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Love of Variety? An Experimental Study of Heterogeneous Responses to Foreign Brands in the Marketplace

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of exposure to foreign brands in the marketplace on the policy and political preferences of US consumers. Using a pre-registered survey experiment, we simulate a realistic consumption experience with well-known brands of sports utility vehicles. Our findings reveal that exposure to foreign brands intensifies policy preferences that are more hostile toward immigrants and trade among respondents holding pre-existing nationalist attitudes while also increasing their support for Trump. Exposure to foreign brands has the opposite effect on the preferences of cosmopolitans. Model-based mediation analysis shows that anti-immigration policy preferences and egocentric concerns about trade mediate the treatment's effect on Trump support. We use raking and post-stratification weighting to show the results generalize beyond our convenience sample.

Keywords: globalization, economic nationalism, populism

1. Introduction

In economies open to trade, consumers are exposed to imports on a regular basis. How do individuals respond to foreign brands in the marketplace? We might expect people, even free trade skeptics, to become more supportive of trade as they experience the benefits of lower prices and greater product variety. However, these benefits are not easily observed by the average consumer because domestic producers match prices and adopt successful brand innovations from abroad. Take the US sport utility vehicle (SUV) market as an example. The consumer observes brands such as Ford, Volkswagen, and Toyota, that can be identified as foreign or domestic by name, but these companies offer very similar products at nearly identical prices. The US consumer does not observe the counterfactual marketplace in which only Ford SUVs are available, and they may not even consider this important thought experiment when evaluating the benefits of trade. Another possibility is that repeated exposure to foreign brands triggers and reinforces pre-existing attitudes toward trade. Rather than moderating extreme anti-trade attitudes, exposure to foreign brands may exacerbate them, and consequently contribute to social and political polarization over the international economy.

After decades of research, there is an emerging consensus that individual attitudes toward trade are highly malleable, subject to framing and priming effects, and driven more by cultural attachment, nationalism, and ethnocentrism than by material self-interest (Scheve and Slaughter 2000; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2001; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006; Mansfield and Mutz 2009; Margalit 2012; Naoi and Kume 2015; Mutz and Kim 2017; Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein, and Rudra 2024). Previous experimental research has examined mainly the influence of elite rhetoric in shaping individuals' perspectives.

However, people may also update their beliefs based on their personal consumption experiences. These experiences, in turn, may influence which elite frames resonate with the broader public. We argue that exposure to foreign brands yields heterogeneous effects: it may either diminish or leave unchanged the levels of anti-trade sentiment among pre-treatment cosmopolitans, but it will notably heighten anti-trade sentiment among pre-treatment nationalists.

To evaluate these hypotheses, we conduct a survey experiment in the US, randomly exposing respondents to different market conditions. Participants in our experiment were asked to evaluate and consider purchasing sports utility vehicles (SUVs), with the brands manipulated to be domestic, European, or Asian. Our design has several novel aspects, combining elements of both audit and conjoint experiments. First, our approach simulates realistic consumption experiences with well-known brands. Our goal is to assess whether the national identity of a product's brand influences how individuals evaluate trade and the international economy more generally, and whether this influence depends on pre-treatment levels of nationalism. Second, we extend the analysis beyond individual home bias (for example, Bankert, Powers, and Sheagley 2022; Feng, Kerner, and Sumner 2021), investigating whether exposure to foreign brands reinforces nationalists' preference for illiberal foreign economic policies and the leaders who espouse them. Lastly, our study explores how consumption experiences, in a marketplace abundant with foreign brands, might catalyze a bottom-up process polarization over the international economy, a departure from the predominant focus on the top-down process of elite framing (e.g., Diana Carole Mutz 2021; Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein, and Rudra 2024).

Our analysis yields significant insights: pre-treatment nationalists exposed to foreign SUVs expressed more negative evaluations of trade, increased support for illiberal policies, such as reducing immigration, and were more likely to endorse Trump for president than pre-treatment nationalists exposed to domestic SUVs. Exposure to foreign brands has the opposite effect on the preferences and behavior of cosmopolitans. These findings largely hold after controlling for age, gender, income, education, occupation and race and when we apply post-stratification weighting to our sample to match known population demographic benchmarks. Amid growing concerns about rising nationalism, right-wing populism, and the future of the liberal international economic order, these findings are important. Our work extends Autor et al.'s discussion of 'importing political polarization' to include the impact of trade-related consumption experiences. The subtle intervention in our experiment demonstrates the potential for grassroots polarization and provides empirical evidence connecting nationalism and populism to policy illiberalism, bridging a significant gap in the literature (Mansfield and Pevehouse 2022).

We also show that hostile policy preferences toward immigrants and egocentric concerns about the costs of trade potentially mediate the relationship between the treatment (exposure to foreign brands) and support for illiberal policies and Trump. These findings highlight the intricate relationship between international economic activities, such as trade, and cultural grievances. Our results are consistent with previous research examining trade exposure using observational data (e.g., Hays, Lim, and Spoon 2019), while also providing stronger evidence for the egocentric pathway, which has not received much support in the literature.

In the remainder of this article, we first situate our study with respect to the growing literature on the populist backlash against economic globalization, from which we derive our theoretical argument. Next, we describe our experimental design and the results obtained. Finally, we conduct a model-based mediation analysis to examine the pathways through which exposure to foreign brands triggers policy illiberalism.

2. Economic Globalization and the Populist Backlash

If free trade maximizes national welfare, why do governments impose tariffs? This puzzle has motivated political-economic research for decades. The standard answer is that trade generates both

winners and losers, and while the aggregate gains may be larger than the losses, if the losers have political power, they will use it to impose tariffs. Recently, some scholars in this research tradition have turned their attention to understanding the emergence and political success of right-wing populist parties and candidates around the world (Colantone and Stanig 2018; Ballard-Rosa, Scheve, and Jensen 2021). This is because opposition to free trade and economic nationalism, more generally, is a central tenet of right-wing populism. Trade losers may be drawn to the foreign economic policy positions of right-wing populist candidates and parties. This phenomenon is viewed by many in international relations as a significant challenge to the post-World War II liberal international economic order (Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021).

Do trade losers tend to favor right-wing populist parties and candidates? Evidence indicates that regions experiencing significant import shocks show increased aggregate support for these parties and candidates, yet the evidence at the individual level is less compelling (Colantone and Stanig 2019). An alternative hypothesis, which has garnered significant attention, suggests that people's political responses to trade shocks are more sociotropic—concerned with society at large—rather than egocentric, focusing on personal impact (Mansfield and Mutz 2009). Nonetheless, support for this sociotropic explanation remains limited. For example, Hays, Lim, and Spoon (2019) find that individuals living in regions that experience large import shocks are more optimistic about the overall state of the economy than others.

A comprehensive body of research in both political science and economics has traditionally highlighted the negative effects of imports on domestic economic production, especially employment, while taking the consumption benefits of trade—such as lower prices and a broader range of products—for granted. These advantages are extensively discussed in seminal works by Krugman (1979, 1980), which introduce equilibrium models based on monopolistic competition. These models underscore the importance of product variety in international trade. Krugman argues that countries benefit from trade by importing new varieties of goods, attributing this gain to the consumers' "love of variety." This perspective was bolstered by Broda and Weinstein (2004), who empirically show how an increase in global product varieties, primarily attributed to the introduction of new imported goods, has significantly enhanced welfare.

Building on this work, a small group of scholars has argued that an individual's self-identification as either a producer who competes against imported goods or a consumer who buys them determines their support or opposition to trade. Baker (2005) shows that individuals who heavily consume imported goods tend to be more supportive of trade. Moreover, the related experimental research suggests that these identities are malleable. In a survey experiment conducted in Japan, Naoi and Kume (2011) present evidence of "producer projection": respondents exposed to visual cues emphasizing production–pictures of a white-collar office, car factory, and rice field–are more likely to support restrictions on agricultural imports, irrespective of their own industry of employment. This tendency is more pronounced among those experiencing job insecurity. Similarly, Naoi and Kume (2015) demonstrate that priming individuals with consumer-related cues increases their support for free trade.

