive to the inclusion or exclusion of those respondents who failed one of two attention checks. The results reported in Table A.13 show that dropping inattentive respondents does little to alter the identified effects.

Table A.14: Study 2 - Test for differential attrition

	Direction	Democracy (absolute)	Democracy (benchmark)	Force for Good	Shared values
Treatment	−0.006	−0.017	−0.033**	0.002	−0.001
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Constant	0.068***	0.101***	0.116***	0.027***	0.030***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.005)
N	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993
R2	0.000	0.001	0.003	0.000	0.000
R2 Adj.	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.000
AIC	80.5	994.3	1115.6	−2280.2	−2211.7
BIC	98.5	1012.4	1133.7	−2262.2	−2193.7
RMSE	0.25	0.29	0.29	0.17	0.17

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table A.15: Study 2 - Test for differential attrition (categorical treatment)

	Direction	Democracy (absolute)	Democracy (benchmark)	Force for Good	Shared values
Civil liberties & POTUS	−0.013	−0.025	−0.036*	−0.004	−0.007
	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Civil liberties & SCOTUS	0.005	−0.016	−0.025	0.010	−0.001
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Minority rights & POTUS	−0.021+	−0.007	−0.032*	−0.012+	−0.007
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Minority rights & SCOTUS	0.004	−0.021	−0.040*	0.014	0.009
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Constant	0.068***	0.101***	0.116***	0.027***	0.030***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.005)
N	2993	2993	2993	2993	2993
R2	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.003	0.001
R2 Adj.	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.000
AIC	82.4	999.2	1120.9	−2282.5	−2208.9
BIC	118.5	1035.3	1157.0	−2246.5	−2172.9
RMSE	0.24	0.29	0.29	0.16	0.17

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table A.14 models non-response across diverse items of interest as a function of treatment assignment. There are outcomes where treatment assignment results in attrition. In the case of out benchmarked democracy outcome, however, treatment significantly reduces the proportion of missing (i.e. Don't Know) responses. Table A.15 replicates this analysis based on the individual treatment arms.

Figure A.14 reports the output from a multiverse specification curve. It visualizes the point-estimate of treatment across 511 different model specifications. The models vary in their inclusion – and combination – of the following covariates: gender, age, education, LGBT identification, ideology, political partisanship, levels of affect towards Donald Trump and levels of prejudice towards the US. All variables were recorded pre-treatment. Across all 511 specifications, treatment induces a non-zero ($p<.1$) effect with the median ATE of around two percentage-points.