Is the common belief that voters qua consumers view trade and globalization more positively than voters qua producers accurate? Are these identities as malleable as the experimental research suggests? Furthermore, how do non-material factors like nationalism influence these attitudes beyond the simple benefits of price and variety that imports offer? Our research diverges from traditional approaches by analyzing the interplay between exposure to foreign brands, anti-trade sentiment, and the endorsement of right-wing populist politics, challenging the conventional wisdom that consumer-oriented evaluations of trade invariably foster a positive outlook towards it.

3. The Argument: Trade and Nationalism

Consumer and producer identities are not the only identities that are likely to shape attitudes toward trade. People also identify as nationalists and cosmopolitans. Nationalists exhibit extreme patriotism, support their country in international affairs unconditionally, and expect their leaders to pursue the national interest even when doing so leads to conflicts with other nations. Cosmopolitans have a more global identity, expect their leaders to pursue international cooperation, and oppose policies that lead to conflict. A considerable amount of research has examined the relationship between nationalism an attitudes toward trade.

Carnegie and Gaikwad (2022) explore the aversion to trade with perceived geopolitical adversaries. Scholars such as Guisinger (2017), Margalit (2012), O'Rourke and Sinnott (2001), and Mansfield and Pevehouse (2022) have thoroughly examined nationalism and trade attitudes. Mutz and Kim (2017) interpret this evidence as a form of in-group favoritism, where individuals show a preference for generating benefits for members of their own group, even at the expense of outsider groups. Feng, Kerner, and Sumner (2021) demonstrate a general preference for domestic investment over foreign investment, especially investment from China, and this preference is markedly stronger among nationalists.

Research in international business and marketing has shown that consumer ethnocentrism significantly influences the willingness of individuals to purchase imports (Zeugner-Roth, Žabkar, and Diamantopoulos 2015; Herche 1994) and is broadly linked to feelings of nationalism and patriotism (Balabanis et al. 2001; Lekakis 2017). Increasingly, evidence suggests that consumer ethnocentrism may have a neurological foundation (Huang et al. 2020). For example, Casado-Aranda et al. (2021) find that individuals with high levels of consumer ethnocentrism exhibit activation in brain regions related to self-interest and reward when they contemplate buying domestic products, whereas areas linked to risk-taking light up when they consider foreign purchases. This research does more than prime individuals to identify as consumers with visuals or text. The experiments require subjects to engage in consumption-related behavior. The treatments are active consumption tasks rather than passive consumption frames or primes.

The literature on consumer ethnocentrism suggests that the effect of priming individuals to think like consumers on their trade attitudes may be limited. When nationalists are exposed to foreign brands in the marketplace, their reactions might not reflect what we would expect based on standard trade models. The presence of foreign brands could trigger protectionist and illiberal sentiments instead, driven by perceived threats to national and other in-group identities. Simply put, nationalists may not derive much if any utility from consuming a internationally diverse basket of goods, despite lower prices and more variety. Conversely, cosmopolitans exposed to foreign brands are more likely to reflect on the benefits of trade and internationalism more generally.

Hypothesis 1 (Nationalists) *Nationalists who are exposed to foreign brands will be more likely to support illiberal policies and right-wing populism compared to those who are exposed to domestic brands.*

Hypothesis 2 (Cosmopolitans) *Cosmopolitans who are exposed to foreign brands will be less (or equally) likely to support illiberal policies and right-wing populism compared to those who are exposed to domestic brands.*

4. Experimental Design and Procedures

Experimental research in political science and economics typically provides subjects with informational cues, visual primes, and fictional scenarios rather than realistic, ecologically valid consumption experiences. For our experimental design, we follow the lead of researchers studying consumer ethnocentrism in business and marketing. Our surveys specifically focus on consumption behavior and exposure to foreign brands. We simulate the experience of online shopping for a commonly consumed product with established, well-known brands without explicitly mentioning the national identity of

these brands.[1] Lastly, to explore potential mechanisms linking exposure to foreign products with illiberal policy preferences and support for Trump, we include a series of targeted questions. These questions capture mediating pathways, such as egocentric and sociotropic cost-benefit calculations, anti-immigration policy preferences, and ethnocentric attitudes.

We conducted our survey in the United States using CloudResearch. The survey involved 3,299 US adults and was carried out in October-November 2022.[2] Participants in our study were informed that our focus was on understanding how personal politics and public policy preferences correlate with the characteristics of 'big ticket' items consumers purchase and their inclination towards online buying. We created a simulated shopping experience for SUVs, directing respondents to visit websites of specific models.[3] They were asked to review and consider the purchase of three different SUVs. The purpose of the survey is explained to potential respondents as follows:

> Companies are increasingly interested in learning about the political identities and public policy preferences of their customers. A recent survey, for example, showed that an overwhelming majority of consumers believe that brands should take a stand on important social and political issues of the day. Political attitudes and behavior also seem to correlate with the product attributes that consumers find desirable. We hope to learn more about these relationships. In this survey, the focus is on automobiles, specifically sports utility vehicles (SUVs).
>
> As part of this study, we will ask you some questions about your political identity, public policy preferences, and product evaluations. You will be guided to the webpages of randomly selected SUV (sports utility vehicles) models to aid in these evaluations. We will also ask you whether you would consider buying an automobile online.

Under this premise, participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions. The first condition featured three American sports utility vehicle (SUV) brands: Ford Explorer, Chevy Traverse LS, and GMC Acadia SLE. The second condition showcased three European SUV brands: Mercedes GLA 250, Volkswagen Atlas SE, and Volvo XC40. The third condition included three Asian SUV brands: Hyundai Palisade SE, Toyota Highlander L, and Mazda CX-9. For simplicity, we refer to the first condition (American brands) as our control condition, and the second and third conditions as our European and Asian treatment conditions, respectively. As with most conjoint consumer-choice experiments, a pure control, in which respondents are not asked to compare any SUVs, is theoretically uninteresting and nonsensical, given our survey description.

We selected automobiles due to the sector's significance in domestic production and consumption, as well as the high volume of imports.[4] In choosing brands, we considered consumer familiarity (based on sales data) and product similarity in terms of price (approximately $34-38k) and quality. Our aim was to provide an ecologically valid consumption experience. Therefore, we did not

1. In this sense, our experimental treatments are similar to audit studies in economics and political science that use distinctively black names to study discrimination (Fryer Jr and Levitt 2004; Butler and Broockman 2011). We expect our participants to attribute national (or continental) identities to distinctively foreign brand names.

2. We chose this platform because previous research has shown that CloudResearch or Prolific yields better results than using Mturk, undergraduate students, or Qualtrics (Douglas, Ewell, and Brauer 2023; Hauser et al. 2022; Litman et al. 2021). Additionally, this platform incorporates quality control measures, permitting only selected respondents with an approval rate above 95% to participate and preventing multiple survey responses from the same IP address. Respondents are paid $1.50 for a completed survey.

3. Respondents are provided with a link to each model's (external) webpage where pictures and product descriptions are available. We record whether respondents click on the link and the amount of time before proceeding to the next vehicle. Figure A.1 presents a screenshot of the websites at the moment the experiment was conducted. As evidenced by these figures, the websites for all SUVs display strong similarities.

4. Automobiles are the most imported commodity (e.g., in 2018 represented 8.3% of total imports into the U.S), and they play an important role in domestic production, with the car industry and their suppliers representing over 3% of the U.S's GDP.

include information about the products' country of origin. Respondents were unaware that they were participating in an experiment until they were debriefed at the end of the survey. Incomplete disclosure about the study's purpose was used to prevent biasing the results.

Participants in any of these experimental conditions were asked to provide socio-demographic information, which included *inter alia* age, gender, occupation, employment status, range of income (10-point scale), and zip codes. We also measured participants' partisan and ideological predispositions and their pre-treatment levels of nationalism. To gauge nationalism, we create an index using five Likert-scale questions previously utilized in social psychology studies.[5] These questions include statements about the importance of being born in the US, pride in their country, and preference for US citizenship over any other country, among others.[6] Then, we categorize respondents' scores into low, medium, or high levels of nationalism, referring to those with low or middle levels as cosmopolitan (lower 66th percentile).

Finally, following the treatment, we prompted respondents to undertake tasks consistent with our stated intentions, to identify product attributes that consumers find desirable. This included questions on their preferred SUV among the three, reasons for potentially purchasing (or not purchasing) these vehicles with options such as fuel efficiency, safety, price, among others. Subsequently, we asked respondents about their public policy preferences. This transition was justified under the premise that companies are increasingly keen to understand their customers' political identities and policy preferences.

Our primary aim is to determine whether our foreign brand treatment conditions elicit heterogeneous effects on policy and political preferences among nationalists and cosmopolitans. These include policy preferences related to immigration, attitudes toward trade, climate change, and degrees of economic ethnocentrism. We also examine the influence on support for a potential Trump candidacy in the 2024 presidential election and the core elements of the neo-mercantilist foreign economic policies that right-wing populist governments around the world, including the Trump administration from 2016 to 2020, have pursued.

To assess immigration preferences, we ask subjects on a 5-point Likert scale whether the government should increase or decrease the number of immigrants allowed in the US. We measure trade favorability on a 100-point scale that captures evaluations of whether trade has benefited various groups such as the American economy, workers, companies, 'you and your family,' or consumers. We are also interested in whether our treatments have a causal effect on foreign policy nationalism more generally (i.e., beyond foreign economic policies). To that end, we ask whether respondents support increased military spending and oppose international cooperation to address climate change. For the latter one, we inquire about support for US participation in the Paris Agreement. We measure economic ethnocentrism through questions about preferences for buying American-made and branded products, and whether American companies should always manufacture their products in the US (consumption and producer ethnocentrism respectively Shimp and Sharma 1987; Aljukhadar, Boeuf, and Senecal 2021)

The survey also incorporated attention checks and manipulation checks to ensure high-quality data. These checks involved selecting a specific option during the survey and identifying the products that were the focus of the study. Additionally, we included three extra questions to assess the effectiveness of our manipulation. At the end of the survey, we asked respondents to identify whether the brands were foreign or domestic, their degree of familiarity with these brands, and which set of words best describes the vehicle brands (luxurious, powerful, safe, reliable, other). We also ask a couple of "distraction" questions on taxation and healthcare to disguise that our interest is in foreign policy.

5. Several questions are similar to those in the ISSP National Identity Survey.
6. For the complete set of questions, please refer to the appendix.

5. Evidence About the Effects of Foreign Brands on Politics

Figure 1 summarizes the overall effect of exposure to foreign brands on political attitudes and behavior. To compute the average treatment effect, we compare subjects assigned to foreign SUVs (either European or Asian) with those exposed to domestic brands.[7] The results are largely consistent with our theory. Specifically, subjects with high levels of nationalism (represented by red circles) who were exposed to foreign SUVs are more likely to oppose immigration and trade and to support Trump, as predicted in hypothesis 1. To contextualize these results, preferences for restricting immigration increased by approximately 10 percentage points (pp), against trade by 8 pp, and support for Trump by 6.4 pp. This increase corresponds to 22%, 17%, and 15% of a standard deviation in each of the respective variables.

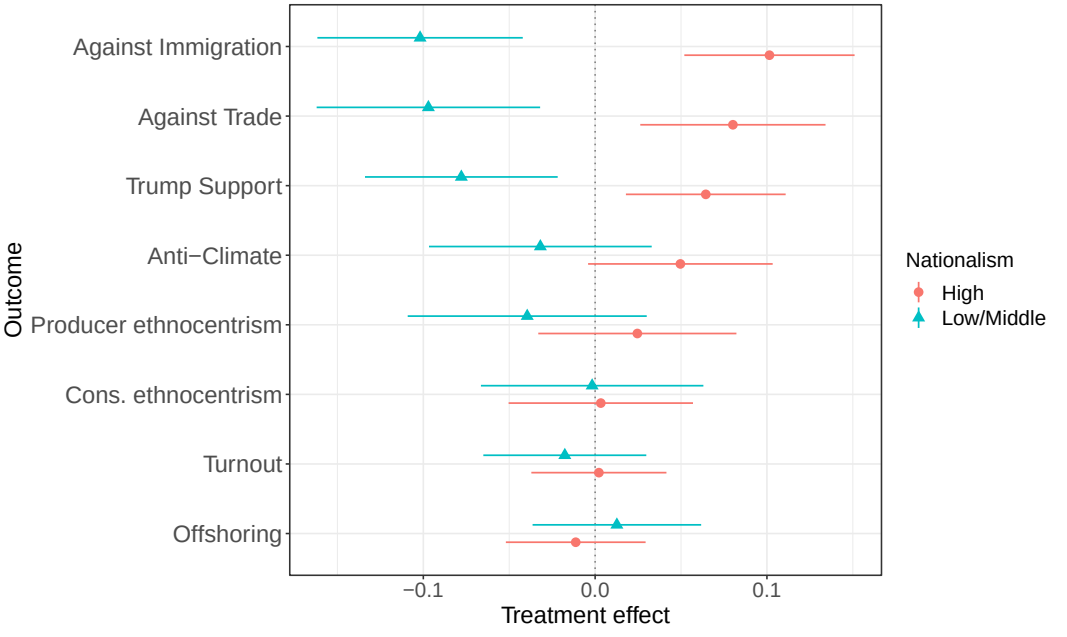

Figure 1. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism levels.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together (N=2786). The full model can be seen in Table A.2, and estimations with control variables are included in Table A.3. Moreover, the full sample of treated without dropping the subject who did not click can be seen in Table A.5, and Figure A.2.

When we focus on cosmopolitans—those with low or intermediate levels of nationalism, as indicated by blue triangles in the figure—we observe that in line with hypothesis 2, exposure to foreign brands significantly reduces their support for restricting immigration and trade policies, as well as their support for Trump. Overall, our findings –aligned with our pre-registered expectations– suggest that exposure to foreign brands markedly influences consumers: it triggers support for illiberal policies and the candidates that support these policies among nationalists, whereas it leads to more favorable views of trade and immigration among cosmopolitans. Contrary to our initial expectations, we observed no significant effects on economic ethnocentrism, either from a production or consumption standpoint. This may be because the analysis stratifies individuals into nationalist and cosmopolitan groups. For nationalists, a ceiling effect may have occurred, as their ethnocentrism

7. We defined our treatment group as those who completed the task (i.e., clicked on at least one of the websites). The results remain similar when this constraint is relaxed.

scores were likely already high, leaving little room for further increases. Conversely, cosmopolitans may have scores at the lowest end of the spectrum, limiting the potential for further decreases. Another way to think about this is that the producer and consumer ethnocentrism questions tap our moderating condition rather than a mediating belief.

Our results are robust to incorporating demographic controls for age, gender, income, and education levels (see Table A.3). Moreover, we control for race and economic insecurity indicators, including concerns about job (or business) loss and the routine task intensity index—a proxy for exposure to automation-related occupational risks. As shown in Appendix Table A.4, even after directly accounting for white identity and economic risks, we continue to find significant evidence that exposure to foreign brands influences nationalist preferences for restricting trade and immigration, and fosters liberal attitudes among cosmopolitans.

If we replace the pooled interaction term for low and middle levels of nationalism with separate interaction terms for each level of nationalism, the results are substantively unchanged (see Table A.6). We prefer the main model (a single interaction for low and middle) since it allows for different constants for low and middle levels but pools the interactive effects. This model specification has a better fit to the data, as indicated by its lower AIC score. Using a broader definition of 'treated'—including those subjects who were assigned to the treatment but did not click on the website—we find similar results (Table A.5 and Figure A.2).

Finally, one common issue with convenience samples is that they are rarely representative of the larger population from which they are drawn, which can influence study results and lead to contradictions in the literature (Goldberg et al. 2019). To address this, we replicate our analysis using rake-generated weighting. This approach weights respondents by their profiles to match known population shares. We employ the American Community Survey (ACS) as the population benchmark, adjusting for race and ethnicity, age, sex, educational attainment, and the interaction of education and race.[8]

After adjusting our sample to reflect population benchmarks, our main results remain consistent across most outcomes of interest. The weighting increases the effect with respect to immigration policy preferences, but reactions to trade are no longer statistically significant despite maintaining the expected signs (see Figure A.3 in the Appendix). Furthermore, opposition to internationalism—measured as disagreement with the Paris Agreement on climate change, which showed no effect in the unweighted sample—appears to have increased among high nationalists who received the foreign brand treatments. The overall alignment between the unweighted and weighted results enhances our confidence that our results would hold in the broader population.