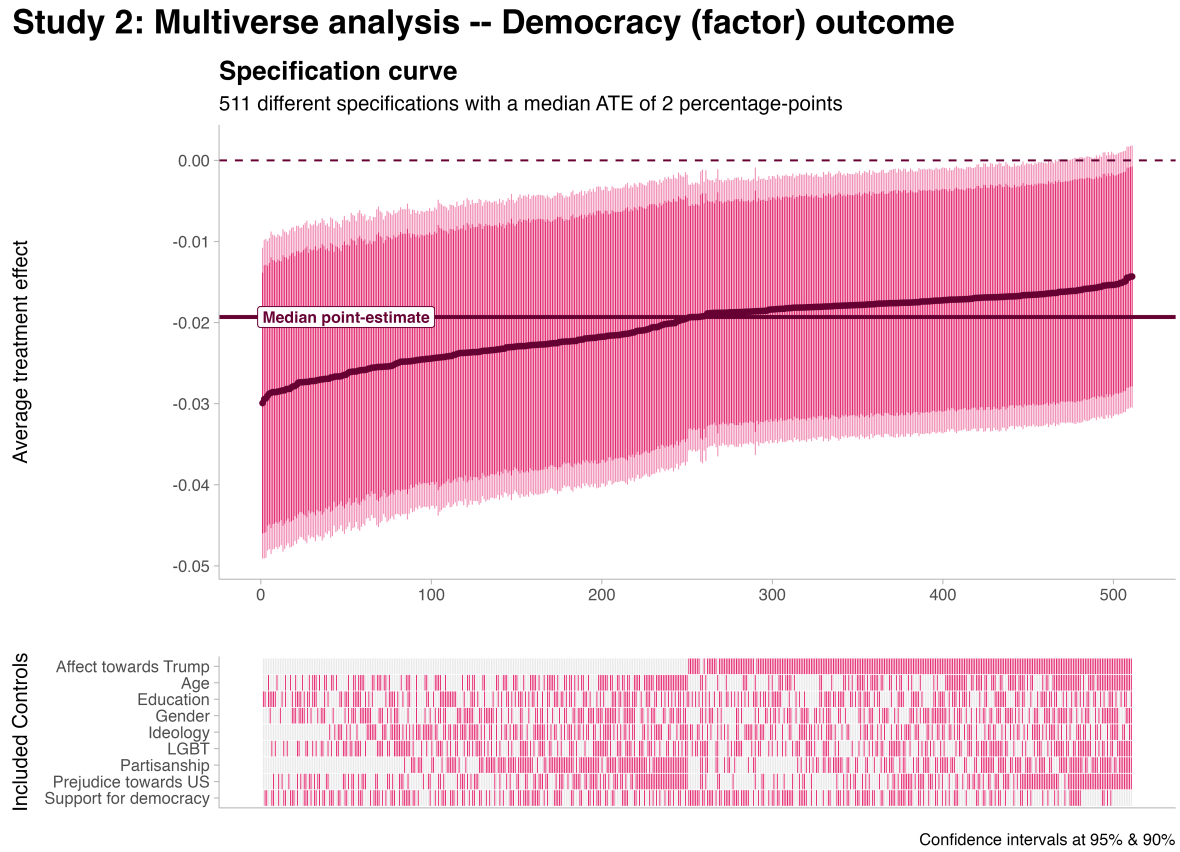

Figure A.14: Specification curve showing robustness across adjustment for different controls

Table A.16: Study 2 - Placebo items (I)

	US Direction	UK Direction	EU Direction	Life Direction
Treatment	−0.031*	−0.018	0.026	−0.026
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Constant	0.186***	0.133***	0.237***	0.539***
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)
N	2801	2887	2342	2871
R2	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
AIC	2031.1	1732.2	2755.0	4166.5
BIC	2048.9	1750.1	2772.2	4184.4
RMSE	0.35	0.33	0.44	0.50

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

In Table A.16, Table A.17, and Table A.18 we report the results of treatment assignment on several different placebo outcomes compared to core outcomes related to the US. In Table A.16, we compare views on the overall direction of the US to the direction of the UK, the EU as well as respondents' own personal life. In Table A.17, we compare respondent evaluations on whether they US the US as a force for good with similar evaluations for the EU and China. Finally, Table A.18 reports effects on whether the US shares the values of the UK and replicate these outcomes for the EU and China. There are no significant effects on any of the placebo outcomes.

Table A.17: Study 2 - Placebo items (II)

	US force for good	EU force for good	China force for good
Treatment	−0.028*	0.006	−0.016
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Constant	0.500***	0.688***	0.499***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
N	2909	2919	2846
R2	0.002	0.000	0.001
R2 Adj.	0.002	0.000	0.001
AIC	1069.7	140.3	344.2
BIC	1087.6	158.2	362.1
RMSE	0.29	0.25	0.26

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table A.18: Study 2 - Placebo items (III)

	US shares values	EU shares values	China shares values
Treatment	−0.021*	0.000	−0.015
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Constant	0.615***	0.725***	0.446***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
N	2907	2912	2784
R2	0.001	0.000	0.001
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.000	0.000
AIC	407.5	−358.8	240.8
BIC	425.4	−340.9	258.6
RMSE	0.26	0.23	0.25

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001