6. Analyzing the Mechanisms: Why Do Foreign Brands Trigger Illiberalism?

Having demonstrated that exposing nationalists (cosmopolitans) to foreign brands increases (decreases) support for illiberal policies, such as less (more) support for international trade, we turn to the possible mechanisms, mediating beliefs that lead to illiberal policy preferences and support for Trump. One possible mechanism is that trade generates feelings of cultural threat. In the literature, researchers focus on the cultural proximity of trade and investment partners. Trade with and investment from countries that are culturally distant are shown to generate stronger adverse reactions. To explore this possibility, we stratify the sample into European and Asian brands. We consider a number of other mechanisms as well with model-based mediation analysis. Specifically, we explore whether anti-immigration policy preferences, economic ethnocentrism, and egocentric or sociotropic evaluations of the material consequences of trade might explain changes in policy preferences and support for Trump.

8. The *anesrake* R package (Pasek 2018) facilitates this raking process. Following DeBell and Krosnick (2009), we cap the weights at 5 and repeat the process with a cap of 6.Our approach aligns with prior work in the social sciences, such as Goldberg et al. (2019), Zhang et al. (2020), Penn, Petrolia, and Fannin (2023), and Wang et al. (2020).

If the preferences for policy illiberalism are primarily motivated by cultural threats, or a fear of foreigners (Diana C. Mutz 2018), we would expect a stronger average response to the Asian treatment than to the European one. This expectation aligns with prior research that indicates public hesitance towards Asian investments (Feng, Kerner, and Sumner 2021) and goods (Bankert, Powers, and Sheagley 2022; Sabet 2013). Conversely, if changes in policy preferences stem primarily from egocentric or sociotropic concerns about American jobs, then no significant variation should be observed between the effects of European-foreign and Asian-foreign treatments. In essence, if the primary concerns of respondents are the material consequences of trade rather than its cultural implications, then the particular national identity of a foreign brand would not matter; any foreign country would be perceived as a economic threat.

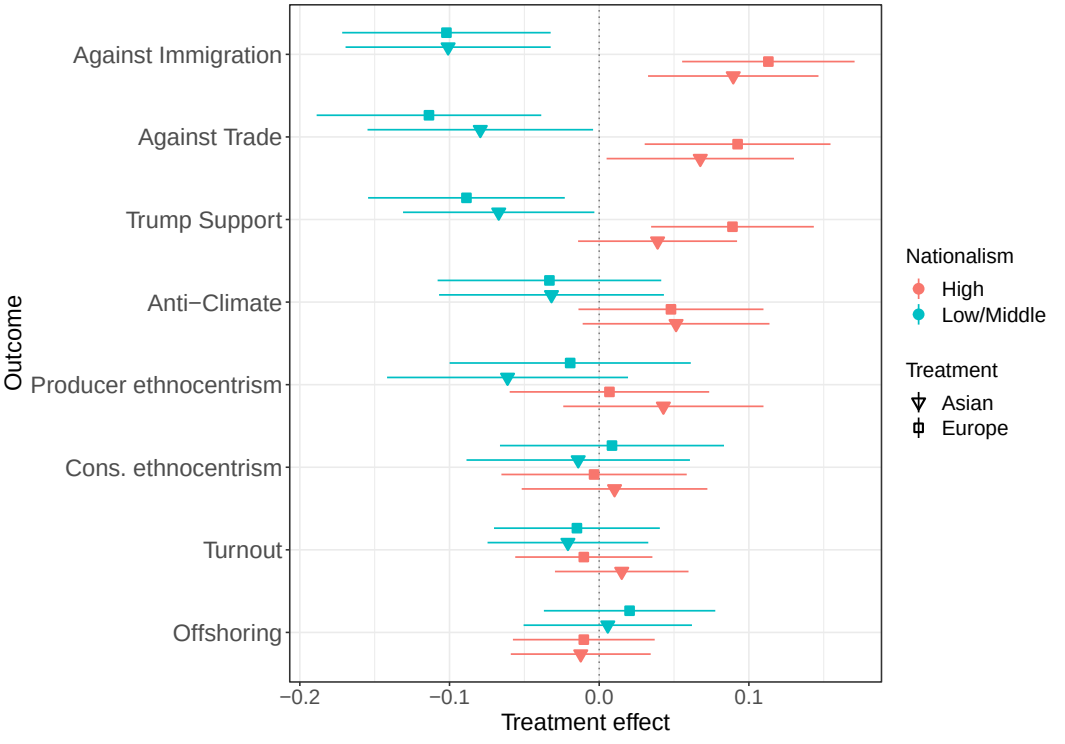

Figure 2. Treatment effect of exposure to European and Asian SUVs by nationalism levels
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle/low (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the samples by country, meaning that the European (N=1860) and Asian (N=1858) treatments are separated. The full model can be seen in Table A.7 for Europe and Table A.11 for Asian, and estimations with control variables are included in Table A.8 and Table A.12. Moreover, the full sample of treated without dropping the subject who did not click can be seen in Table A.9 and Table A.13.

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the average treatment effects for each foreign treatment mirror those when the European and Asian brands are pooled together, except for the effects on support for Trump among nationalists who were exposed to the Asian treatment. The sign remains positive, but the estimate is no longer statistically significant. Overall, we observe that exposure to foreign brands generates divergent effects on nationalists and cosmopolitans regarding their support for illiberal policies. The magnitude of these effects appears to be slightly greater for the European treatment than the Asian one; for example, the increase in anti-immigration policy preferences is 11 pp for European SUVs versus 9 pp for Asian SUVs. However, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that these differences are due to chance. These results are inconsistent with the cultural threat mechanism,

commonly linked to cultural distance, which should be greater with Asian than European brands.

We also employ model-based causal mediation analysis, following the methods described by Imai et al. (2011) that use observed values of potential mediators in our survey. This method allows us to decompose the average treatment effect (ATE) into two components: the average causal mediated effect (ACME) and the average direct effect (ADE), providing clearer insight into the distinct causal influences.[9] Results for ACME are presented in Figure 3.

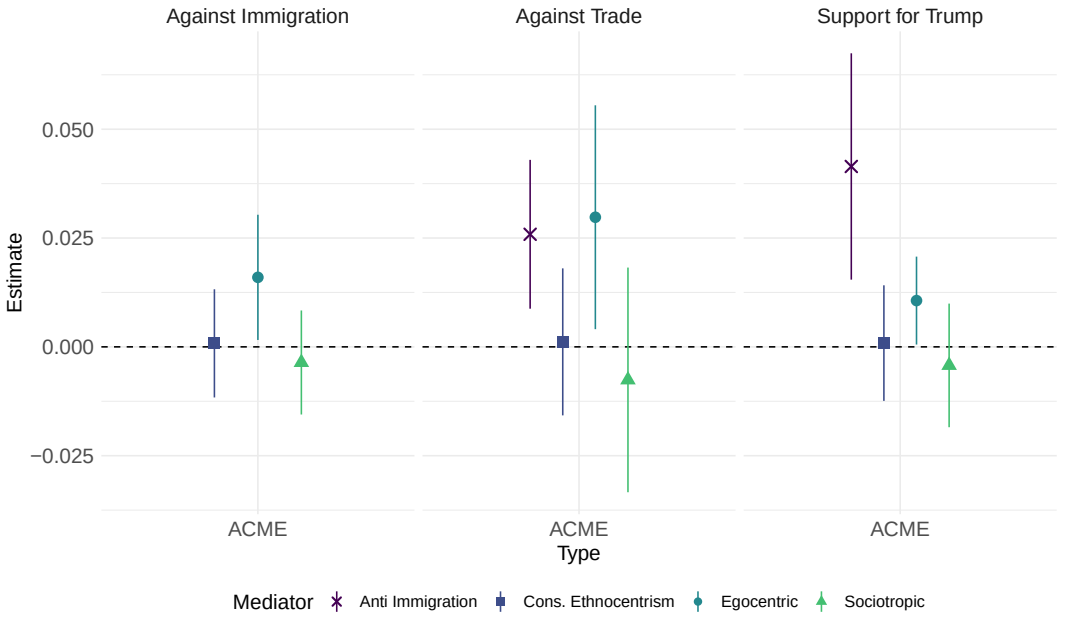

Figure 3. Average Mediated Causal Effect (high nationalists)
Note: The points indicate the estimated effect of automation risks, with lines displaying 95% confidence intervals. The outcome variables are all binary (0-1). The mediators include the following: 'against immigration' and 'consumption ethnocentrism', both of which are binary variables (0-1). It is important to note that these are only used as mediators for opposition to trade and support for Trump. The 'egocentric' and 'sociotropic beliefs' mediators are indexed variables ranging from 0 (indicating a negative evaluation) to 100 (indicating a positive evaluation). The proxy for egocentric beliefs pertains to the evaluation of international trade's impact on oneself and one's family. The proxy for sociotropic beliefs involves assessing trade's perceived benefits for the American economy. The sample is limited to those who are high nationalist (top 33th score in the nationalist index).

These results illustrate how policy preferences to reduce immigration and egocentric beliefs about the costs and benefits of trade potentially mediate the effects of the treatment (exposure to foreign brands) on support for illiberal policies and Trump. To contextualize these findings, we quantify the contribution of these mediators to the total treatment effects. Our foreign brand treatment leads to an increase in preferences for reducing immigration, large enough to account for 61% of the increase in support for Trump among those treated. The egocentric pathway contributes 15%. More specifically, our foreign brand treatment leads to a higher percentage of pre-treament nationalists saying trade is bad financially for them personally, and this increase is large enough to account for 15% of the increase in support for Trump.

Concerning the increase in support for illiberal policies like restricting trade, policy preferences to reduce immigration account for up to 31% of the effect, while the egocentric pathway explains 36%. Importantly, the treatment effect on support for Trump seems to be mainly mediated by the role of anti-immigration policy preferences and egocentric beliefs about the costs of trade, as demonstrated by the null direct effect of the treatment documented in Figure A.4. Finally, contrary

9. See subsubsection A.8.1 for the details of the model.

to our pre-registered expectations, the results show no significant effects mediated via consumption or production ethnocentrism. Similarly, we fail to reject the null hypothesis regarding the sociotropic pathway.[10]

These findings highlight the complex interplay between international economic activities such as trade and cultural grievances. These results are consistent with previous research that examines trade exposure with observational data (e.g., Hays, Lim, and Spoon 2019). Furthermore, the results from the egocentric pathway strengthen the previously weak evidence for this mechanism.[11]

7. Conclusion

For decades, the rise of right-wing populism in democracies has challenged liberalism and the global order. This article contributes to the debate by asking: How do individuals respond to foreign brands in the marketplace? We demonstrate that exposure to foreign brands has heterogeneous effects on policy and political preferences depending on pre-existing levels of nationalism. Using an innovative experimental design with subtle and realistic treatments to simulate the experience of online shopping, we show that among nationalists—those with high levels of nationalism before treatment—there is increased support for illiberal policies, such as anti-immigration policies and trade protectionism, as well as for the populist right-wing candidate, Trump. In contrast, cosmopolitans exhibit diminished support for these illiberal policies and Trump following the same exposure. We believe that stronger preferences for illiberal policies mediate political support for Trump. Exposure to foreign brands causes nationalists to prefer tighter restrictions on immigration and to be more skeptical of the benefits of trade, which, in turn, leads to more support for the candidate who will limit immigration and trade. Our mediation analysis suggests that these pathways account for a substantial portion of the total effect.

Our findings challenge the prevailing assumption that consumer-oriented framings are sufficient to mitigate backlash against trade (Naoi and Kume 2011, 2015). We demonstrate that trade is not solely interpreted through consumer and producer identities; nationalism also plays a critical role. For nationalists, the economic benefits of trade—such as greater product variety or lower prices—are often overshadowed by deeply held values and identities that strongly shape their policy preferences.

This article advances our understanding of how people perceive trade and the factors that shape their support for illiberal policies. Our findings align with recent economic research suggesting that general support for trade does not increase when the benefits of consumption are emphasized, though it may decline when trade is framed as causing employment losses (Rodríguez Chatruc, Stein, and Vlaicu 2021; Stantcheva 2023). We believe that the null effects of consumption framing can be partly attributed to the heterogeneous responses we observe: while cosmopolitans recognize and value these benefits, nationalists do not. These findings emphasize the importance of considering how values and identities shape attitudes toward trade, beyond purely economic considerations.

An important implication of these findings is that even subtle interactions with foreign products, without explicit cues about their country of origin, can activate nationalist sentiments and provoke illiberal responses. This highlights the potential for everyday exposure to foreign goods to shape support for right-wing populists advocating economic nationalism. Furthermore, our findings suggest that pre-existing nationalist tendencies can be easily activated, which may help explain the success of right-wing populist leaders in advancing their economic nationalist agendas. Additionally, our results complement elite-centric narratives (e.g., Diana Carole Mutz 2021; Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein, and

10. Table A.15 presents the sensitivity analysis of these results to violation of the sequential ignorability assumption. While the unobserved variables could be related to the mediators, we believe it is unlikely they will be so strongly related as to make the mediating relationship disappear.

11. Our results are similar to those found by Rho and Tomz (2017), which show that selfish responses often predominate over altruistic ones when individuals understand the losers and winners. Our work expands on this by showing that even without explicitly presenting information about winners or losers, introducing individuals to consumption scenarios in a diversified open market indirectly leads them to form more egocentric attitudes.

Rudra 2024) by demonstrating that grassroots dynamics, such as individual consumption experiences, also play a critical role in shaping political preferences and fostering polarization.

For policymakers, our findings highlight the importance of effectively communicating the benefits of trade to highly nationalistic individuals, who may otherwise overlook these advantages. Proactive strategies should focus on mitigating egocentric and xenophobic responses while emphasizing the tangible gains from trade, even when it involves importing foreign goods.

Finally, this study advances the methodological and theoretical discourse on trade exposure by employing an experimental design grounded in real-world consumption experiences. Future research could build on this framework by implementing double randomization to manipulate mediators, such as xenophobic and egocentric beliefs. Additionally, replicating the study across diverse countries and industries—such as security—and exploring cultural perceptions of European versus Asian goods through open-ended questions could provide deeper insights into the sentiments associated with these regions. These extensions would further refine our understanding of the complex interplay between economic globalization and political behavior.

Conflict of interest The authors declare none.

Data Availability Statement Replication data and code will be be found in Harvard Dataverse upon publication

Ethical Standards The research meets all ethical guidelines. IRB approval at the University of Pittsburgh was obtained on August 12, 2022.

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Appendix 1. Online Appendix

Contents

A.1 Survey Questions

You can find our survey questions in our pre-analysis plan https://osf.io/y8nrm, pages 22-43.

A.2 Survey Flow

A summary of the survey design and flow is provided in Table A.1.

Table A.1. Summary of Survey Design and Flow

Sequence of subject screens	Content	Function
1	Consent Form	Inform subjects of study's purpose and confirms their willingness to participate.
2	Eligibility	Screen subjects based on their citizenship and age.
3	Pre-treatment demographics	Assess representativeness of sample. Includes questions on gender, race, income, education, employment, occupation, zip code.
4	Pre-treatment politics and nationalism	Pre-treatment political questions about ideology and partisanship. Several questions on nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and ethnocentrism.
5	Treatment Screen	Information about SUVs and their respective webpages are displayed. Questions about price reasonableness, quality and comparative rankings.
6	Attention Check	We incorporate a simple attention check to make sure the respondents are paying attention. If they fail this attention check they will be moved to the end of the survey. We tell them: "This is an attention check. Please click "Moderately Likely".
7	Post-treatment questions	Questions about economic ethnocentrism, vote intentions, and public policy preferences.
8	Manipulation Check	Assess whether respondents were aware that the brands were American, European or Asian, and able to identify the type of products that they were asked to evaluate from a set of options such as chocolates, clothes, etc. SUVs being the right answer.
9	Thanks and subjects ID	We thank the respondents for their participation, debrief them about the experiment, and provide IDs for payment. We repeat contact information in case respondents have any questions.
10	End of the survey	

A.3 SUVs Webpages

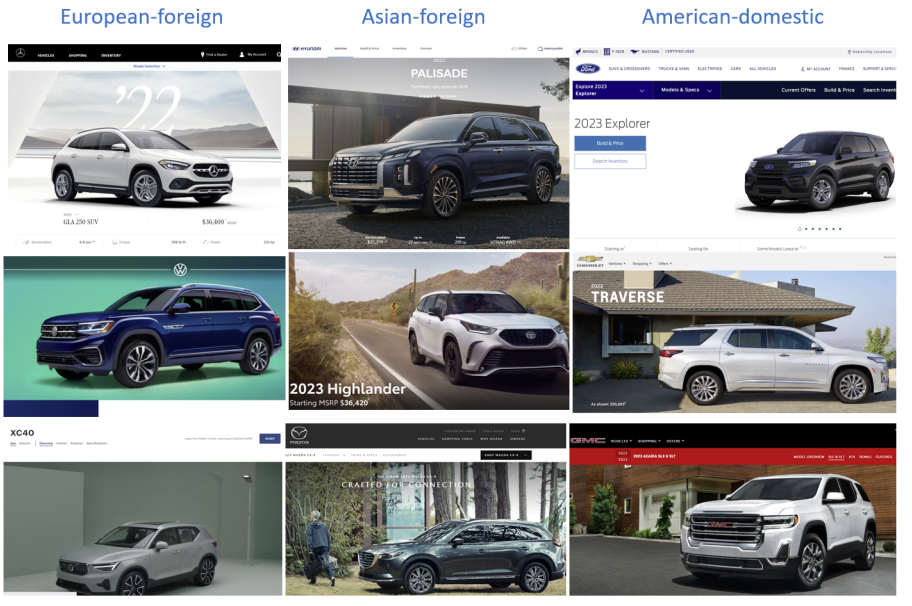

Figure A.1. Screenshots of the Website at the moment of fielding the experiment

A.4 IRB and Registration

Our design was reviewed and granted an exemption by the IRB at the University of Pittsburgh on August 12, 2022.

Our study was pre-registered at https://osf.io/y8nrm.

A.5 Results

A.6 Average Treatment Effects

A.6.1 Treatment = Foreign

Following, we present tables and figures for the results of the main text and a robustness check related to the treatment defined as foreign (i.e., pooled Asian and European cars).

Table A.2. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 1 in the main text.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together.

	(1) Anti-Immigration	(2) Anti-Trade	(3) Support Trump	(4) Cons. Ethnocentrism	(5) Prod. Ethnocentrism	(6) Offshoring	(7) Anti-Climate
Treated=Foreign	0.101***	0.080**	0.064**	0.025	0.025	-0.011	0.050
	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.033)
Middle Nationalism	-0.227***	-0.054	-0.234***	-0.175***	-0.175***	-0.027	-0.195***
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.034)
Low Nationalism	-0.386***	-0.092***	-0.388***	-0.197***	-0.197***	-0.059**	-0.503***
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.034)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.102***	-0.097**	-0.078**	-0.040	-0.040	0.013	-0.032
	(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.034)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.030)	(0.039)
Observations	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786
R^2	0.162	0.022	0.169	0.039	0.039	0.004	0.175
AIC	3066.377	3536.751	2710.986	3911.678	3911.678	1966.008	3516.703

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.3. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 1 in the main text, but with control variables included.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together. Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1) Anti-Immigration	(2) Anti-Trade	(3) Support Trump	(4) Cons. Ethnocentrism	(5) Prod. Ethnocentrism	(6) Offshoring	(7) Anti-Climate
Treated=Foreign	0.099***	0.077**	0.064**	0.013	0.013	-0.007	0.051
	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.033)
Middle Nationalism	-0.220***	-0.039	-0.237***	-0.165***	-0.165***	-0.031	-0.199***
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.034)
Low Nationalism	-0.373***	-0.062*	-0.395***	-0.176***	-0.176***	-0.068***	-0.513***
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.034)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.096***	-0.092**	-0.074**	-0.024	-0.024	0.008	-0.031
	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.034)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.030)	(0.039)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786
R^2	0.170	0.039	0.179	0.066	0.066	0.010	0.178
AIC	3049.577	3498.632	2685.985	3844.577	3844.577	1957.083	3515.456

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.4. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 1 in the main text, but with additional control variables (race & occupation) included.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together. Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1) Anti-Immigration	(2) Anti-Trade	(3) Support Trump	(4) Cons. Ethnocentrism	(5) Prod. Ethnocentrism	(6) Offshoring	(7) Anti-Climate
Treated=Foreign	0.124***	0.074**	0.065**	-0.021	0.003	0.009	0.060*
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.031)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.036)
Middle Nationalism	-0.195***	-0.047	-0.239***	-0.246***	-0.161***	-0.027	-0.189***
	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.027)	(0.036)
Low Nationalism	-0.353***	-0.073**	-0.395***	-0.346***	-0.177***	-0.071**	-0.502***
	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.116***	-0.071*	-0.068*	0.027	-0.015	-0.010	-0.035
	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.032)	(0.043)
White	0.070***	0.028	0.086***	0.038*	0.053**	-0.023	-0.011
	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.016)	(0.021)
Occupation RTI	0.002	-0.001	0.001	0.002	0.004**	-0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Job/Business Insecurity	0.016	0.016	-0.014	0.046**	0.043**	-0.023	-0.004
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.019)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2449	2449	2449	2449	2449	2449	2449
R^2	0.168	0.031	0.187	0.094	0.064	0.015	0.175
AIC	2641.598	3037.181	2306.676	3042.078	3402.179	1712.436	3109.489

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.5. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism levels. Treatment was defined without dropping those who did not click.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together. Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1) Anti-Immigration	(2) Anti-Trade	(3) Support Trump	(4) Cons. Ethnocentrism	(5) Prod. Ethnocentrism	(6) Offshoring	(7) Anti-Climate
Treatment=Foreign (no matter if they clicked)	0.082***	0.055*	0.085***	0.014	0.014	-0.016	0.048
	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.026)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.023)	(0.030)
Middle Nationalism	-0.205***	-0.055*	-0.232***	-0.175***	-0.175***	-0.039*	-0.191***
	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.023)	(0.031)
Low Nationalism	-0.355***	-0.080**	-0.388***	-0.203***	-0.203***	-0.072***	-0.494***
	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.024)	(0.031)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.084**	-0.066*	-0.094***	-0.028	-0.028	0.019	-0.034
	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.036)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3299	3299	3299	3299	3299	3299	3299
R^2	0.156	0.036	0.181	0.067	0.067	0.009	0.167
AIC	3593.038	4131.214	3234.234	4537.998	4537.998	2339.143	4202.287

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

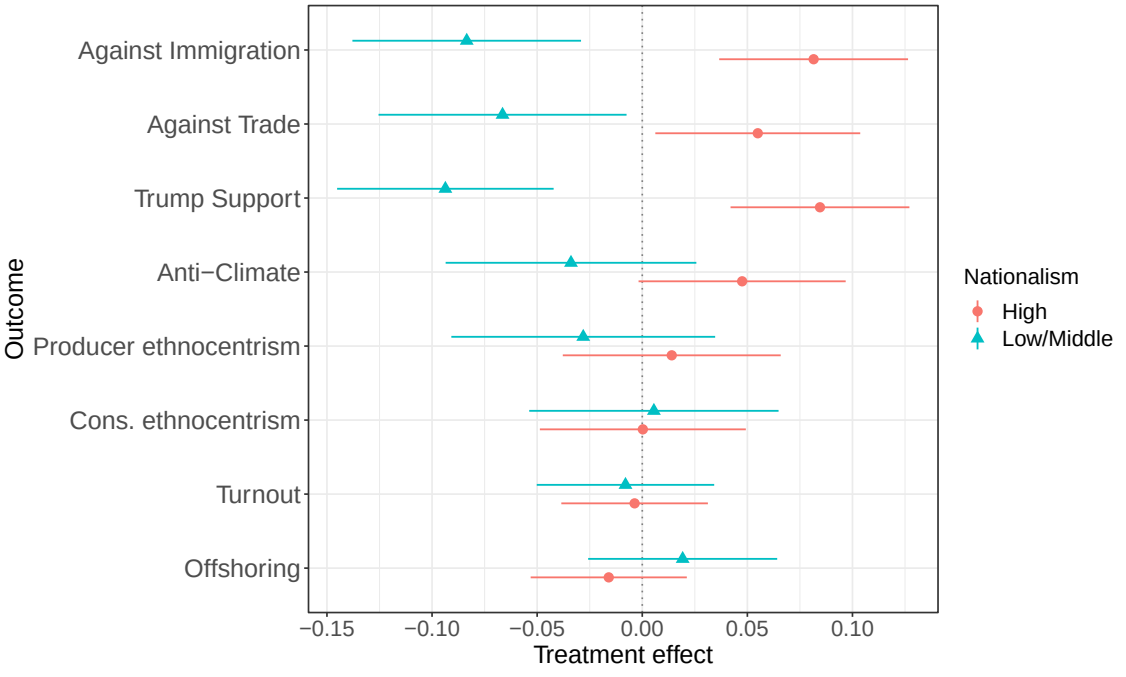

Figure A.2. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism levels. Treatment was defined without dropping those who did not click.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together (N=3299). Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

Table A.6. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism levels w/interactions by low and middle.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together. Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treated=Foreign	0.099***	0.077**	0.064**	0.013	0.013	-0.007	0.051
	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.033)
Middle Nationalism	-0.222***	-0.038	-0.224***	-0.160***	-0.160***	-0.022	-0.188***
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Low Nationalism	-0.372***	-0.063*	-0.407***	-0.181***	-0.181***	-0.077***	-0.525***
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Treated x Middle Nationalism	-0.094**	-0.093**	-0.091**	-0.031	-0.031	-0.005	-0.047
	(0.041)	(0.045)	(0.038)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.034)	(0.045)
Treated x Low Nationalism	-0.099**	-0.092**	-0.054	-0.016	-0.016	0.022	-0.013
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.035)	(0.046)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786	2786
R^2	0.170	0.039	0.180	0.066	0.066	0.011	0.178
AIC	3051.566	3500.631	2687.021	3846.481	3846.481	1958.444	3516.847

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

A.6.2 Treatment= Europe

Following, we present tables and figures for the results of the main text and a robustness check related to the treatment defined as Europe (i.e., only European cars).

Table A.7. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 2 in the main text.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treated=European	0.113***	0.092**	0.089***	0.007	0.007	-0.010	0.048
	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.033)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.029)	(0.038)
Middle Nationalism	-0.228***	-0.058*	-0.228***	-0.169***	-0.169***	-0.033	-0.187***
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.034)
Low Nationalism	-0.384***	-0.087**	-0.394***	-0.204***	-0.204***	-0.053**	-0.512***
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.035)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.102**	-0.114**	-0.089**	-0.019	-0.019	0.020	-0.033
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.040)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.035)	(0.045)
Observations	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860
R^2	0.150	0.021	0.164	0.034	0.034	0.003	0.178
AIC	2084.032	2361.573	1867.678	2626.077	2626.077	1355.599	2345.215

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.8. Treatment effect of exposure to euro brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 2 in the main text, but with control variables included.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treated=European	0.111***	0.089**	0.089***	-0.004	-0.004	-0.008	0.048
	(0.035)	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.029)	(0.038)
Middle Nationalism	-0.219***	-0.041	-0.229***	-0.157***	-0.157***	-0.036	-0.191***
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.035)
Low Nationalism	-0.370***	-0.061*	-0.397***	-0.184***	-0.184***	-0.059**	-0.520***
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.031)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.035)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.098**	-0.111**	-0.084**	-0.005	-0.005	0.018	-0.031
	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.040)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.035)	(0.046)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860
R^2	0.159	0.040	0.174	0.064	0.064	0.007	0.179
AIC	2073.155	2334.133	1855.587	2577.783	2577.783	1358.024	2351.496

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.9. Treatment effect of exposure to euro brands by nationalism levels. Treatment was defined without dropping those who did not click.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1) Anti-Immigration	(2) Anti-Trade	(3) Support Trump	(4) Cons. Ethnocentrism	(5) Prod. Ethnocentrism	(6) Offshoring	(7) Anti-Climate
Treatment=Europe (no matter if they clicked)	0.088***	0.061*	0.091***	-0.002	-0.002	-0.011	0.054
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.035)
Middle Nationalism	-0.204***	-0.054*	-0.228***	-0.169***	-0.169***	-0.042*	-0.182***
	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.032)
Low Nationalism	-0.353***	-0.082**	-0.385***	-0.210***	-0.210***	-0.065***	-0.498***
	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.025)	(0.032)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.085**	-0.085**	-0.091**	-0.011	-0.011	0.027	-0.044
	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.037)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.032)	(0.042)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2196	2196	2196	2196	2196	2196	2196
R^2	0.147	0.038	0.167	0.062	0.062	0.007	0.170
AIC	2422.843	2738.069	2204.690	3039.733	3039.733	1643.172	2795.952

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.10. Treatment effect of exposure to euro brands by nationalism levels w/interactions by low and middle.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1) Anti-Immigration	(2) Anti-Trade	(3) Support Trump	(4) Cons. Ethnocentrism	(5) Prod. Ethnocentrism	(6) Offshoring	(7) Anti-Climate
Treated=European	0.113***	0.092**	0.089***	0.007	0.007	-0.010	0.048
	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.033)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.029)	(0.038)
Middle Nationalism	-0.228***	-0.054	-0.222***	-0.166***	-0.166***	-0.021	-0.183***
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Low Nationalism	-0.384***	-0.091**	-0.401***	-0.207***	-0.207***	-0.066**	-0.516***
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.032)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Treated x Middle Nationalism	-0.102**	-0.121**	-0.100**	-0.025	-0.025	-0.003	-0.041
	(0.047)	(0.051)	(0.045)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.039)	(0.051)
Treated x Low Nationalism	-0.102**	-0.105*	-0.074	-0.013	-0.013	0.049	-0.024
	(0.050)	(0.054)	(0.047)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.041)	(0.054)
Observations	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860	1860
R^2	0.150	0.021	0.164	0.034	0.034	0.004	0.178
AIC	2086.032	2363.480	1869.347	2628.029	2628.029	1355.863	2347.103

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

A.6.3 Treatment = Asian

Following, we present tables and figures for the results of the main text and a robustness check related to the treatment defined as Asian (i.e., only Asian cars).

Table A.11. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 2 in the main text.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treated=Asian	0.090***	0.068*	0.039	0.043	0.043	-0.012	0.051
	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.028)	(0.038)
Middle Nationalism	-0.227***	-0.049	-0.234***	-0.177***	-0.177***	-0.018	-0.197***
	(0.031)	(0.035)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.034)
Low Nationalism	-0.386***	-0.097***	-0.388***	-0.195***	-0.195***	-0.068***	-0.502***
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.101**	-0.079*	-0.067*	-0.061	-0.061	0.006	-0.032
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.034)	(0.046)
Observations	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858
R^2	0.155	0.016	0.163	0.041	0.041	0.007	0.175
AIC	2008.575	2361.652	1750.232	2607.144	2607.144	1275.102	2349.678

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.12. Treatment effect of exposure to asian brands by nationalism level. This table is related to Figure 2 in the main text, but with control variables included.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treated=Asian	0.087**	0.067*	0.039	0.031	0.031	-0.008	0.052
	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.028)	(0.038)
Middle Nationalism	-0.221***	-0.034	-0.238***	-0.171***	-0.171***	-0.023	-0.201***
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Low Nationalism	-0.371***	-0.064*	-0.395***	-0.173***	-0.173***	-0.082***	-0.513***
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.093**	-0.073	-0.066*	-0.043	-0.043	-0.000	-0.032
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.034)	(0.046)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858
R^2	0.165	0.035	0.174	0.065	0.065	0.015	0.180
AIC	1996.682	2336.359	1736.404	2571.479	2571.479	1269.756	2348.520

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.13. Treatment effect of exposure to asian brands by nationalism levels. Treatment was defined without dropping those who did not click.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). Demographic control variables were included (age, gender, income, and education).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treatment=Asian (no matter if they clicked)	0.075**	0.050	0.080***	0.031	0.031	-0.023	0.042
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Middle Nationalism	-0.204***	-0.051	-0.229***	-0.176***	-0.176***	-0.035	-0.192***
	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.024)	(0.032)
Low Nationalism	-0.355***	-0.081**	-0.392***	-0.201***	-0.201***	-0.079***	-0.495***
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.032)
Treated x Low/Mid Nationalism	-0.082**	-0.049	-0.099***	-0.046	-0.046	0.013	-0.025
	(0.038)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.031)	(0.042)
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2211	2211	2211	2211	2211	2211	2211
R^2	0.153	0.031	0.179	0.069	0.069	0.011	0.167
AIC	2379.366	2786.646	2125.583	3042.374	3042.374	1505.922	2823.490

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.14. Treatment effect of exposure to asian brands by nationalism levels w/interactions by low and middle.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Anti-Immigration	Anti-Trade	Support Trump	Cons. Ethnocentrism	Prod. Ethnocentrism	Offshoring	Anti-Climate
Treated=Asian	0.090***	0.068*	0.039	0.043	0.043	-0.012	0.051
	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.028)	(0.038)
Middle Nationalism	-0.228***	-0.054	-0.222***	-0.166***	-0.166***	-0.021	-0.183***
	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.027)	(0.037)
Low Nationalism	-0.384***	-0.091**	-0.401***	-0.207***	-0.207***	-0.066**	-0.516***
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Treated x Middle Nationalism	-0.098**	-0.069	-0.092**	-0.083	-0.083	0.010	-0.058
	(0.047)	(0.052)	(0.044)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.039)	(0.052)
Treated x Low Nationalism	-0.104**	-0.091*	-0.040	-0.038	-0.038	0.001	-0.003
	(0.048)	(0.053)	(0.045)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.040)	(0.053)
Observations	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858	1858
R^2	0.155	0.016	0.164	0.042	0.042	0.007	0.175
AIC	2010.554	2363.471	1750.768	2608.451	2608.451	1277.046	2350.509

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

A.7 Average Treatment Effect Weighted

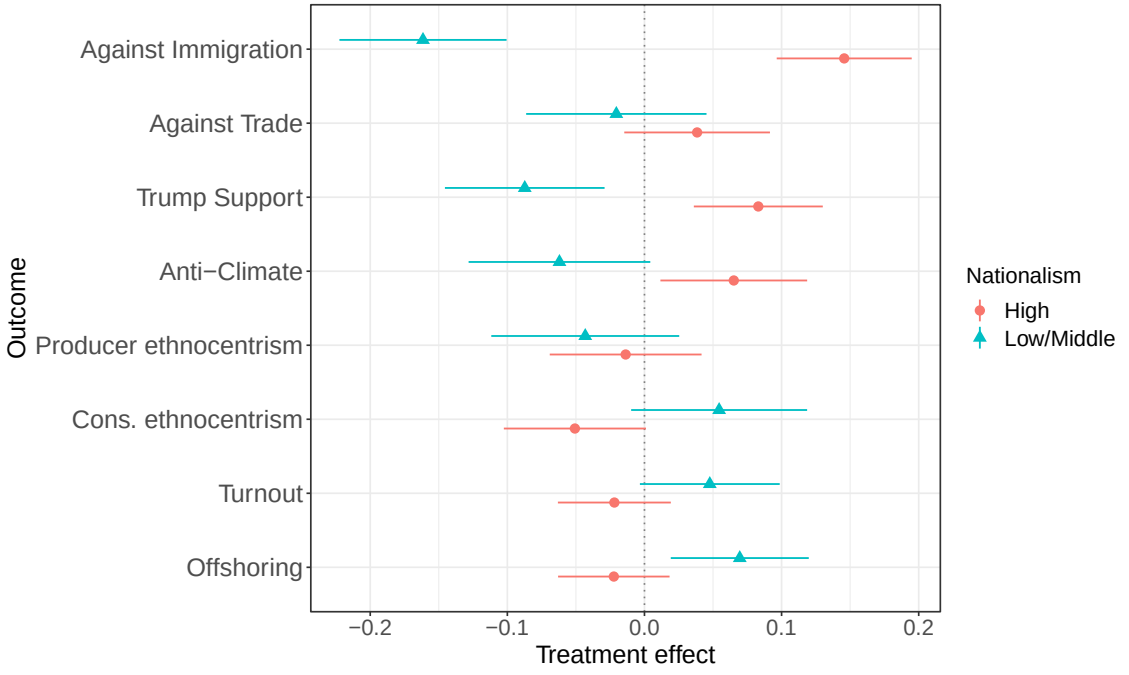

Figure A.3. Treatment effect of exposure to foreign brands by nationalism levels weighted.
Note: All variables are binary (0-1), with 1 indicating stronger support for the statement questions. The nationalism clusters are categorized as follows: high (top 33rd percentile scores in the nationalism index), middle, and low have been pooled together (bottom 66th percentile). This analysis includes the full sample, meaning that the European and Asian treatments have been pooled together (N=2786). The weights were calculated using raking, with the ACS as the benchmark. The variables used for weighting were education, age, sex, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and the interaction between education and race.

A.8 Mediation Analysis

A.8.1 Specifics

$$ATE = E[Y(1) - Y(0)] \quad (1)$$

$$ACME(t) = E[Y(t, M(1)) - Y(t, M(0))] \quad (2)$$

$$ADE(t) = E[Y(1, M(t)) - Y(0, M(t))] \quad (3)$$

with $Y(t)$ representing the expected outcome of interest under a given treatment status ($t \in [0, 1]$) and $M(t)$ denote the mediator's value. The outcome variables of interest in our analyses are whether individuals exposed to foreign brands increase their support for populist leaders and illiberal policy preferences. The mediators in this context are proxies for anti-immigration policy preferences, ethnocentrism, and egocentric and sociotropic preferences.

A.8.2 Sensitivity

Table A.15. Sensitivity Analysis

Mediator	Against Immigration	Against Trade	Support for Trump
Sociotropic	-0.2	-0.43	-0.23
Egocentric	-0.23	-0.43	-0.15
Anti Immigration		0.26	0.4
Cons. Ethnocentrism	0.19	0.27	0.2

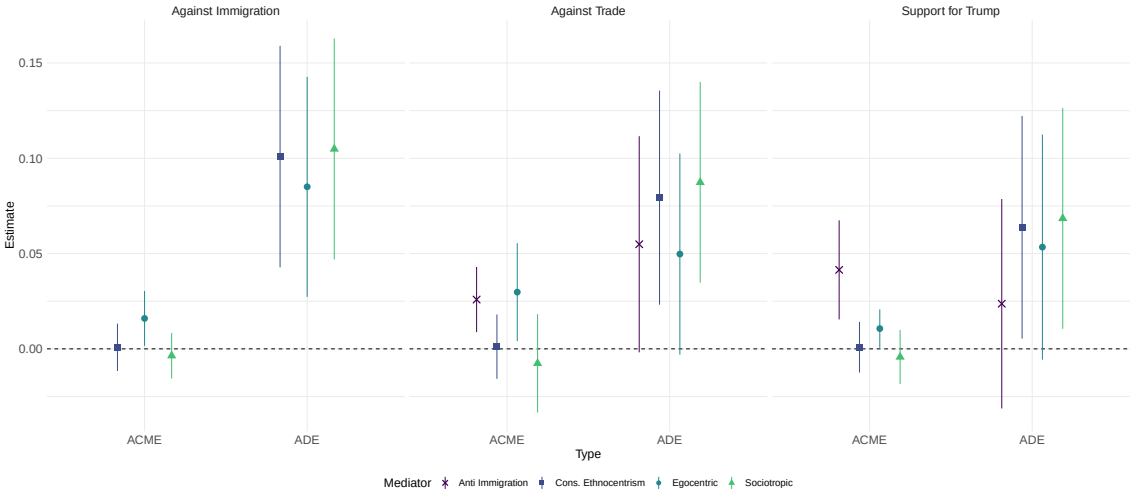

Figure A.4. Average Mediated Causal Effect
Note: The points indicate the estimated effect of automation risks, with lines displaying 95% confidence intervals.